

FIRST WEEK, HELL WEEK

August 30, 2020

Have you ever been at a time where things were going so well it made you paranoid?
When you felt so good that you thought there was something just waiting to go wrong?

Well that's pretty close to how I felt as we completed move in, aka "Ross' Hell Week(s)"! Hell Week is an old phrase that was used when pledges were required to live in the House for a week of tests, trials and torment. Well that's how the move in period felt for me!

Just as last year we had a bunch of things that were getting done at the same time. We had to expedite our order of 5 bunk beds to make sure we had enough for the 35 guys moving in... and then get them built! We had to work around schedules for the new carpet in the 2nd and 3rd floor hallways. And after delays in decision making, our vendor for the gorgeous new "Nature Stone" basement floor started work at the same time that guys were moving in! Take a look at the attached pictures to see that result!

Now add to that the issues surrounding the strange closing to last semester and the even stranger opening for this one and you've got some idea of the stress and pressure. We allowed guys to leave some of their stuff in the House after last year with the assumption they would be out by Saturday August 8th because this year's crew would start moving in on Sunday the 9h! Needless to say, there were some complications... most of last year's crew were out, but the rest made for a lot of shuffling!

So even with all this activity and 35 sets of guys and their families moving in, we managed to survive. There were some really long and intense days... at one point in week 2, I told the guys "I'm done" at about 4:30 and went to my room and closed the door... not my usual mode, but I was exhausted!

I do have to give a great amount of credit to a couple people. House President Drew has been a warrior in both helping out (he personally finished building our new picnic tables... see attached pics) and keeping the guys notified and engaged. New House Manager Josh has done a great job at pushing people to stay ahead of the cleaning and recycling... he's also organized the complete Weekly Cleaning schedule to assure everyone in the House takes their turns. And there are a bunch of guys who already stand out as willing to jump in... as well as just a couple who I can count on to run and hide when there is work to be done... situation normal!

But special recognition goes to my Oxford buddy John (a middle school teacher) who was invaluable in helping us figure out how to assemble bunk beds and the picnic tables. I've always said that my older and not as good-looking brother Moose got all the mechanical ability... and I got the hair! (Moose was into serious comb over for years!) When it came to assembling bunk beds and picnic tables, I was really good at providing tools and encouragement... but without John's help they never would have gotten done! Owe him a large number of beers!

When the dust settled, classes and meal service started on schedule on August 17. It's a bit strange to have the guys staying in the house instead of running to classes. On any given day we'll have 3 or 4 guys in the Library and each living room streaming their classes... so far we are holding to our goal of keeping the Library for studying! King Library and the Rec both offer guys a chance to get out and about (and give me a chance to play pickleball). But other than a couple houses where upper class brothers live and uptown restaurants (that close at 10 pm) the campus is deserted. The House is definitely Home!

A big part of that feeling is our wonderful Chef Jackie! In spite of all the challenges and restrictions of this strange semester, one of the joys of re-opening this fall was welcoming Jackie back to her kitchen! She was so eager to be back she was almost giddy... and the guys really appreciate her and the great meals she provides!

Of course, nothing is easy! There are now 7 Frat Houses in Oxford that created a whole new level of Upper Crust management to complicate her life... add to that the restrictions required by Covid (individually packaged meals and some serving rules) and a kitchen that can get to the high 90's during the recent heat wave and she deserves a medal! We're working on that heat problem!

So we're settling into a routine during this abnormally normal year. We passed our fire and county health department inspections with flying colors... I think it helped when I took the Health Inspector's temperature and offered him hand sanitizer as soon as he walked in the door!

Now we'll just have to wait and see if the good times roll... stay tuned!