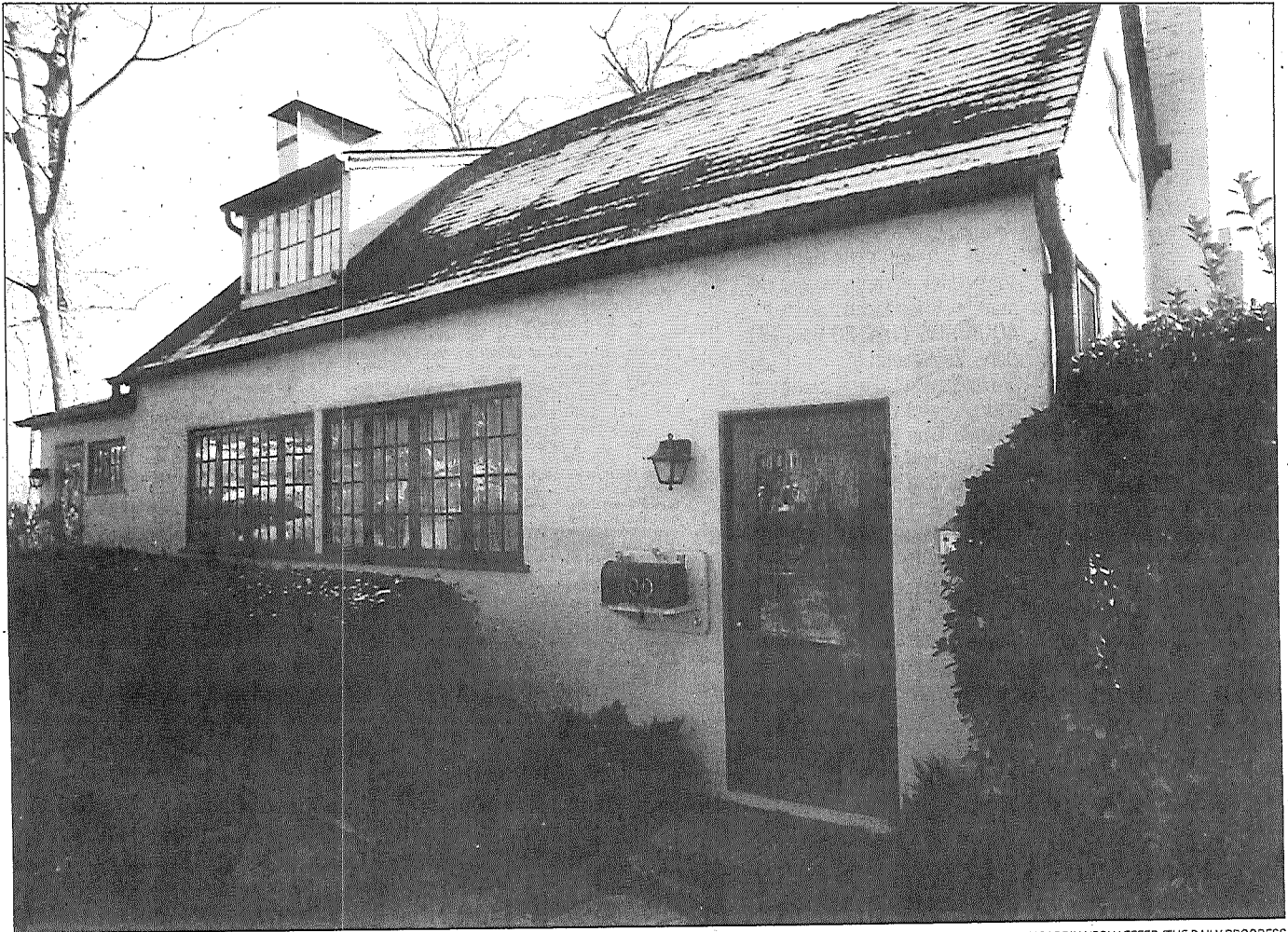


700 RUGBY ROAD

Engineering a dream



PHOTOS BY SABRINA SCHAEFFER/THE DAILY PROGRESS

Ken and Lucy Wallenborn's home at 700 Rugby Road in Charlottesville was once owned by Lucy's father, Charles Henderson.

Where Jefferson sought to place UVa's Rotunda, professor called home

This story is part of a series of occasional stories about beautiful and interesting homes in the area.

BY DAVID A. MAURER
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A dusting of overnight snow had melted by mid-morning, leaving the lawn surrounding the house at 700 Rugby Road glistening in the sunlight.

Inside, Lucy "Poochie" Wallenborn sipped coffee in a dining nook just off the kitchen. Her grandfather's watercolor paintings hung on the three walls surrounding the table.

The alcove, with its open-beam ceiling, is where Mrs. Wallenborn enjoys spending quiet time. As she nears her 81st birthday, she has a lot of memories to recall, many of which happened in this house, where she grew up.

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nose that she had put some of her 4711 cologne on, so I wouldn't have to smell whatever it was. Another early memory is of my father reading to me every night from my favorite 'Uncle Wiggily' book.

"My father was a very gentle man, and so patient. He was a big reader, gardener and carpenter, and he did much of the carpentry work on this house."

Her father, Charles Henderson, was an engineering professor at the University of Virginia. In 1950, he became dean of the engineering department and was instrumental in greatly expanding the department to meet the demands of the post-World War II world.

Years before Dean Henderson increased the engineering school's curriculum, he took on the task of eliminating one of Charlottesville's dubious landmarks. When he purchased what was then a modest five-room house at 700 Rugby Road in 1931, it had a 25-foot-tall water tank in the front yard.

The water tower had been there since 1900, when the city purchased the 30-by-30-foot parcel of land it was built on. City planners had selected the site because it was the highest geological point in the

later, the water tank was obsolete, and the engineering professor paid the city \$300 for the piece of land.

As part of the sale arrangement, Henderson agreed to remove the water tank at his own expense. Although the water tower is long gone, the house is still called Tank Hut.

Dr. Ken Wallenborn took a seat on the bench next to his wife and shared a bit of local history with a visitor. If Thomas Jefferson had had his way, this particular area of Charlottesville would look much different.

"This house stands in the area where Mr. Jefferson wanted to build the Rotunda," said Wallenborn, who practiced medicine in Charlottesville for many years before retiring. "He wanted it on the highest point.

"But the farmer who owned the land, Mr. Kelly, was a political opponent of Mr. Jefferson. When he heard Mr. Jefferson wanted to buy it, and this is quoted in one of the books, he said, 'I'll see the devil in hell before I sell this to Mr. Jefferson.'

"That's why he had to build the Rotunda on land [James] Monroe used to

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"My first memory is being in the upstairs bedroom at the far end of the house," Mrs. Wallenborn said. "They must have fumigated the house or something, because it had a terrible smell.

"I remember going to bed and my mother putting a handkerchief over my

nose that she had put some of her 4711 cologne on, so I wouldn't have to smell whatever it was. Another early memory is of my father reading to me every night from my favorite 'Uncle Wiggily' book.

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The water tower had been there since 1900, when the city purchased the 30-by-30-foot parcel of land it was built on. City planners had selected the site because it was the highest geological point in the neighborhood.

That part of town was growing as a residential area, and gravity would ensure the new homes being built would have decent water pressure. Three decades

later, the water tank was obsolete, and the engineering professor paid the city \$300 for the piece of land.

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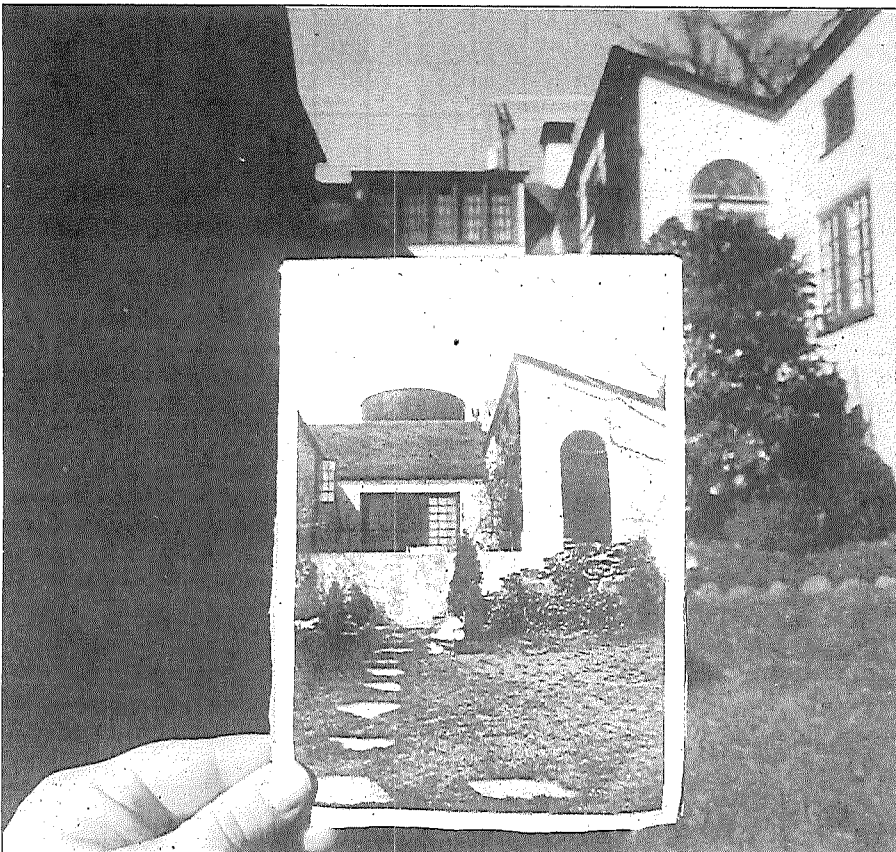
Jefferson didn't get to build the icon of his university where he wanted, but he still has an impressive presence in the Wallenborns' home. A large painting of the third president hangs above a nicely cluttered desk in the physician's study. Nearby hangs a framed photograph of the doctor with President George W. Bush in the White House.

The house at 700 Rugby Road has been enlarged greatly since the days when calling it a hut had made more sense. Now it's a magnificent structure that delights visually with complex angles and design features.

The once unfinished attic has been transformed into a playroom, where Mrs. Wallenborn enjoys working on her projects. Nearby is a whimsical passage way that leads to a bedroom and a full bath.

The house is replete with fanciful features, such as a sunken fireplace in the living room and a formal English dining room on the ground floor. A beautiful garden area in the rear of the house includes a rock-lined pond that a heron likes to visit on fishing expeditions.

Although there are no records to show when the core of the house was built, Mrs. Wallenborn suspects it was in 1923, when her great-uncle bought the property. After her father bought it in 1931, he purchased additional land parcels on each side of the house, which allowed a garage to be built on one side and the yard to increase on the other.



A photo from the 1920s shows the water tower that used to be in front of Ken and Lucy Wallenborn's home in Charlottesville. The tower, which had served the Rugby Road neighborhood since the beginning of the 20th century, was obsolete when Lucy Wallenborn's father purchased the house in 1931, and he agreed to remove the tank at his own expense.

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700 Rugby

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The house itself exudes an ambience of warmth and welcome. Although the Wallenborns have lived in the house for about 25 years, Mrs. Wallenborn said it's still fresh every day.

"I sort of pinch myself every once in awhile to believe I'm back here," Mrs. Wallenborn said. "I remember when my mother had a cataract operation and I was staying here to care for her.

"I woke up early in the morning and looked to the east and the sunrise was an amazing, brilliant red. I thought, 'I've got to live here.'

"It was an epiphany. Now, it's almost like I never left, because I feel so at home."

Mrs. Wallenborn concedes that Rugby Road "isn't a terribly quiet street," but it holds a certain mystique for her. When she was a child, she liked playing in a nearby wooded area where Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church — Unitarian Universalist now stands.

Back then, the Dabney family lived across the street. The head of the household, Richard Heath Dabney, was a professor of history at the university. His son, Virginius Dabney, would win a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing and pen a number of books, including "Mr. Jefferson's University: A History."

Paul Goodloe McIntire, Charlottesville's and the university's great benefactor, lived in a beautiful home just down the street, where an apartment building

now stands. Mrs. Wallenborn remembers the Rugby Road of her youth as being lined entirely by private homes.

"My father would often walk to the university," Mrs. Wallenborn said. "During the war [World War II], he rode a bicycle to work, always wearing a coat and tie."

The professor had been a volunteer air raid warren during the war. During drills, he would patrol the neighborhood to ensure his neighbors didn't have any lights showing.

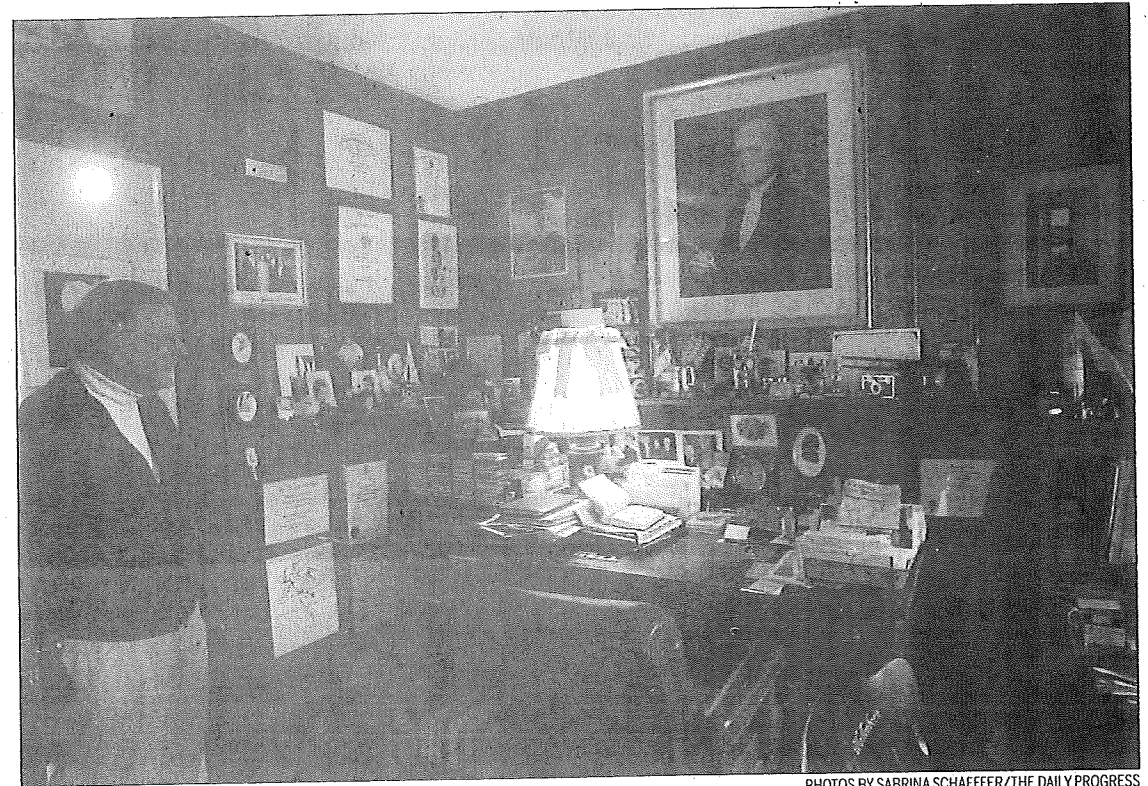
Mrs. Wallenborn's mother, Rosalie, knitted items for the troops and served as a volunteer spotter for enemy airplanes. Her lookout post was on the roof of the Monticello Hotel.

Another treasured memory for Mrs. Wallenborn is how on Christmas Eve her father would slip into the back yard and ring sleigh bells. When the children peeked out the door, he would pretend to be Santa Claus and ask them what they wanted for Christmas. The sleigh bells now hang near the fireplace.

Mrs. Wallenborn recalled how she and friends would roller-skate down to the Rotunda and along the sidewalks that border the Lawn. At other times, they would make hollyhock dolls, or play hopscotch on the sidewalk in front of her house.

It is a house where many of the most revered and loved professors in the university's history have spent happy times. It also has been home to many students, because Mrs. Wallenborn's parents had rented spare rooms to them.

"My parents loved having people in the house, and they entertained a lot," Mrs. Wallenborn



PHOTOS BY SABRIHA SCHAEFFER/THE DAILY PROGRESS

Ken Wallenborn's office in the Rugby Road home where his wife, Lucy, grew up. The portrait of Thomas Jefferson is a reminder that the University of Virginia founder unsuccessfully sought to place the Rotunda at the home's site.

said. "There's been a lot of joy in this house.

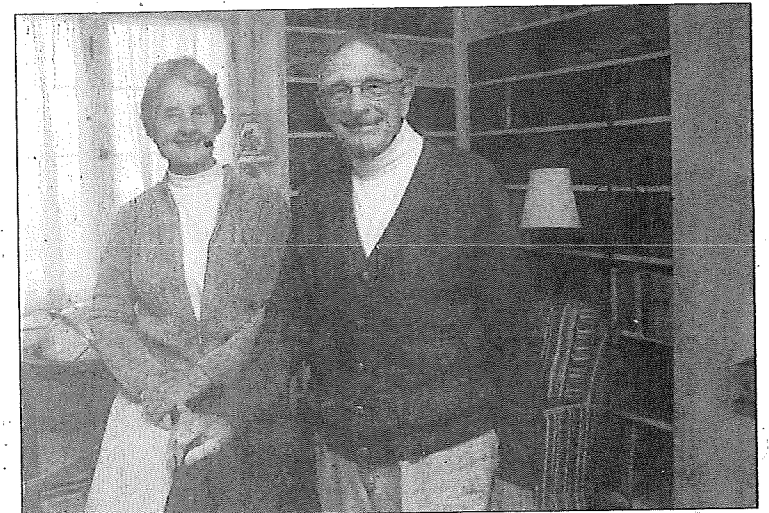
"There's windows everywhere. On clear days, light will flood every room at some point."

When Mrs. Wallenborn's mother died in 1986, she inherited the home. Their oldest son has made it clear that he wants to own the home some day as well.

"I do love this house," Dr. Wallenborn said. "It rambles around, but it's comfortable and it's historic.

"My folks lived on Rugby Road, too, but their house was built in 1949. It didn't have the feel this house does.

"I have the sense of family and roots here."



Ken and Lucy Wallenborn at their home in Charlottesville. Lucy Wallenborn's father, longtime University of Virginia engineering professor Charles Henderson, purchased the house on 700 Rugby Road in 1931.