Well-wishing neighbors, family and friends streamed in and out of the West Tisbury home of Robert and Maggie Schwartz over the weekend as the couple prepared to move to a new home after 55 years.

The Schwartzes — he is 95, she is 93 — will relocate to Norwalk, Conn., to be closer to their three children.
“I guess it’s about time, but we’ll surely miss the Vineyard,” said Mr. Schwartz, the architect who designed the Field Gallery in 1970 as well as his own home that Tom Waldron built on Look’s Pond Way in 1966.

“We bought the land from Percy Burt. It overlooked a field of grass and we had a view of the pond then, too,” he recalled.

He designed the home with a barn-like look to fit in with its setting. Later he set out with the late Tom Maley, a friend and fellow artist, to build a simple gallery where Island artists could show off their work. The gallery site was in a field Tom Maley owned and where his sculptures still stand. Construction of the gallery was a family and a neighborhood project, with the Schwartz teenaged children helping out, as well the late Stanley Burnshaw, poet and editor, and the late artists Max Kahn and Eleanor Coen, whose home on Scotchman’s Lane Bob had assisted in designing. Virtually anyone else in town who showed up with a hammer and nails and a strong arm was welcomed.

It was a far cry from the work Bob Schwartz had previously been doing when he had his own architectural firm in New York city and had been selected to design The Protestant Center at the New York World’s Fair of 1964-1965. A painter as well as an architect, he had also produced a 50-foot mural for the building’s entryway.

The Protestant Center is where he and Maggie had met as children attending a Presbyterian Sunday School in the Bronx. Maggie had come with her parents from Northern Ireland to the Bronx via Canada. The former Sunday school classmates have now been married for 71 years.

The Schwartzes first came to the Vineyard in 1957, staying at the Harborside Inn in Edgartown. They liked the Vineyard, but went to Maine the following summer. They were lured back to the Island by the Maleys, who had become close friends when the Schwartz children attended the nursery school Helen Maley had founded in Yorktown Heights, N.Y.

On the Vineyard, in addition to continuing his architectural forays, Bob has happily painted over the years — in watercolor, oil and acrylic. In 1992, he and his son, David, an architect and potter, had a father-son show at the Field Gallery.

In recent days, Bob has been busily painting acrylics of favorite Island woodland and waterfront sites for his friends and neighbors.

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