

Thomas Howard Wickenden II Family

By Thomas H. Wickenden II

One day when I was visiting my grandfather at Medford Leas, he called me into his study, picked up an old, heavy leather suitcase, and put it down in front of me. This contains all my records of the history of our family, he said, and I think you should be responsible for it from now on. The torch (or suitcase) was thus passed, and I have felt a growing interest in our family history ever since, as well as a certain sense of duty. As my name suggests, the family connection for me through my father, Thomas Clinton, my grandfather, Thomas Howard I, our great grandfather, Thomas Rogers and our great, great grandfather, Thomas Wickenden of Rochester, is quite strong. Hence, my son is also a Thomas, Thomas Aaron. Once I put together a list of possible Wickenden ancestors going back to the original Wickendens in Cowden, Kent, where the Wickenden from which our name derives was located. The list goes back 15 generations to the early 17th century. I even have plans for tracing the migration of our clan of Angles from Wickenburg in Germany north to the coast and over to the south shore of the Thames, from which they herded animals down a drove into Kent to establish their den.

Education

After my sister Elizabeth was born in Hyde Park, NY, we moved to Short Hills, NJ, where I grew up. As a grandson and namesake of Thomas Howard Wickenden, I got to spend one night a week with my grandparents, eating dinner with them, sleeping in my father's bedroom, and after breakfast, walking to school or to the school bus stop with my grandfather, as he was on his way to the train station. I regarded it as a special privilege earned by being the eldest, only to find out later that my mother was glad to get rid of one of us boys at least once a week, since Michael and I caused trouble due to our sibling rivalry. I remember my grandfather paying me one penny for each dandelion I dug out of his front lawn. I didn't get rich, but I enjoyed being outside on the lawn and making some pocket money. I went to Glenwood Elementary School two blocks from my grandfather's house and two blocks from my aunt and cousins house on the other side of the school. Then it was on to The Pingry School, a non-boarding prep school where I had the same Latin Teacher that my father had when he was a student there in the 1930's. From there I went to Princeton University, where my grandfather on my mother's side had graduated with the class of 1915. I enjoyed the intellectual challenge of college so much, I made higher education my life's work for nearly 50 years.

My big move away from home in New Jersey came in 1966 when I went to graduate school at U.C.L.A. in Westwood, CA. After graduation from Pingry and a summer studying in France along with my sister, I returned to Short Hills to find that I had been

awarded a four-year Chancellor's Teaching Fellowship by U.C.L.A. I had planned to attend the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where I heard they served beer in the student union, but the adventure of going West and the advice of my father that I would enjoy being financially independent convinced me to accept. After a five-day trip first to Chicago and then, by way of old route 66 through Missouri, Oklahoma, the Texas Pan-Handle, New Mexico, Arizona and California, I finally took Interstate 10 to the beach in Santa Monica, so I could put my feet in the Pacific. After completing work in American Literature (and thereby avoiding with honor the ill-conceived war in Viet Nam) I earned a Candidate of Philosophy degree, transferred back East to the University of Pennsylvania and completed a Ph.D. in the new multi-disciplinary social science field of Communications. I have since earned a M.P.A. degree from NAU and having retired from a career in Higher Education Administration at the campus, state, federal and national levels, I am currently having fun following a two-year curriculum in Electronic Music and working on two books along with several musicals, plays, websites and a film-script. Not realizing the value the Wickenden family has always placed on education, my mentor at NAU once accused me of being a professional student out to collect a bunch of degrees. My educational and professional experience is described in my profile at www.linkedin.com/in/twickenden.

Tom and Beth

While I was at U.C.L.A., I met Beth Helene Friedman, who was an 18-year-old freshman at the time, and I, an old graduate student of 24. We met in a private student dormitory in Westwood Village, the same dorm where Hugh Hefner picked up Barbie Benton each weekend. We were married in the garden of the Bel Air Hotel in 1970. The pond next to the gazebo made a pretty backdrop, but the swans snapped at our ankles when we posed for family pictures. Thomas and his wife Dee Schuman stayed at the hotel, and his sister Ida Wickenden Nixon and his sister-in-law Myra Wickenden were chauffeured over from Claremont by Ruth Wickenden Abel, and thus also able to attend.

Since Beth's immediate family was living mostly in California, while mine was mostly located in New Jersey, we have moved several times back and forth across the country. After a year in Brentwood, we moved to Philadelphia. Beth completed a her BFA at Beaver College, now Arcadia University, and was presented the Spruance-Daumier Award at graduation in 1974. She worked with a several artists in Philadelphia while I finished my Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania. We then moved to Ithaca, NY, where our children Aaron and Anna were born. I took a teaching position at Ithaca College overlooking Cayuga Lake. During the winter I would head out our back door and cross-country ski one mile through the woods to the College. The School of Communications used this story for recruiting faculty. Beth worked as coordinator for the NY State Council on the Arts' decentralized regranting program through the Tompkins County Arts Council. Following a transition into administration, I worked at

Tompkins Cortland Community College in Dryden, NY, before we moved to Flagstaff, Arizona. Beth studied American Indian Art and volunteered at the Museum of Northern Arizona while I served as Associate Vice President for Planning and Budgeting at Northern Arizona University. Then, I took an exciting job serving as the Chief Academic Officer of the Arizona University System down in Phoenix, AZ. Beth continues her interest in American Indian Art as a volunteer at the world-famous Heard Museum. We lived first in Scottsdale and then, after both Aaron and Anna were off to college and jobs, we moved downtown where we could both walk to work and were featured in a local paper as “urban pioneers.”

Ten years later, we purchased a condominium on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. where I took executive positions with the U.S. Department of Education and then with the Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Universities. I had a view of the Capitol dome from my office and enjoyed walking past the azaleas in the park to meetings in the Senate and House Office buildings. Beth stayed in Arizona after having moved across the country and around the state numerous times, so we commuted between Phoenix and Washington with side trips for vacations and to see our children and family. She enjoyed visiting the Smithsonian museums and spending many hours in the Senate gallery watching debates and votes, including those on the ground-breaking Lilly Ledbetter Equal Rights for Women Act and the ill-fated gang of eight comprehensive immigration bill. On national holidays, we would walk a few blocks to the Capitol to view the festivities, and we both reveled in the joyous spirit of the crowds at the inauguration of President Barack Obama in 2009. When I retired in 2014, we decided to relocate back in Arizona. Currently we enjoy our summers in hiking in Flagstaff and winters walking in Phoenix. We fit in trips each year to see our family, holiday times together, at least one road trip and reunions when they come up. I have a list of projects (websites, writing, and musical) I work to complete during my “spare time.” We’re planning a special celebration for our 50th wedding anniversary in 2020.

Children

Beth and I have two children, both of whom are living interesting lives. My son, Thomas Aaron Wickenden is an editor of documentary films. Although he and his wife Jennifer Brandel live in the uptown district of Chicago, he spends part of each year in LA working with various directors. It was exciting for Beth and me to attend the 2018 Sundance Film Festival in Park City Utah to see the premiere of not one, but two of Aaron’s films. His work has been recognized by American Cinema Editors (ACE) and he is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS). His films include popular pictures such as Won’t You Be My Neighbor (about Fred Rogers) and the Oscar nominated film Finding Vivian Maier. His most recently completed work is the provocative and illuminating HAIL SATAN? which was a New York Times Critic Pick and also derided by the internet conspiracy theorist Alex Jones (Info Wars) as a “soul

sucking masterwork of evil." It is a film that fuses comedy with activism to explore ideas around the separation of church and state. In that way, HAIL SATAN? is a bold continuation of the ideas put forth by William Wickenden when he helped found Providence, RI in 1637. If he were still alive today, how delightful it would be to think of old William Wickenden watching the film and then proudly proclaiming –“Hail Satan!” More information about Aaron's work can be found on his website www.aaronwickenden.com.

Our daughter, Anna Wickenden, is multi-talented. With an academic background in fashion design, she moved to L.A. and took a job with American Apparel. She also worked as a fashion stylist for a time, dressing celebrities such as Michelle Pfeiffer and her family to attend the unveiling of her new star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Mostly she worked styling models for commercials and print ads. She enjoys visual arts and co-founded a graphics company called Dead Ex's. Working in neon, she produced a fantastic portrait of her beloved Chihuahua, Uko. Currently she is exploring the use of tufting as a graphic medium. Her passion, however, is music and she has a small studio in the house that she shares with her cats in Highland Park, a popular artistic area in NELA (North East L.A.).