

Notes and Anecdotes

December 2021

Been a while since I did one of these... seems like the end of the semester is a good time!

The semester kind of ended with a whimper. The last week of classes after the Thanksgiving break was followed by a really quiet Finals Weeks, accented by a couple celebrations when they were done. But even those events were largely “out of House” as has become the norm. I was a bit disappointed at how guys kind of forgot that there were chores to do... on the other hand they were very generous in their holiday bonus for Jackie (matched by Alum Council, btw). At any rate, it’s Sunday morning, the last couple guys are leaving, and the parade of cleaning and repairs are about to begin.

We had a BLOH (old term... Brother living out of House) come to our last Chapter meeting to discuss how his class felt a “disconnect” from the guys in the House. There is always some tension between classes and when we turn over most of the guys living in every year there is a tendency towards “tribalism”. But it led to an interesting discussion of separation and the difficulty of building a cohesive group in different premises. Another piece is the difficulty Senior Brothers have in separating from the 4 years that are generally known as “the best years of your life”... this explains the old (and hopefully “defunct”) tradition of trashing the House. We replaced that last year with a graduation reception, hosted by the parents. As George Washington says in “Hamilton” ... “teach them how to say goodbye”.

We have been working hard at revising our New Member Education program (NME or “pledging” to use the archaic term) to meet ever stricter University and societal requirements. We’ve had great meetings that have included Alums and set some positive goals and activities for team building replacing “traditional” behaviors that were way too close to violating new standards like “Collin’s Law”. We need to stay vigilant, and we have good House leadership that will be working hard to make it a positive experience for all... stay tuned!

I generally try hard not to talk too much at Chapter... OK, they are used to “Ross’ Rants” where I try to hit the most current needs for improving the House. But the combination of the NME and the usual mid-semester malaise that leaves the House needing better attention got me on my soapbox. As near as I can remember, here is what I said (or wanted to say):

“I have a job description... I think I read it once and it’s like most... some specific stuff, dates I need to be here and the inevitable ‘other duties as assigned’. When I got here, I asked Stefan and Rocco what my job really was... they replied, ‘Figure it out’. But I have realized that my job description is really very simple... ‘Protect this House’. And it’s important that you (actives) understand it’s not to protect this House FROM you... it’s protect this House FOR you and for all those who have come before and will come after.

That's why I talk about taking out the trash. That's why I suggest turning the music down on the patio. That's why I bitch about the poker players not cleaning up after their game. That's why I make sure the yard is clear every morning. That's why we have been working so hard at creating a new NME that does not allow selfish and stupid "abuse" of new members. And that's why I make the same comment in Circle at the end of Chapter every week... 'Let's be careful out there!'

I really don't like being a bitch... wish I never had to do so. But in the final analysis, this place is where you hopefully make your transition to manhood, where you learn about yourself and develop lifelong friendships, and where you contribute to a tradition larger than yourself. And that's why I hope you understand my role and you agree with me... let's protect this House."

I realized recently that in the 60+ years that Alpha Delta Phi has occupied this House, I have been the longest-term resident! At 3 years as an Undergrad and 29 months as a House Director, I'm practically permanent! With a little luck, I'll finish the record at almost 7 years... amazing.

Along with that thought, I also realized that I am homeless, but not House-less. Now "homeless" is not as bad a thing as the initial thought... when I do leave this House, I have lots of options, especially if I would just start acting my age! And I'm pretty sure I can find Pickleball in Cleveland! But I must admit that the "walking life" in Oxford is a tempting option... just couldn't afford student rental rates! Time will tell... and I ain't ready to go yet!

PS... Just found out that a good friend and golfing buddy contracted Covid. Dan is healthy and 10 years younger than me, but it strikes me as strange that he would get it! He's been working from home for more than a year, helps look after his grandchildren, and is generally careful and fastidious in his personal habits! Compare that to me... I live with 30+ 19-20 year old boys who not only think they are invincible, they are less than cautious! While I had a pretty bad bout of the flu in November, I continue to test negative for Covid. Just goes to show that there's no telling what will come next... so we hope for the best and keep moving. As Satchell Paige put it, "Don't look back, something might be gaining on you!"