

MOVING STORIES



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Introduction

Once upon a time, long long ago, when our new home was still rising from the ground, the Old Grace Library Committee was sitting around Nicola Schaefer's ample kitchen on Harvard Avenue. She had just served us one of her brilliant lunches and we were getting down to the business of dreaming up library-related projects. One of us piped up, "What about putting together a book of residents' stories about moving into the co-op? We can call it Moving Stories!"

And who doesn't like a good double entendre?

It took a while for our idea to grow into this book, as each of us settled in and began learning what it means to live co-operatively. Now, with two years of co-op life under our belts, we're happy to share Moving Stories, true tales of the trials, tribulations and joys of moving into the Old Grace Housing Co-op in the spring of 2018.

We hope you enjoy them!

Francene Adelman, Alex Merrill, and Nicola Schaefer

March 2020

Acknowledgments

We want to recognize the efforts of all the residents who participated in the making of Moving Stories. Thank you for sharing your words and photos and artwork. Thank you for sharing your memories and your imagination. And thank you to the editors and proofreaders and those cheerful, insistent ones who prodded us along when our attention and energy lagged behind our bright ideas.

We especially want to thank Doug Smith for all the time, effort and expertise he has donated to designing this book and making it look lovely.

Drawings and Collages

Bob Haverluck: Frontispiece, 44

Steve Snyder: 28–29

Photographs and Illustrations

Francene Adelman: Cover, 3, 12, 35, 43

Margaret: 1

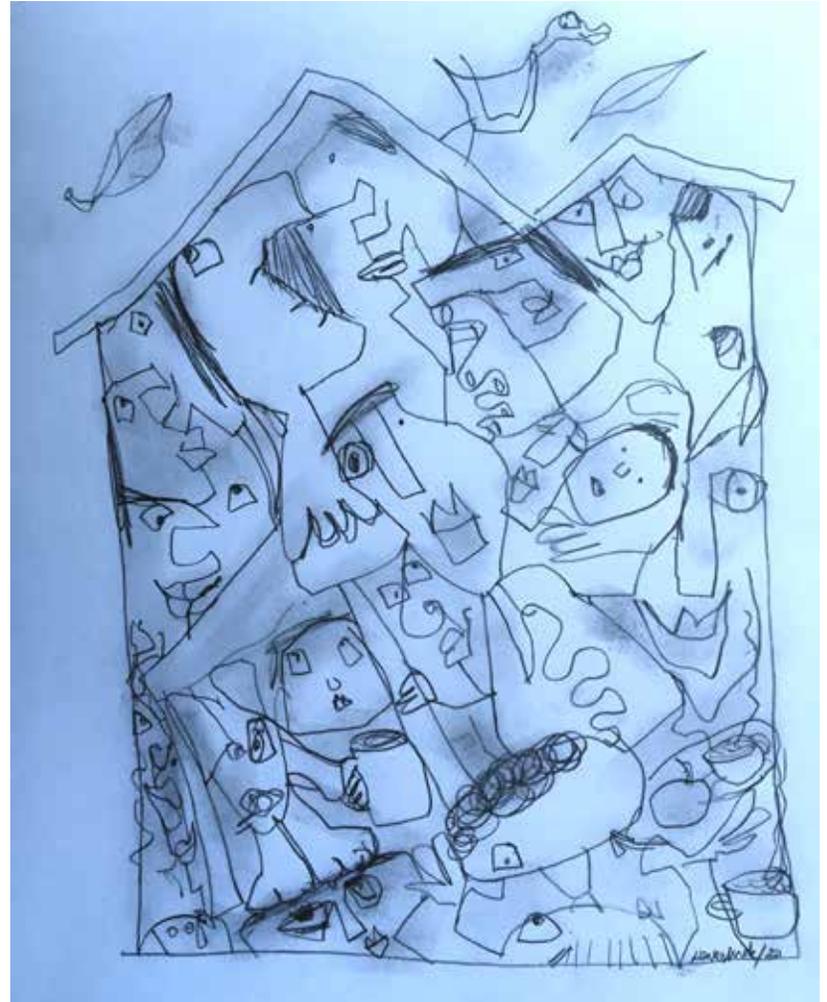
Mary Rose Dela Cruz: 16

Alex Merrill: 22, 27

Prairie Architects: 56

Doug Smith: 9

Bonnie Thiessen: 19



Bob Haverluck

Moving in: How hard can it be?

Sandra Hardy

When, in 2012, a small group of people came together to see if it would be possible to build some form of co-operative housing on the site of the former Grace Hospital, they knew they were up against many challenges. They knew it would be difficult to get land, members, money, and a common vision. There were many times when they thought these problems were insurmountable. For years none of us thought much about the difficulties we would face at



move-in. If we ever had a building to move into, moving in would be simple. A few trucks pull up, furniture is unpacked, and hey, presto, life goes on. We were so very naïve.

The move-in was staggered, staggering, and challenging. By the time the move-in took place, we did have a volunteer team that organized many aspects of the job and eased many of the bumps. But that said, it was a bumpy ride that served to bring us all a little closer together.

March 21 and we spring forward

On March 20, 2018, after months of delays, anxiety and dashed hopes, the City of Winnipeg issued Old Grace House Co-op an Interim Occupancy Permit. This permit allowed occupancy of 53 of 60 suites in the Arlington building, but not the use of the Common Room, the laundry room, the third-floor roof deck, or any balconies or porches. The first residents began to move in the following day: March 21.

A second Interim Occupancy Permit was issued on April 27. It allowed access to the remaining seven suites, the laundry room, and the Common Room. By then, 40 households had moved in. The rest had moved in by late July.

Rites of passage

Members were moving into a construction zone, surrounded by a sea of ice, water, and mud. Wheelchair users faced a

precarious journey over plywood panels from the loading zone to the front door.

The building and grounds were overrun with tradespeople, movers, delivery staff, and, it soon appeared, desperadoes. Doors were frequently left unlocked or propped open. As a result, residents organized a team to check the doors each evening to ensure the safety of residents—a practice that has been expanded and continues to this day.



Residents were soon self-organizing and co-operating amongst themselves. A crew regularly picked up the litter left by construction, both on the site and on the surrounding boulevards. Others helped each other out with laundry until the

common laundry became available, passed along moving boxes to those who hadn't yet moved, and offered many other kinds of mutual assistance. Facilitation of the move-in was a mammoth volunteer task, as were organizing the suite inspections, collecting all the necessary documentation, and issuing keys.

Initially the parking lot was filled with the contractor's equipment, materials, and garbage bin. By April, residents were able to park in the lot on a scramble basis, though many continued to park on the street or made alternate parking arrangements.

The City of Winnipeg declined to pick up garbage or recycling as the property was a construction zone. Members responded by driving carloads and little red truckloads of recycling and broken-down boxes to recycling depots. A private company had to be hired to remove garbage until June, when the City began its garbage pickup. City recycling pickup did not begin until October, by which time residents had also organized a composting project.

The deficiency room

Construction on the main building continued until the fall. Many deficiencies were identified as residents started making use of their suites and the common areas.

The meeting room became the "deficiency room." For months the walls were covered with flip chart paper on which

volunteers recorded issues for the contractor, the architect, and the building committee.

The company installing the siding and eavestroughs experienced scheduling problems and labour issues. The work dragged on for months with heavy equipment left in the courtyard, limited attention to boulevard tree care, and carelessness about securing their equipment and supplies. On one occasion, a gasoline can was left behind in the courtyard when workers left for the weekend.

Many issues were fairly minor, and easily addressed. Others took much longer to resolve. Unexpected fire and other alarms took several weeks to resolve. An unseasonable heat wave in April quickly highlighted issues with the air conditioning, some of which were not resolved until late June. The laundry room ventilation proved a very complex issue that was not fully resolved until well into 2019.

Construction and landscaping continued throughout the summer and fall, with the final Occupancy Permit being issued on October 2018. It was not until this point that residents had access to their balconies and porches, and could move their outdoor furnishings from the basement, where they had been stored for six months.

Creating common areas and services

While members were moving into their suites, considerable volunteer effort went into setting up the common areas and common services.

- The office was set up and staffed part time with volunteers and a DSI Tandem representative. (DSI Tandem was our long serving, long suffering co-op development consulting firm.)
- The library committee installed and painted the shelves and filled them with donated books.
- The intercom was programmed with resident phone numbers.
- Residents re-upholstered the four dozen stacking chairs that had been previously stripped of their upholstery, cleaned, and temporarily stored offsite.
- The WiBand internet service was set up and many members took advantage of the low-cost option it provided.
- The plant committee placed dozens of donated plants, containers and plant stands.
- The art committee started planning the placement of donated art.
- The guest rooms were furnished and equipped through member donations.

- The kitchen was equipped, largely by donation.
- The co-op fitness room was set up and equipped, again largely by donation.

In June members began to make use of the Common Room. We held our first member meeting in our own building on June 12, 2018. A week later, we held our first on-site potluck dinner. By mid-August, the Common Room soft seating (obtained at substantial discount from local manufacturer EQ3) was in place, as was the courtyard paving and plantings (only the maple grove was still to come).

Theft and loss

Less pleasant things were happening as well. In a string of break-ins from early May through mid-July thieves stole bicycles, computers, and electrical wire, and damaged many doors and door handles. Significant effort went into improving security: door handles were replaced, deadlocks added to most common rooms, door frames strengthened, an office safe in a secure angle iron framework was installed. For a period it was necessary to hire overnight security guards.

Some suite turnover started almost immediately, as some members never moved in or found co-op life not for them. An unusual odour in one suite required the services of restoration companies over several months, and ultimately led to the occupants of the suite leaving the co-op. The delayed closing

in of the co-op's eaves provided several families of pigeons with hidden roosting places; they continue to visit the building looking for nesting opportunities. A workman broke a sprinkler in one of the four-bedroom suites, causing quite a bit of damage. Fortunately, the deluge was loosed before the suite was occupied.

Storage lockers were unavailable to residents until August, a combination of a supplier's failure to order them in time and difficulty in finding a new installer.

Behind the scenes work

The work of the OGHC project team continued into 2019. Construction meetings were held bi-weekly until mid-December 2018. Another 20 Change Orders (involving adjustments to the building as required by the City or to rectify problems) needed to be designed, priced, and implemented after initial occupancy.

Members produced a steady series of emails, newsletters, bulletins and updates as well as website enhancements, an online calendar and room-rental system, and an electronic member forum.

Negotiations with the contractor and architect over costs continued throughout, as did ongoing cost scrutiny and financial reporting. The fundraising committee continued to raise funds to offset share prices for very low-income households and seek out grants and other sources of funding.

It was feared that delays in construction would lead to a lengthy and costly delay in the co-op's receiving the Manitoba

government's \$768,000 Rental Construction Tax Credit. Rather than see this happen, the co-op changed its fiscal year end from March 31 to December 31, allowing it to apply for the credit nine months earlier than would otherwise have been possible.



Phase II—The Townhouses

Throughout this period, planning and construction continued on the Phase II townhouses. The Financial Assistance Agreement with the Province for this development was not signed until March 27, 2018, with the construction meetings commencing the following week. By mid-April, all townhouses had been allocated and the future residents offered a meet-and-greet session and tour of an empty four-bedroom suite in the completed development.

Pile driving for Phase II commenced on April 30, 2018, and construction continued rapidly until mid-December, when all four households moved in. For their moves, the building was complete and the deficiencies comparatively few.

And then we were 64.

Elegy for a wood stove

Francene Adelman

Moving to the City from our Country residence of 40 years into the brand new, LEED-rated, energy efficient co-op complex heated by electricity was a daunting and alienating prospect, and its impact was exacerbated by the news that our trusty wood stove and the system that vented its smokey byproducts through our brick chimney to the outdoors, was defunct.

“It failed the test,” we were told by efficient Jim, the WETT* inspector who authorized the safety of wood stoves. The beautiful, black 35-year-old Lakewood wood stove situated in the living room of our country home had a small fissure on its backside. “Too dangerous to use,” he said. “Plus the chimney liner is not up to safety standards for your insurance.”

I preferred to think of it as a case of wood stove “wabi-sabi,” nothing a patch of welded metal couldn’t cover up. But Jim’s damning report haunted us. On May 10, 2017, a week before we planned to list our house “For Sale,” we hauled the Lakewood out



to the woodshed to sit alongside the smug and jeering firewood, where she would be picked up by the local “Scrap Metal Guys.”

For millennia, the hearth has been the centre of domestic life. Cicero wrote: *“Nullus est locus domestica sede jucundior.”* (There is no place more delightful than one’s own fireside.) As well as heating our house, and providing a stovetop for the tea kettle, our wood heater was a watching post to wait for friends and family to arrive through stormy weather, a place to dry off wet woolen mitts, or just a spot to think about today’s events and tomorrow’s dreams while warming cold hands.

For days following the removal of the stove, I was drawn to the empty spot on the hearth tiles where the stove had sat. Every day, I walked up to the empty space expecting to rest against the cool metal and stare mindlessly through the nearby window. It took days to learn new responses to the emptiness.

We eventually purchased a brand new “made-in-Manitoba” KOZI heater with a double-insulated stainless-steel chimney, choosing to spend money that we knew we would never see the benefits of. We believed our rustic home in the woods would be bereft of its unique identity without a wood stove, so decided to make the purchase as a lure to prospective buyers who might share those same preferences and values. It was awful, this new black lump of steel, as it sat smugly all summer, waiting to earn its keep. Potential urbanite homebuyers would stare at it blankly, perhaps thinking to themselves, “First thing that goes!” while outwardly saying, “Nice Stove,” or worse yet, “Hmm.”

October’s move-in date came and went and we learned it would be spring before our new home at the co-op would be ready. One chilly fall day, Jack brought in an armload of poplar kindling, strategically placed it in the KOZI and tossed in a match. Acrid “new-paint smell” filled the room and KOZI sputtered into existence. Days and months passed, snow fell ... and KOZI lived up to her namesake.

She was not perfect, but she would do. It WOULD be easy to leave her behind. And, yes, cutting and stacking wood this year was a little harder on the back than other years.

One day in February, my new co-op friend Nicola gleefully showed me her “flick-of-the-remote” electric surrogate fireplace stove. A possibility for our new co-op apartment. And ... I discovered that YouTube has a setting with a Christmas holiday

fireplace that burns more efficiently and with less smokiness than even Nicola's heater.

Lady Lakewood served us well for 35 years. She was the heart(h) of our home in the Roseisle Hills. *Requiesce in Pace.*

*WETT refers to "Wood Energy Technology Transfer." This is a certification that insurance companies require for wood burning stove insurance to be purchased.

Catherine and I

Nicola Schaefer

My beautiful, inspiring, 58-year-old daughter Catherine has significant inconveniences with which to contend, including quadriplegia and lack of speech; thus she needs 24-hour assistance with every aspect of her life.

When she was 25 she moved from our family home into the ground floor of a house in Wolseley, where she lived—with assistance from our support agency, L'Avenir Cooperative—for 30 years. Then I heard about a plan to create a 60-unit, multi-generational, multi-ethnic, multi-income, multi-ability (wow!) housing co-operative just two blocks from Cath's current house. As her Substitute Decision Maker I signed her up immediately and booked a three-bedroom suite for her and her friend Louise—also a L'Avenir member and a wheelchair user.

In the ensuing months I became acquainted with the Old Grace Housing Co-op's Board members and was blown away by their imagination, enthusiasm, expertise and dedication. Catherine and I attended many planning meetings and met

other potential co-op dwellers. We were invariably greeted with warm good will and interest. It was an exciting time—so exciting that I booked a suite in the co-op myself!



Since the spring of 2018, Cath and I have lived in ground-floor suites mere steps apart. Hers is a carefully designed accessible one to accommodate her and Louise and also their team of assistants, who often tell me how much they like working with the ladies in the new environment.

Importantly, there are features of the co-op, such as a generous loading zone at the front entrance and two large elevators within,

that afford everyone easy access to the entire complex. After the confines of a house, Catherine especially appreciates roaming (OK, being roamed) around the corridors and meeting friends—plus she and Louise love attending the numerous concerts, films, parties and other events in the magnificent Common Room.

Cath and I lead separate lives but see one another whenever we want and are both thriving in this wonderfully welcoming, diversely populated intentional community.

What moved me

Bonnie Thiessen

Moving was the farthest thing from my mind in January 2015 when I placed my husband in a care home. Two and a half years earlier, we had moved across the country, back to Winnipeg from Vancouver Island, at the urging of our children. Abe's Alzheimer Disease was getting worse and they wanted to be able to support us. We found a beautiful condo—close to a park and beside the river with easy access to the trails. Our neighbours seemed like nice folk; most were friendly and greeted each other cheerfully when they met in an elevator or at the mailbox.

For the first two and a half years, everything seemed fine. I was quite busy caregiving and, until that cold day in January, I hadn't noticed anything amiss. But now, for the first time in a long, long time, I was on my own! All of a sudden, after living together for almost 53 years, I had to figure out how to make a life on my own.

What I realized, quite quickly, was that I needed a community. The first place I looked was to my neighbours in the condo.



Parents with young children got together from time to time and they seemed to be supportive of each other. So, I tried to get a couple of activities going. People were interested ... but they just didn't have time.

As a new board member, I became chairperson of a newly formed Welcoming Committee. I started putting up cheerful posters on our message boards. I also connected with the local Biz group and spearheaded a joint effort to spruce up our neighbourhood. It was quite successful—a number of

neighbours joined in. I maintained a relationship with the Biz group, but they eventually took over the initiative.

All of this helped, but the sense of community I was looking for remained elusive. There were probably many reasons for this. First, and perhaps foremost, we didn't really have space to gather. We tried to have gatherings a couple of times a year but only a small fraction of the residents could be in the room at one time. Another major factor, was, I think, that each of us had based our choice to live there on its physical properties—the location and amenities. For sure, this is usually how people decide where to live, but it certainly doesn't guarantee we'll have anything in common with our neighbours—no matter how nice they might be!

Just as these realizations were sinking in, I heard about Old Grace. I remember the first time I opened up the Old Grace Housing Co-operative webpage. It made my heart sing; I signed up immediately! I knew I had made the right decision when I got a call from the membership committee. Right away, we were talking about things that mattered, values we shared and the importance of community.

So, from the get go, I knew this was the place for me. I was overjoyed when I found out I had a unit. I paid the first half of my shares and began planning—and waiting for the day I'd move in. Then that summer, I got some devastating health news and I had to delay my second payment. The thought that I might not get to live in Old Grace highlighted, for me, how very much I

wanted to be there. The day I got the “all clear” I eagerly sent in my final shares and began waiting. That wasn't fun ... but it sure was worth it!

When I moved in at the end of March, with so many of us moving in at the same time, everyone seemed to get along. I never once heard anyone complaining or speaking unkindly. It was abundantly clear that each and every one of us had chosen to move to Old Grace because of our shared values and our support for ethical community living.

I am so glad I'm part of this community. I love the way we have our own space and our own time and, yet, just by walking down the hall or going to a common area we are among friends. I love the way we work together. Each of us using our skills and doing what we can. Together we have a diverse and amazingly competent community that enjoys living and working together—and making a difference in our world.

I have truly come home. Living amongst others who share so many of my values is exactly what I desired. It is all I had ever hoped for.



Beloved cactus thrives in its new home

Francene Adelman, Randa Stewart & Alex Merrill

Like many of us, this mighty Christmas cactus found its way into the Old Grace having enjoyed a full life among people with a strong social conscience. Born over 80 years ago, this *Schlumbergera* moved into our co-op courtesy of Dr. Suzanne Newman, who has been a powerful advocate for women's reproductive rights in Manitoba. The cactus had been in the family for eons, first with Suzanne's

sister's grand-mother-in-law, who had split it in two with an axe 40 years ago and shared half with Suzanne's mother, Esther. The plant used to bloom profusely two or three times a year, but basically stopped flowering when Esther moved into assisted living, where it faced a north window.

After Suzanne donated this revered cactus to our newly opened co-op in fall 2019, it stayed briefly in the Common Room, then moved to the Meeting Room where, with the blessing of the morning sun each day, it started yielding its famously extravagant deep pink blossoms, just in time for Christmas. When we sent Suzanne a photo of the cactus in bloom, we learned that her mom, at age 101, had just passed away. Sadly, Esther never got to see her beloved plant in bloom again.

Boys like numbers. Or so they say. And I believe it.

Glenn Morison

Alex and I agreed that although we had loved our home on Alloway Avenue very much and had countless memories, we were ready to move. Although we had our moments, and the never-ending downsizing was a little draining, the excitement of moving generally overcame any weight of leaving.

Our son, Matt was just happy that we were happy.

But it wasn't until the day after our furniture was moved out that we realized how attached to the house our daughter, Morag, was. After all the stuff was out, she choreographed a dance for each room in the house and recorded herself doing each one. She also wrote a beautiful memory for each room and posted it on Instagram.

A snippet on her post on the “yellow room”:

... eventually I moved to the next room over and spent my early teen years creating wall sized collages of the Jonas brothers from every crappy magazine I could get my hands on. After I tore that wall down once I

was through my “jo-bro” phase, I covered my walls in pictures of my friends and ticket stubs and hung leaves from the ceilings and my whole room looked like an eye spy (level: impossible.) I made lots of art in here and cried over break-ups and danced around with friends and danced around by myself (a lot.) There was a slumber party in pretty much every room of the house at various points in my childhood/teen years, but this room held quite a few of them. My parents were absolute champions who would let 5 giggling tweens stay up until 4 or 5 am, eating “chockie-poo” (oats with butter, cocoa, sugar and chocolate chips - I haven't had one in about 10 years but I remember it being pretty tasty?)

Only for moments did I wonder about the richness of this tribute; then I did the math:

- Alex had spent 16 ½ of her 60 years in that house—or 27.5% of her life.
- I had spent 16 ½ of my 58 in it—or 28.4% of my life.
- Matt, who moved out immediately after high school, had only spent 6 of his 28 years in the house—or 21.4% of his life.
- But for Morag, 22 Alloway was home for 16 of her 23 years. A whopping 69.6%.

It all made sense then.

Monstera Deliciosa

Francene Adelman

Early in the summer of 2018, Bonnie Thiessen’s daughter offered us her gorgeous philodendron, *Monstera Deliciosa*, as a gift for the Common Room. A few months after it was moved, we were all surprised to see that it had flowered with a lovely, large, creamy white sheathed jack-in-the-pulpit-type blossom which lasted several weeks. We discovered that this tropical plant flowers only once every 10 years, if we are lucky. When the petal/sheath dried up and fell off, a central upright spike remained, frequently drawing attention to its interesting appearance. Curiously, it remained on the plant, becoming part of it.

In December of 2019, a call came from one of our co-op residents, telling me there was “something” on the floor of the Common Room that might be a cactus ... and it looked really weird! Sure enough, it was weird! The spike from the blossom of the *Monstera* had fallen off with some force, so it appeared, and had danced its way across the floor to rest about five feet from the plant. It had broken into pieces, and upon closer



examination, was found to be mushy and smelly—but GOOD smelly! Like a pineapple, like a mango, and some might say like a banana. Research confirmed that the spike was “edible when ripe, and resembled a pineapple in both texture and taste.” Alex and I examined it closely, but decided to pass on eating it.

Perhaps some of us will be fortunate enough to see it blossom again in our lifetimes.



Steve Snyder

A Long Journey

By Hazo Abdulkareem

No one wants to leave their homelands, but we had to. I was born and lived in Iraq for 12 years. Back home it was fun, with all your family and friends and your culture. Then all of a sudden in 2012 my parents decided they wanted to move. They wanted to come to Canada to give us a better future and life.

It was pretty difficult to get all our things together. It was only a two-hour drive from our home in Sinjar* to Mosul to get our passports and paperwork done, but it took us two days. It was almost like a lifetime. A scary time—we had so many bombs in our way. You had to wear a hijab—you had to look like them, you couldn't look like Yazidis or they would kill you. It took us almost a week to get all the stuff done we needed so we could move.

First, we moved to Turkey where we had to stay for a year and a half before we could come here to Canada. My mother's father had some friends in Turkey so we first went to their house. He helped us find a home and find a job for me and my dad. I loved Turkey! It's the best place. I want to go back there again, just for

a trip. The country is very open. All the shops and restaurants, everything, is outdoors. But at the same time, it was a difficult time in our lives. We missed all our friends and family. Almost every night my sister and I would cry for hours, and my mom would calm us, and would say everything will be okay. In Turkey we didn't say that we were Yazidis because we were scared. The man who helped us was Muslim and he told us about safety. It's much different than here in Canada.

First homes in Canada

When we came to Winnipeg in 2014, we lived in the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council's Welcome Place for seven months. It was only one room, with seven of us. And then we moved to IRCOM [Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba Inc.]. Our life wasn't easy then but we just had to live with it. IRCOM was pretty small for us. Our family was eight then [Hazo and her family have welcomed a new baby brother since moving into the co-op], and there were three bedrooms, but we had to put all our stuff in one bedroom, so we had two bedrooms for us.

It was nice living at IRCOM, it's just the space that was difficult. They were so friendly there and they helped us through so many things. They had many programs there, youth and children's programs, my parents' school. Any paperwork that my dad needed to do he could take to them and they would help with it.

It was good, like here at the co-op, where all the volunteers help with anything.

Yazidi community here

When we got here there weren't very many Yazidis and people didn't know much about us. Now, after all that stuff that has happened to Yazidis, many people know who we are, so it's changed. Now Yazidis are all over the world. There are two families here that I knew from back home. The rest are new to me. My auntie and my uncle and some cousins were here before we came. That's how we knew we wanted to come to Winnipeg.

Yazidis spend a lot of time together here. We fast in December for three days and then have this big celebration. And for our New Year's in April there is a night when we don't sleep—we get together and eat traditional foods, dance, play games. And every Tuesday there is a program where all the kids get together and play and there's food.

Moving to the Old Grace

You can stay at IRCOM for three years. We had just a few months left there, so we were panicking about where we were going to find a house. Our community leader, Nafiya Naso, heard about the co-op and told us, "It is perfect for you, you can move there, it's close to schools and everything."

We were scared before we moved to the co-op. We heard that they don't have big families, so we wondered, "Hmm, are we going to be the only kids there?" At IRCOM there were so many newcomers with their kids, and we all knew each other. And my family is a big family, we can be noisy! When we go out and come home late, I just go, "Shh ... there are people sleeping here, we don't want to wake them up!"

But this co-op is very good for us, it's much bigger, with four bedrooms. The library is a big area, which is great for studying, and there are lots of other areas in the co-op where you can go and relax a bit. I like to talk to young people, to meet young people, yes, but I also like to learn from people older than me, people who saw a lot and did a lot.

I think co-ops are the best place to live. You guys are great. It's just an amazing place to live.

*Sinjar is a city in northern Iraq. In 2014, it was the site of the Sinjar massacre, the genocidal killing and abduction of thousands of Yazidi men, women and children by the Islamic terror group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).

My move

Leuba Franko

The movers my photographs scratched
Van Gogh valley and vines - the whole batch!
They denied I was right—
'Till I put up a fight;
They paid me ungraciously, natch!

* You can see Leuba's photos of France on the wall facing her apartment door, #41.



Ficus Benjaminia

Francene Adelman

This majestic fig tree living in the Common Room has thrived since moving to the co-op on the back of Hardo's somewhat decrepit red Ford Ranger, on one of the hottest days of the summer of 2018. The lovely tree was donated by Keith Oliver, a furniture designer and builder. Her home was Keith's studio/workshop in the ill-fated Jarvis Street Artists building which burned to the ground in late July 2019. *Ficus Benjaminia* is thrilled to live in the sunny Common Room, pre-emptively rescued from the fate that would have befallen her. We are thrilled to have her!

Falling lightly

By Alex Merrill

I'd be lying if I said it was easy to leave our big old rambling Wolseley home. In that old house our lives shifted in so many ways. That was where our kids grew up and we grew into our middle ages. Where we were when our mothers died. Where we started new jobs, half a dozen times. Where we discovered a passion for hosting rowdy theme parties honouring musical icons from Leonard Cohen to Nirvana. Where I tried learning bass but got that I was more about the treble—and bought my first uke. Where our son and his rock band practiced in our basement and, after graduation, moved into a Wolseley house rowdier than ours. Where our daughter graduated and left to travel the world.

But the Old Grace was almost ready and wasn't going to wait for us. We had to get a move on. Which meant selling the house, an ordeal that took us a year and a half. Anyone who's been through it knows the drill:

- 1) Culling.
- 2) Fixing the holes where the rain gets in. And the mice.

- 3) More culling.
- 4) Arguing about whether it's worth it to entirely re-sod the lawn (not if you're selling in November).
- 5) Culling again.
- 6) Fixing more holes—the ones you never saw before because they'd been covered up by the mounds of stuff you've culled, and yesterday you found new mouse dirt in the dining room.
- 7) Braving Ikea to buy stuff like matching pastel towels, curtains and flouncy bed dressings which you'd never buy if you weren't staging.
- 8) And finally, you're at it: the staging.

We were at #8: the house was gussied up and going on the market the next day. Sheri, our cleaning expert, came for the afternoon to apply the final sheen. We were both out while she worked and expected to arrive home to a glistening abode (where we'd skulk around on tiptoe until a buyer took it off our hands).

Glenn came home first and, as he opened the back door, heard a thin voice calling, *Help! Please help!*

He rushed in, slushy boots on spotless floor.

Sheri was standing on top of the dining room table, hunched over with something in her arms. *Thank god you're here!*

Glenn took in the scene. Sheri was cradling our brass chandelier, an ancient fixture that had clinched the deal for us

17 years earlier when we were looking at this house. It weighed far more—and was way more awkward to hold—than a festive turkey. All the bulbs were brand new, for the staging—the most expensive ones to make sure it remained the pièce de résistance for prospective occupants. Our prized chandelier, though, had come loose from the ceiling and was hanging by a thread of worn electrical wire while Sheri—not much larger than this fixture—grappled it with all her might.

She peered at Glenn through the brassy octopus in her grip, waiting for him to do something. She began teetering.

No! Glenn leapt up with a single bound. For one bright shining moment, Glenn and Sheri and chandelier were locked steadfastly in one other's arms while they caught their collective balance.

And the next moment: *Craccckk!*

Our sturdy dining table had borne weighty spreads before, Christmas dinners for 12 and other feasts galore, but it had never endured this. Like the Red Sea, it parted down the middle and Sheri and Glenn and chandelier fell into the abyss.

Luckily the floor was there to catch them.

Not one of our classy lightbulbs broke. Sheri maintained her grip through the whole mêlée. The chandelier, she told us, had collapsed into her arms while she was dusting it and she hadn't known what else to do. By the time Glenn found her she'd been standing on the table for ... well, she couldn't say how long. She left that day with not a scratch. Glenn managed to haul the broken table parts to the shed before I returned. The only

evidence was the 60-pound light fixture heaped on a chair while still clinging to the ceiling by one precariously exposed wire. Tym, our friend who'd already worked his handyman magic to ready the house for staging and had fixed all the holes, returned that night to fix this new one. As Tym futzed with wires that were last exposed in 1911, Glenn perched atop a ladder to hold the chandelier for him.

It'd be anticlimactic to tell you next that the ladder collapsed and Glenn and the brass brute fell to the floor, again. But that's what happened. And again: not a single bulb shattered.

Tym said we were lucky it fell that day and not while the house was being shown. Or at any other time, for that matter. The insulation was completely gone so the raw wires were touching the casing. "Yeah," he said, "That was a serious hazard. You are so lucky that the house hasn't burnt down."

That night he set things right for the next homeowner, whoever they would be.

There is no moral here. When we moved into the Old Grace, we saw that our dining room table would have been too big for our new place anyway. And even better: we had no chandelier to clean. We've just had to find other ways to have fun.

Moving tails

Daisy May Stewart

Chapter One: I remember when it all started

November 2016. I remember it well. I was home alone ... left, at the tender age of one, to fend for myself for an entire hour. It was exactly halfway between breakfast and supper. Suddenly, the most horrifying sound EVER—strangers, crashing through the door, tearing the house apart, smashing things as they moved from floor to floor ... and thankfully, ignoring me as I cowered in the corner. Then, as quickly as they came, they went. When Boss got home, we hugged and cried. Later that day, Boss started putting things back onto shelves and into drawers where they came from. But she also put things into bags. She turned to me and explained: “I’m only putting back what we’re going to keep! I guess we’ve started our downsizing, Daisy.”

Chapter Two: My friends at Siloam Mission

Winter, 2016. I was just a pup when Boss changed our regular walking route. For reasons I didn’t understand at the time, each day, we would walk from Sherburn along Westminster to Evanson. And each day, we’d stop to say hi to my new friends at the Madison. We always walked at the same time, and my friends would wait and watch for us. On cold winter days, they huddled inside the door to keep warm ... and they waited. One-by-one they’d ask me to ‘sit’ and ‘shake a paw’ or ‘high five’ ... and then they’d give me a cookie. Boss thinks I don’t know she was supplying the cookies. And they think they taught me tricks. But really, I knew how to do those tricks ever since I was little. One day, Boss explained to me the reason she wanted to walk over this way. THIS is where we would be moving soon, and THAT place up there on the corner—where the pigeons were flying in and out—THAT would be our new home some day. We still go past the Madison most days, the guys wait for us to come by, they make me do tricks and give me treats. Everyone smiles.

Chapter Three: It was a moving weekend

March 23, 2018. Boss sent me to stay with friends that weekend. She likely thought I’d be in the way. A few days later, she picked me up to take me home ... to our new home. I had my first ride in an elevator. It was pretty scary, and I’m pretty sure I was the first dog to ride in the elevator. But I’m not scared

anymore, and there's always interesting people and dog smells to explore. Off the elevator and down the longest hallway I had ever seen! Nobody else lived at our end of the hall yet, so Boss had placed a long line of treats halfway down the hall, through the door to suite 59, around a mountain of boxes, and into the kitchen where I discovered my bowls. Although I was busy eating the goodies and didn't notice all our stuff was in this new place, the smells were very familiar. When I finished eating, I checked it out. With a single bound, I was up on the couch. I've never been on the couch before—or since—but I was so excited to be with our stuff that I couldn't help myself. A minute later, I found my bed just outside Boss's bedroom. And before long, I was sound asleep ... comforted knowing Boss and I, and all our stuff were together again in this new place at the end of the very long, blue hall.

Chapter Four: Harsh punishment

"They" say that Labs take five years to mature. Whatever. Anyway, one day during our first spring at Old Grace, Boss was collecting the names to be engraved on the courtyard paving stones. Ours was going to be beautiful—Boss and Daisy May: the permanent symbol of our journey together. Well, later that day, I guess I had a bit of extra attitude and I may have been acting up a bit. It's possible our walk was a bit much for Boss that day. Not long after, the paving stones arrived. Boss walked through the

courtyard to take a look at ours. Imagine my surprise when I saw that my name was missing! She told me she was so upset with me that day of that terrible walk, that she removed my name from the list before sending it to the engravers. Geez, that was harsh punishment! Maybe if I'm good, she'll get me a stone of my own some day. Maybe for my fifth birthday in a few months.

Postscript

I like my new home a lot. I like the people. I like my balcony. I like the long hallways (especially in the basement where it feels nice on my feet). And I like my K9 friends: Buddy, Jack, Sami, Georgy, Auggie and Beau; and part-timers Slinky, Gage, Maddie and Zoe. I'm so happy Old Grace is pet friendly. I'm pretty sure if it wasn't, Boss would have a hard time deciding between me and the co-op ... or would she?





Bob Haverluck

Journalling a move

Gerry Wolfram

how deep are the windowsills? *[winter 2017]*

As people who had signed on to live in the OGHC, we were all initially working from a vision. This involved scrutinizing suite plans, budgets, and making decisions around common space use. It took a while for things to progress from paper to something more concrete (literally!). But at this stage, we were also getting to know the people who had stepped forward already, volunteering to plan and take leadership in areas where they had some experience. And this was encouraging; they were capable folks who worked with commitment and good humour, and they seemed like the kind of people you would enjoy having as neighbours!

During this stage of planning and envisioning, I had only one moment of real hesitation. I'd always lived in older houses or apartments and was used to spaces with high ceilings, wood trim and deep windowsills. When I started to envision a more modern form of construction, I suddenly wondered: will I be able to grow plants on the windowsill? Turned out that the

newer, plastic windowsills were indeed going to be deep enough for some plants. I could still grow things!

in search of a smaller footprint *[spring 2018]*

A wish that seemed to be shared by many of our prospective neighbours in the co-op was the wish to live more simply and more locally. Reducing our living and storage space meant scaling back our collection of books and papers. This proved much harder than giving away furniture or the piano. But the result is pleasing.

My partner and I discovered that many individuals were not planning to have a car on site but instead to bike or bus or join the Peg City Car Co-op. (This was fortunate as the space allotted for parking at the co-op would not have allowed for a space for each suite!) In this and in other regards, it's very helpful to live alongside others who share your values; for example, about living more simply, gardening, composting—or enjoying hearing children playing in the courtyard.

a gradual shift *[fall 2018]*

Having never lived in a newly constructed space before—a space that even smelled new—I found it helpful to move things in gradually. First, built-in bookshelves, then a few wall hangings and plants, a teapot and a kettle for tea breaks. We brought our dog over several times and took him for short walks so we could

sniff out the neighbourhood. Friends helped us to carry over smaller items and finally, a local moving company brought the remaining furniture. We had arrived at last!

life in the village *[winter 2018-19]*

I had lived in a small village (of a couple of hundred people) in rural Manitoba and in an even smaller village (fourteen houses) in northern England. So, I began to recognize in the OGHHC some familiar patterns. There are casual connections that you make; for example, when getting the mail, walking dogs, shopping at the local bakery. On these occasions, you may just say a brief hello or you may stop for more of a conversation. But it all helps to get to know people. I discovered many co-op neighbours with common interests and even shared connections. As in many small communities, we at the co-op also reflect a diversity of tastes and personalities, so we need to learn to accommodate and respect our differences.

may I borrow a cup of sugar? *[spring 2019]*

After someone suggested initiating a resident email group as an option, we were able to communicate more easily. People could request or offer any number of things from tools to computer help to extra theatre tickets. We also send around notices of events that we think may be of interest to others. All of this practical sharing helps to develop community. And it

leads a person to conclude that she does not need to own one of everything; it makes more sense to share.

pitching in *[summer 2019]*

An expectation of co-op membership is that members will regularly contribute to the life and running of the co-op. The opportunities are many, from serving on the board or a working group to shoveling snow. There are also occasional cleaning bees. The spirit of co-operation is apparent at OGHC and many folks are generous with their skills.

sharing the model *[fall 2019 -*

Whenever we've had old friends over for a meal for the first time here, they've also wanted a tour of the whole place. They have been extremely interested, asking: how does it work? same as a condo, right? (wrong) who figured out the space? do you know everybody? can I still join the co-op? So I reckon we are doing some education and promotion around housing co-ops along the way, just as we ourselves continue to learn about living in "Old Grace."

Freedom, community, family

Libby Zdriluk

I didn't know anything about the co-op until my aunt, who lives in the neighbourhood, saw a posting for it, and my mom mentioned it to me and said, "Let's do it!" I applied and was able to get the last accessible unit, all within, basically, a week: A week from my aunt learning about it to telling my mom about it, to my mom telling me, and then me telling my landlord, "Sayonara, I'm out of here." Just like that. Spontaneous for sure, but ultimately the best thing that's ever happened to me.

The place I lived before was an apartment by the legislative building. I moved there when I was 21. I'm now 34. It was fine for when I was in my 20s but in your 30s you want peace and quiet. I felt like it was time to move on.

This is the first time I've actually lived somewhere where I have a sense of ownership and pride. When you live in an apartment building you have a landlord and it's hard to make the space yours because there are so many limitations to what you can do. But here I have what I need. For example, not having carpet is amazing. I have asthma, and 11 years of driving over the same

carpet really affected my health. Having the floor not carpeted has made a huge difference to my asthma and allergy symptoms.

The accessibility here is great, it was actually designed to be accessible, whereas the place I was in before was built in 1980. It wasn't really accessible, and I couldn't really change it to what I needed. In new construction like this accessibility isn't an afterthought, it's incorporated into the planning. Having a shower that I can fully get into and out of on my own, being able to cook something for breakfast—it may sound silly but these are big things. I wasn't able to do that in my old space. Here I can do everything myself. That has really added a lot to my self-confidence and independence.

I never really felt independent until I moved here. Where I was before I had to share 40 staff members with 16 other people. I'd have to go to bed at this time and get up at this time—you're not really living independently when you're told when to go to bed. I can't tell you the hundreds of people who would come into my place over the last 11 years and I'd see them once and never see them again. It was exhausting. Here, I have my staff that I chose, that I hired, and I use them however I need them and there's no limitation on that.

Another thing that's really nice here is I'm not afraid to take things into my own hands. When I moved here, I took off the closet doors because it's better for me and I didn't meet any resistance about it. My landlord before was very challenging. To be able to take my closet doors off and not be scolded about it.

That sounds like nothing, but it's freedom to be able to say what works best for me and not be met with resistance.

I just tell people that I feel like I've won the lottery. Being disabled and having somewhere nice to live should be the norm, but it's not. I carry this guilt: Why did I get so lucky? I feel like everyone should have what I have. It's freedom.

The social aspect of the co-op was what my mother wanted for me. She said, "I want you to be in a place where you won't be alone." I didn't really know what that meant until I started meeting people here. And she's right: Since I've moved here, I've never felt lonely. It's hard for me to meet people, because I have social anxiety and it took me a while to get out of my shell, to get to know people. I used to look at the coffee group on Tuesday and I would go, "Oh, I can't do that, I can't go in there," and I'd start to feel panicked. And then every week I'd start to get a little bit closer, and now interacting with people isn't as scary. I overcame that because the people here made me feel so comfortable. Not just about the physical barriers but the social barriers I've had.

One of the best things about moving here is connecting with family. I hadn't seen some of my family members in five years, seven years for some. And it's not because we were apart; they lived in the city, but I didn't or couldn't participate in gatherings. Now I am hosting Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners in the Common Room every year. Everyone knows it's at Libby's house now. I'm meeting family I've never met before, with my cousins'

marrying and having children. To be a part of their childhood, to have a space where I can connect with them, has been amazing. Hearing the little kids asking, “Are we going to Libby’s?” has been so sweet.

I take every opportunity I can to promote Old Grace to friends within the disability community. I’ve actually given tours because I want everybody to know about this place. And every time, I talk not just about the accessibility but about the community. It’s not just accessibility, it’s the people.

My moving story

Kimberley J. Routledge Blondal

Many years ago, I was born at the (old) Grace Hospital, here in Winnipeg. Now I have returned to the land upon which I was born. The land of Treaty One Territory—the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, Dené, and the homeland of the Métis nation. And, I hope to live here for many years to come—until the end of my days!

I have lived in Winnipeg most of my life. However, I did spend 10 years on Vancouver Island from 2002 to 2012. During my last year on Vancouver Island, I lived in an eco-village, which taught permaculture. All this made an enormous impression on me. I knew that I wanted to live in community. Upon my return to Winnipeg, I joined the Transition Winnipeg co-op housing group. This group of like-minded people became aware of the Old Grace Housing Co-op group. Many of us joined the OGHC and some of us are now living here.

Many people ask me, “Why on earth would you move back to Winnipeg, after living on Vancouver Island?” Indeed, I will

always love the “Best Coast.” However, most of my immediate family—including my four wonderful children AND my (so far) two beautiful grandchildren—live in Winnipeg.

Not only do I love the proximity of family, but I also appreciate the friendship and support of our Old Grace residents. It can be challenging to live alone or in community—but I think it is healthiest to share life with others. Once in a while one just has to stretch outside one’s comfort zone.

I’m a retired nurse, having obtained my Bachelor of Nursing from the University of Manitoba. I have worked as a public health nurse for the City of Winnipeg. I also worked on medical wards in several hospitals. Being a nurse helped me to be a more compassionate person. I continually strive to have compassion each day—for myself and others!

From Rivergreen Ecovillage to Old Grace Housing Co-op

Carl von Baeyer and Debby Lake

After our daughters grew up and moved out of our big old house on Temperance Street in Saskatoon, we wanted to downsize. We joined a wonderful new housing co-op that was under development in Saskatoon. It was called Rivergreen Ecovillage. It was to occupy a whole city block near the river and next to the Farmers’ Market. The city made the lot available at \$1 per year. As the name implies, it had energy and water conservation and solar design built in. The architects were Prairie Architects of Winnipeg.

Unfortunately, the 2008 financial crisis happened just at the wrong time, and Rivergreen Ecovillage was unable to get funding to start construction. To our great disappointment, the project died.

However, a few years after we moved into a condo in Winnipeg, we attended a meeting at our Unitarian church about a new housing co-op here. To our amazement, the scale model from Rivergreen Ecovillage was on display. Many OGHC

residents will remember having seen it back then. Here's an overhead snapshot of the model provided by Prairie Architects. Do you see any familiar features?



It was as if our home followed us. Of course, we had to join Old Grace Housing Co-op. And that's our story of how we came here.

Moving means leaving things behind

Glenn Morison

1.

I was blessed with a wonderful father. He was a very hardworking doctor, so time alone with him was always a treat and that provided me with very distinct memories. One, from elementary school, was when he saw some design plans in the Saturday Tribune and immediately took me out to Beaver Lumber. The plans were for an “igloo maker.” Well, essentially a wooden box that you would pack full of snow that would produce a block for making an igloo. Every year after that I “helped” him make an igloo in our backyard.

When I was cleaning out my parents' house after my mother died, I found the igloo-making device in her basement. I doubt she was planning on making another igloo but likely kept it as a memento of our family life. I never picked up the tradition with my kids but I, too, could not bring myself to part with this worse-for-wear box.

When we sold our house, I had it in my hand and stood by the garbage realizing that if I gave it to a thrift shop they would not even know what it was. Then I remembered that the young family who had bought our house had said I could leave any building supplies behind and they could decide whether to use them or toss them. If an igloo maker does not count as building supplies, what does? So, I snuck it in among pieces of scrap wood, drywall and a few some coils of wire.

About two-and-a-half months later, I walked by our old house, and what did I see in the front yard? An igloo.

The world is a benevolent place.

2.

Alex's father grew up in the midst of the Canadian Shield in northwestern Ontario. On one trip through that area we saw a cute little bobblehead moose in a roadside shop and brought it back as a souvenir. We even gave him a name: Moose. He was one of the bobbiest bobbleheads I'd ever seen, one finger flick would get him going for almost a minute. As a family we took to asking Moose, "Is everything going to be okay?" whenever we had reason to be anxious. His answer was always the same: a long, slow, confident repeated nod of "Yes." He saved us thousands of dollars we might have spent on therapy.

Days after we signed the papers of our house sale, the buyer's agent contacted ours and asked if we could include the moose

with the house. Our buyers had looked at our house three times and each time they brought their young children, who were captivated by bopping Moose's head and watching him nod. As our agent waited on the phone, Alex gave me a "come hither" finger to lead me out of the room where Moose was, and whispered, "Can we?" Not an easy decision, but with two young kids' emotions at stake, a clear one. On moving day, Moose sat on the kitchen counter waiting to meet his new family.

3.

Did you have to get rid of a piano to move into the co-op? While we found a taker for our Hammond organ, we were not so fortunate with our piano. There was lots of interest, but no follow ups. I could barely stomach the idea of paying to have a perfectly playable piano taken to a landfill. Then we received our final offer for our house and it included two new stipulations. One, that we set out mouse traps in our attic (our agent had said he had never seen that in an offer in his over 30 years in the business) and two, that we leave our piano behind for the new owners to enjoy.

Yes, and Yes. House sold.

April 2018

Judie Bewer

We are nicely ensconced in Old Grace, here.

With chattels too much for our space, here.

We've wined our new neighbours.

Thanked the board for their labours.

Our new lives we will embrace, here.

