

August 2019

## **LANDING IN OXFORD...CRASHING IN THE BELLTOWER**

The Move...

Kevin McKenzie is a professional mover, with the emphasis on Professional. We rented a U-Haul, loaded it with all my worldly goods in about an hour and 20 minutes. After a 4+ hour drive, we were met by 2 Undergrads, Elliot and Ian, who is also our House Manager. I can tell you that my old body was delighted to get their help as we unloaded in another hour. Then it was drop off the truck and back to Columbus to have Kevin picked up by friend Jim, and then back to Oxford by 8 pm! I was tired!

The “worst” part of the move was that my apartment was not ready, so my first move is spread out over 3 rooms in the house. I set up my computer and TV in the Executive Office in the Old House while my extremely heavy desk and most of my boxes and clothes are stashed around the corner in 2 new house rooms. I think it’s all going to fit eventually, with the possible exception of my outdoor chairs and table which are currently making a great addition to the side porch. It’s still 2 moves!

The house is a construction beehive with new sliding glass doors in the dining room, work progressing on the kitchen and, of course, the finishing touches for my “suite”. All the workmen have been pleasant and professional... and the wishes of “good luck” for my new role keep coming.

The most impressive part of the house reconstruction is Stefan. He leads the charge, answers all the challenges, and has been a warrior in dealing with the intensive bureaucratic oversight (so tempted to write “overreach”!) of the City and County Health Departments. He remains calm, focused and hopeful.

That last word reflects the massive risk being faced by the Alumni Council. They are spending well over \$200,000 of borrowed money to make the house ready for this year’s class. They are betting that we can buck the trend of Undergrads trashing the places they live. Stefan also owns an off-campus rental and I have heard multiple horror stories about damages and rampant destruction of facilities. This kind of brings my new role into sharp focus...

An interesting interaction... I’ve been crashing in the Bell Tower (one of the coolest rooms in the house, and probably in Oxford), primarily because of the central air conditioning in the Old House. This morning I was awakened by Jackson, an undergrad who lived in the room last year. While apologizing profusely for waking me (a good sign!) he mentioned that he just wanted to “make sure my TV is still here”.

This comment fascinates me. First it indicates a lack of faith in the security of the house. We have 24-hour surveillance and locks everywhere, but he still had the concern. But more interesting, his comment reinforces the transitory nature of the relationship with the house and the college experience. This is to be expected in some ways... but it strikes me that this is part of the problem with how Undergrads treat their surroundings.

Their view is short term. They lack commitment to their surroundings because they know they will be gone. There is an old expression usually attributed to the Irish... “We’re not here for a long time so we are here for a good time!” And in the case of college students, that seems to translate to not being concerned with their surroundings. So that’s part of the challenge... how to make this House feel like Home, how to make them invest in the present and to see the future as ROI... return on investment!

