

# Memories of the PR House

by

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**In** 1978 I saw *National Lampoon's Animal House*. I thought it was hilarious and in many ways true as I experienced the Greek culture on fraternity row. But that isn't the house I'm thinking of. The dwelling I have in mind was an old — once lovely — white two story frame home on a street just minutes away from the NC State University Memorial Belltower. The two story structure was built on huge rough timber set upon a partial basement foundation. The first level was very sturdy, typical of early 20th Century homes, it had a living area on one side and a parlor and formal dining room on the other. A foyer, staircase and hall separated each side on the first level. Since the property had been converted into a rental for students, the parlor and dining room had become bedrooms. The living room was perfect for meetings or entertainment. Upstairs the rooms in the corners were divided into four large bedrooms. Another set of steps lead to the attic where there was yet another bedroom. All the bedrooms except for the attic accommodated two—four students with ease. The first and second levels had a full bath. The kitchen was upstairs built upon the ceiling of a covered back porch. A narrow staircase from the closed in back porch led to the kitchen above. The eat-in kitchen was more than enough to support the residents' cooking needs. Those of us with cars parked in back where I envisioned there was once a beautiful yard. Parking in the front was permitted along the curb, however, most of us preferred the service road entrance into the backyard. The house was filled with Pershing Riflemen (PR), members of Company L — 4th Regiment of the national society. The usual full-time compliment was a dozen plus riflemen. Pooling our monies, the PRs were self-sufficient and maintained a civil existence together from month to month, semester to semester.

**Using** the living room as a meeting hall or conference center, the PRs organized themselves to establish priorities that brought order and thus stability to the house. Someone was designated to collect our rental payments and to pay the landlord, another to pay utilities, and a kitchen steward to secure the food. Another looked after the grounds and organized work details and so on. Everyone living in the PR house had a job. That was the unwritten agreement, everyone would share in the upkeep.

**Food** has a way of bringing people together. The kitchen was fully equipped. At first we used it to store our treats and perishables, but soon several of our ladyfriends organized a Friday night dinner that quickly became a standing tradition. They provided a list of groceries which we would purchase and store away during the school week. The menu was mostly always a surprise. Having eaten short order and fast food during the school week, the anticipation of a sit-down dinner was the talk of the day. After classes on Friday the ladies would rendezvous at the house and quickly put the kitchen area off limits to the PRs. The food aromas soon filled the halls and stairways. This old house that was once a beautiful home for a family was now hosting

the PRs and their girlfriends in a splendid manner all over again. The dinners on Fridays were awesome. Nothing beats homemade food, the ladies were certainly talented. If one of the cooks mentioned how they could better prepare a menu item, it magically appeared in the kitchen. The women were given what they needed. That's how much they were appreciated. The men gladly cleaned and put away the pots and pans and all the flatware and dishes. Our morale was high.

**I've** always maintained that the chief reason for harmony in the PR house can be traced back to the fraternal friendship that was shared among its occupants. Each man had been initiated into a military society — the Pershing Rifles — that fostered the attributes of civility and understanding of other services. Aside from mutual respect, and the many virtues of our fraternity, the girlfriends brought cheer and happiness into our abode. Their visits made us want to keep the inside organized and clean. We welcomed the advisors assigned to liaison between the ROTC departments and the PRs. In short, we were always “on parade” and welcomed visitors and guests. The doors were never locked as someone was always around.

**Since** the PR house was in a residential neighborhood and near the university, we were required to maintain the grounds. Our home was not new, therefore, mature bulbs and shrubs required thinning and pruning. Trees lined the property. Grass grew on the terraced front lawn and sides. In the spring our work parties policed up winter debris, removed the weeds from the flower beds, trimmed the shrubs and began regularly mowing the grass. There was never a hint of resistance. Scheduling details were problematic, so most of the outside work was accomplished on weekends. Everyone available pitched in and made short work of the chores. It was good exercise that worked up a thirst for a cold beer.

**Most** of us participated as members of the Marching Sergeants — the fancy drill team. We practiced many hours at our craft and became confident performing before the public. This alone created bonding as we worked hard to perfect our movements. Our public performances were many, especially through the holidays, but we were always critical of ourselves and trained for excellence. It would pay off during the spring competition. To belong to an award winning drill team and have a haven retreat was, I believe, one of the reasons why many of us have remained in contact.

**The** PR house was a fraternity house. Though the house was a rental, it was treated with care and respect. The occupants were all contracted cadets or scholarship cadets. Everyone was focused on the prize, earning a degree and receiving a commission in the U.S. Army or Air Force.

Notes:

1. Joe Harris was initiated into L-4 of the National Society of Pershing Rifles in 1968. He became a member of the Marching Sergeants and lived in the PR House his junior year (1970–1971).
2. Joe serves as the Director of Administration for the L-4 Alumni Association, Inc.