

## Chapter Four

### **Sunnyvale**

We moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in September 1988. Not wanting to live in the middle of the suburban sprawl, we found a house in the Los Gatos Mountains, about 20 miles south of NASA Ames Research Center. Unfortunately, as it turned out, the only major highway leading to and from the house was predictably clogged with traffic during rush hour. In our starry-eyed idealism, however, we did not consider this a problem, as we intended to commute during non-rush hour times when the trip could be easily made in about 30 minutes. The problem is that many other people had the same idea, which merely started the morning and evening rush hours earlier. The result was that we often spent up to three hours each day commuting. After a few months, we were tired of wasting so much time, so we moved to Sunnyvale, about 10 minutes from Ames, right in the middle of the suburban sprawl. We were both a little surprised by what appeared to be a surfeit of rules, regulations, and fees governing one's life in California. Echoing an earlier comment about Jawahar lal Nehru University in Delhi, Kalpana said, "They're all Commies!"

Upon arriving at Ames Research Center, Kalpana was assigned to a project that simulated the airflow around a delta-wing descending vertically using vectored thrust. The simulation was an exploration of Harrier jump-jet performance. Though she joined the project shortly before it concluded, to her chagrin Kalpana was identified as one of the primary researchers in the yearly highlights video produced by her department. She was even more annoyed when her name was linked to a poster of the simulation published and displayed at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC.

Kalpana investigated nearby Palo Alto Airport, where she joined a flying club. She started aerobatics training in a Super Decathlon airplane, eventually completing the syllabus necessary for solo practice. I joined the club shortly thereafter as a flight instructor. During one of our visits to the