

A Happy Army Home

After 27 years of military service, I retired for the first time in 1993. For the last eight years of my career, from 1985-1993, I was stationed at WRAMC - and even better, my family and I were lucky enough to live on Walter Reed's installation for that time, in Qtrs. #12 on 15th Street.



The old "four-square" was in a well-hidden little enclave, across the circle and up the azalea-heavy hill from Delano Hall. I was the lowest-ranking officer living on post - a Major when we moved in. On weekends, without all the cars, it was like living on a private estate where children roamed ad lib. Which they did, with our dog Sasha - a Great Pyrenees, who when she escaped from our house headed to the succulent trash cans at the Abrams Hall NCO Club. I got more than one phone call from the MPs, "MAJ Alden, we have your dog - - Again!"

For my children and for me, an Army Brat, this was the house we lived in longer than anywhere else in our lives to date. It was truly home.

Fast-forward to 2008, fifteen years post-retirement, when I was offered a somewhat unusual opportunity to return to active duty, so who could resist? Not me. I served another three-plus years as a Nurse Case Manager at the Warrior Transition Unit in Bamberg, Germany - returning to the US in December 2011, re-retiring in February 2012. While I knew WRAMC had been BRAC'd, much to my dismay, disbelief and through persistent denial, I never thought MY house and home would be part of that.

Earlier this year I asked my former boss, WRS president COL (Ret.) Janet Southby, about two things: could I get blueprints for our house and what was the fate of The Memorial Chapel where my sons served as altar boys and where the older one was married in 2004?

She referred me to COL (Ret.) John Pierce, the Society's historian, who in turn referred me to COL (Ret.) Randy Treiber, still working at WRAMC, who in turn referred me to Mr. Jason Short. That sounds like buck-passing, but it was the best thing ever. Mr. Short not only had files on the original blueprints, but also for later renovations that made our house what it was when we were there. And by the way, it was not perfect: steam/radiator heat, no A/C, itty-bitty closets, ancient bathrooms, warped floors, and leaky windows in summer and winter. He sent them to me in June 2012.

Both of my sons have expressed interest in building that house again, if and when they have the means and land to do so. When I retired it was to Harpers Ferry WV, and we often talked about how well that house would fit into such an historic area. If we could have, we would have loaded it up on a tractor-trailer and moved it up over interstates, bridges, and byways. Because of the Walter Reed Society, I will be able to send my sons the blueprints to our one and only home from their childhoods. How wonderful a gift and legacy is that from one Army Brat to her children?

Now ... about The Memorial Chapel ...

Sharon L. (Sam) Stanley-Alden
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[Historical Note: Construction Date(s): c. 1918; purchased July 1920; alterations c. 1933 south façade enclosed porch with double hung windows; moved c.1954 This house was annexed, originally existing outside the post in the adjoining residential subdivision . It was relocated from the current site of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology prior to 1955.]