

May 20, 2019

BEGINNINGS

At almost 68 years old, I guess I was ready for a new challenge...

I recently accepted a new role as live-in House Director for my college fraternity, Alpha Delta Phi at Miami University in Oxford Ohio. This past week was my first "trial by fire".

I arrived in Oxford on Friday afternoon to find the "Old House" in spectacular shape... well, the downstairs at least. It was clean, bright and welcoming. The front porch is one of the best venues in Oxford with a great view of the campus. The front rooms and the library are well appointed both in furnishings and artwork, including historical paintings and composites of the brothers from the most recent years.

The second floor and the rest of the house were another matter. Old House is a century home that has been reconfigured several times. I guess this time is my fault... they are rebuilding the Barn Room as my "suite" complete with a bathroom and kitchenette. I guess they are afraid of the old guy being with the young guys too much! So, the construction mess was all me...

I have some history with the Barn Room. When I moved into the house in the fall of 1970, the team of Rocky Atkinson, Tony Schaeffer, Jim "Nimmer" Brauenig and Ed Gardner (?) were in the process of converting the space with old barn wood and a full-length loft (which have since been outlawed at Miami). When the Bear (our affectionate term for my Dad) pulled up to the curb about 6 pm, he got out of his Lincoln and perused the scruffy, beer drinking group on the porch wearing flannel shirts and blue jeans (the official "uniform" of the day). He looked at me, looked back at them, deposited my bags on the tree lawn, said good luck, and drove away quickly. He didn't understand that they had been working hard all day. Too bad... as a woodworker he would have appreciated their good work.

The rest of the house showed much of the symptoms that afflict fraternities in the off season. The departing seniors had a farewell party without the benefit of cleaning up... to call it a mess would be generous. The rooms were in differing forms of disarray awaiting the incoming 30 guys who will live in this fall. But the kitchen was another matter.

Our house is in the process of re-initiating food service through a contract caterer. We will have 30 live-in and 20 out-of-house participants and we are utilizing a contract caterer to provide 14 meals per week. Quite an undertaking to re-construct a kitchen that has not been used in almost 20 years, bring it to serviceable levels and pass the stringent standards that the inspectors will enforce... more on that later. So as Stefan and I looked around, I was very happy that this particular task was not on my plate!

Brother Stefan Davis '71 is my "boss" and the perpetual head of the Alumni Council, the 9 man volunteer organization that manages the house and will employ me. Stefan was also President of the house in 1969 – 70, 2 years before I became President. When I became aware of the opportunity as House Director, I sent Stefan the following email...

Hi Stefan,

In the great Chuck Turner tradition, would you consider a retiree? If not, I won't waste anyone's time... but I am available and have some interesting qualifications. In addition to fraternity time, I have managed several businesses and worked as a Recruiter, Project Manager and Career Counselor. Would be interested in a discussion. Let me know. Thanks.

*Ross H. Wason, Sr.
Mi 73*

Chuck Turner was a Fraternity Brother from the Class of 1955 who actually lived in the house when I moved in. Chuck was recently divorced and became a great influence on me and all of us. He never told us what to do but he was always there for the discussion and did a great deal to improve our relations with and appreciation of Alumni. Lots of stories about Chuck but let's just say he was a great example for what I expected my role to be. Apparently, Stefan and the committee agreed.