

The Apartments

Upon returning from our honeymoon Jeannette and I rented our first apartment for the summer in the attic of my previous landlady where I had previously lived in a basement apartment. Ronn Umphreys and Dannie Clarida had been my roommates there for the previous 3 years. I finished my B.S. in Physics in the summer of '65 and then began a graduate program while waiting for the Air Force to accept my application to become an officer. I taught 4 undergraduate physics labs each week under a graduate teaching assistantship and took a full load of graduate physics courses myself.

Jeannette took a nursing position at the Phelps County retirement hospital in Rolla where she cared for indigent and mentally ill patients. The stories she told about her patients were hard to believe. One of her patients was so confused she would completely disrobe during the night and tear her sheets into strips by morning.

At the end of the first summer of married life Jeannette and I took a weekend canoe trip with some friends of ours, Larry and Sherry Massey. They had gotten married the week after us near St. Louis as well. Sherry was a friend of Jeannette's and an RN. Larry was a mechanical engineering student at Rolla who I knew slightly. Jeannette and Sherry had driven from St. Louis several times the previous year to visit us before we were married. Late in August we agree with Larry and Sherry to camp out one night as we canoed the Meramec River near Onondaga Cave for about 20 miles. We experienced warm, pleasant days on the slowly meandering river, camping on sand bars, preparing meals over a campfire, and swimming in sheltered pools in shady spots as we floated through the woods. From time to time we would find rope swings hanging from trees over the river and stop to plunge into the water like children. Once, our canoes almost overturned as we tried to go under an overhanging log and became entangled in the brush. Canoeing slowly down a lazy river that summer is one of my favorite memories of summers in Missouri. Even the mosquitoes weren't too bad. It would have probably been more pleasant if I hadn't taking Vicodin to kill the pain from having three wisdom teeth removed the day before we left on the trip.

We moved to our second apartment on the other side of campus in September. It was a basement apartment near the main route for automobile and pedestrian traffic to campus. Students continuously walked past the entrance and back yard of our apartment. One day as I was coming home from class I noticed students laughing as they passed me coming from the direction of our apartment. I walked to the door of our apartment and saw Jeannette in the back yard hanging a load of wash on the clothes line. She was standing on a chair barely able to reach the line above her, propped up by poles which keep the clothes from touching the ground. Carefully I walked over and lowered the lines to where she could reach them from the ground. She told me later that the poles on her mother's clothes lines had always been placed to allow her to reach them from the ground without any adjustments. She hadn't realized they could be moved.

Our apartment had only a small kitchen, a small dining room, a bedroom, and a tiny bathroom, but it was large enough to have about a half dozen of our friends over for a Christmas party. Both my roommates and another member of the BSU, Gary Achenbach, had gotten married the same summer as us and crammed into our apartment with their wives. It was a tight, but enjoyable last get-together before we all scattered to the four winds to graduate school and military service. Viet Nam was in full swing and all of us had military obligations to fulfill.

We rented our third apartment while I was attending St. Louis University. It was also a small one-bedroom apartment with a living room and a swimming pool. The main thing I remember about this apartment was being locked out of it and spending several hours sitting on the floor of the hall outside the door waiting for Jeannette to let me in. I don't remember the details of the incident except to say that I had insulted Jeannette in some way and she decided to let me think about it for a while. In the early days of our marriage Jeannette was very feisty. If I irritated her in some way she would hit me in the stomach or on the shoulder. And, it wasn't a love tap—it hurt. She is one quarter Italian and I think this was her Italian side coming out. She is still Italian, but her style of retaliation is now more sophisticated.

Our fourth apartment was provided by the Air Force at Scott Air Force Base near Belleville, Illinois. It was a larger, two-bedroom apartment, but very basic. The floors were asphalt tile and the view through the back window was of an

Illinois corn field. I had partly joined the Air Force to see the World but was assigned to a base less than 50-miles from home. Not only that, for three years we experienced mid-west summers and winters and cornfields, rather than exotic tropical vistas as we had hoped.

Our fifth apartment was another one-bedroom rental while I was on temporary duty to Travis Air Force base to conduct fog dispersal research. Jeannette and I drove to California with Michelle—who had been born by then—and rented an apartment off base in Fairfield, California. I was not allowed to stay in the Visiting Officers Quarters with a family and was not paid for the extra expense of renting the apartment for my family. But, it was worth the extra expense to have my family with me for the three months I was there. This apartment was our first in a California stucco building with no insulation that allowed the heat to escape and the street noise to enter easily.

We rented our sixth and final apartment at the married students housing complex during the first summer at Colorado State University. It was a two-bedroom town house built four-to-a-unit in a maze of buildings. There were so many children in the *village* that it was like living in a daycare center. The noise was perpetual from about 10 in the morning until 8 o'clock at night. The units had no air conditioning and radiated heat until almost midnight most afternoons and evenings. Fortunately, we were able to leave these apartments and rent a home in September for the next four years.

Apartments are a necessary part of early life for most families until better-paying jobs allow for the purchase of a house. They provide experiences not found in more private living arrangements. But, a home with less noise, more privacy, more room, and personal ownership certainly is a preferable way to live. Unfortunately, the trend in the U.S. economy and societal ethics seem to be driving our society to less private ownership and more compact life styles. I hope my grandchildren will not be forced to live most of their lives in an apartment but will eventually be able to afford a home of their own.