

# The Houses of My Dreams

CHRISTINE BROOKS COTE

## San Diego, California, 1963–1978



Three bedrooms, one bath, single-car garage. Built in the 1950s. Fenced-in backyard with a patio, cactus garden, banana trees, geraniums, and one big tree suitable for climbing.

Streets carved into the hills between the canyons. Houses packed in tight. Friends scattered within a mile-and-a-half radius, all of us together in school from third grade to eighth grade, and a few even beyond—Sandra Berkhart, Debbie LaPlante, Pamela Maushardt, Cindy Tausch, Karen Bowman, Christine Knott. Their names bring a smile to my face. We faced the early years of our lives together. We walked or biked to visit each other after school, on the weekends, in the summer. Swam in Cindy’s pool, played the piano and sang songs at Karen’s house or my house, listened to records (the Monkees were big then), danced in our bedrooms, talked about the boys in our class. We took cardboard boxes and slid down the ice plant on the sides of the canyons. We’d go to the shopping center for a slurpee or donut, or to the gas station for a Pepsi. We had slumber parties and birthday parties, played pranks on each other. We were free to come and go. No worries in those days. The vast neighborhood was ours to explore. We found our own boundaries and dreamed of what lay beyond.

I couldn’t wait for high school, then I couldn’t wait to go to college. I wanted to go far away. I wanted to punch through the boundaries and live my dreams of the future.

CHRISTINE BROOKS COTE founded Shanti Arts in 2011 to revel in nature, art, and spirit. She has called Maine her home for the last thirty years.

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Two bedrooms, one bath, one closet, small kitchen, no garage. Walk-up attic, Michigan basement, large front porch. Built around 1919.

Born in Milwaukee, Indiana was my re-introduction to the Midwest. Trees and farm fields, rivers and lakes . . . nothing like San Diego. Comfortable autumns with trees dressed in red, orange, and yellow; the scent of fall intoxicating. Fell in love with winter, its stunning beauty, softness, and silence. Spring arrived with a burst of flowering trees and daffodils and tulips. Summers hot and muggy, tolerable only in the evening on the porch, watching fireflies, listening to nighthawks as they danced in the sky. My senses were overwhelmed. My mind adjusting to a different way of life.

Never intended to stay long. Indiana was merely a way station. I had more dreams, another boundary to breach.

## South Bend, Indiana, 1981–1992





### Brunswick, Maine, 1992–

Three bedrooms, two baths, three-car garage, woodstove, large stone hearth, five acres of woods. Built out of logs in 1986.

A new life in New England. Not at all like the West, not at all like the Midwest. Winters colder, snowier, longer, and even more beautiful. Spring doesn't burst open with color; it creeps in quietly with swelling buds on trees and green shoots of ferns and grasses and wildflowers emerging on the forest floor. Summer is for kayaking, hiking, cooking outdoors, and sitting lakeside, soaking up the warmth. Autumn is heaven on earth. Why would I live anywhere else?

My husband, born in Maine, has taught me that there is truth in the state's slogan: Maine, The Way Life Should Be. Enjoy the outdoors in every season. Enjoy all that nature has to offer. Marvel at the coastline, the islands, the lakes and rivers, the forests. Cherish the rhythm of the day, the rhythm of the seasons.

I now dream about the past—the past thirty years in this house. But I dream also about what is still to come. The dogwood tree I planted a year ago will oneday bloom right outside my office window. The ferns and wildflowers will spread even further into the woods, creating vast spreads of delicate fronds and tender blooms gently bending with the breeze. Eight dogs are buried on this property,

but soon our next pup will arrive, joining our ten-year-old to play, run through the woods, and make me smile and cry. My husband and I will grow old here and enjoy days when we might just sit together on the porch, sip our morning coffee, watch our old red dogs sleep and dream, and dream ourselves about the life we made . . . here in this house. ❀

*We cannot separate our dreams from where our dreams took root and came to life.*



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