

BUY A NEW HOUSE

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By James Collins

In 1974 my company, Kollsman instruments, due to contract negotiation problems with the IAM union decided that they were going to move to Merrimack New Hampshire the following year. Since my entire family lived in the greater metropolitan area, I did not plan to go with the transfer group. Unfortunately, the recession that hit was one of the worst in history and jobs were nonexistent. Engineers were working as burger flippers in McDonald's and major electronic corporations were closing all around us. I had four children and my wife and I decided that since I worked for the company for 13 years and the company offered me a management position to go to New Hampshire I should accept and plan on buying a new house at that location. The Corporation was very generous to all of those personnel who would relocate to New Hampshire and offered him to use an executive transfer Corporation to purchase our house and cover all of our expenses in buying a new home.

Moving a corporation that had several thousand individuals is a massive task with many unforeseen problems. The majority of the personnel were native New Yorkers and they felt that moving to New Hampshire was like going to the boondocks. Because of the union problems, no union personnel or hourly employees could obtain jobs at the new location. Instead, 18 supervisors went to New Hampshire a year earlier, set up a training facility, and hired and trained assembly personnel for our factory. Because of all the planning involved and the reluctance of most of the personnel to relocate, we only had 80 people in the transfer program that would move to New Hampshire. This forced us to reduce many of our business disciplines and we went from several hundred million dollar's worth of sales down to \$25 million of potential business. With the greatly reduce staff each of us had multiple tasks to perform and we spent every week on an airplane either going to or coming from New Hampshire. I used this opportunity to deal with real estate agents and look at houses available in New Hampshire.

My first problem was to locate which area around Nashua I would focus on for the real estate search. My options were Massachusetts south of Nashua, Hudson on the other side of the Merrimack River, Manchester, North of Merrimack New Hampshire, Merrimack, Amherst or Hollis. This was a daunting problem. Key to my decision would be the education of my children. At that time I wife did not drive and being a city girl insisted on having neighbors in the immediate vicinity and highly visible. This fact immediately discounted Massachusetts, Amherst, Hudson, Hollis and Merrimack. The decision reduced to the two major cities of Nashua or Manchester. At that time, Manchester had 100,000 people while Nashua had 63,000. I decided to investigate the school systems of these two cities.

Personnel acquired the yearbooks from the three major high schools in Manchester and yearbooks from the schools in Nashua. I examined the yearbook for two of the Manchester schools first and looked at the expectations of the graduating seniors. I was not impressed. The graduates were looking to be clerks, retail salespeople, enlisted Army, or Navy personnel. One or two indicated they want to pump gas. I did not want my kids to have these expectations. However, when I examined the third yearbook I was pleasantly surprised. The graduates wanted to be physicists, chemists, engineers, scientists, biologists, lawyers and doctors. Now this is the kind of school I expected. I called the principal to speak to her directly and I planned to set up an appointment and visit the school.

I introduced myself, explained the conditions of my company's move to New Hampshire and I indicated the methodology of my search. Then I told her the expectations of her graduating class impressed me. She seemed surprised and asked me what yearbook I was looking at. I told her it was the 1973 yearbook.

"Mr. Collins I hate to tell you this, but this high school has exactly the same expectations of the graduating class as the other two you examined. The class of 1973 was an exception. Bishop Brady the Catholic high school in Manchester closed a year or so before and this was the last class using the students from the high school to graduate from West. They were from middle to upper income families and all had the expectations which were listed in the book. The rest of our graduating classes do not have those kinds of expectations. Our high school is influenced by the 'Mill Mentality' of this part of New Hampshire."

"I'm sorry I'm not familiar with the term what is Mill Mentality?"

"As you may or may not know Manchester has a history of being the largest plant in the world for the making of cloth. Most of the workers came from Canada or the farm areas of New Hampshire and worked in the mills for their entire lives. They all raise large families and could not afford to send them to college. So the children, once they reached the age of 16, had to go out and work in the mill. Since the mills closed about 20 years ago, the opportunities to work in the mill have disappeared and the menial jobs you see listed in the book are what their present expectations are. I am sorry we cannot offer you any of the classes that you would expect but I applaud your investigation. "

"Thank you Ms. Robinson, for your explanation, you helped me make my decision."

Once we decided to live in Nashua, I selected an impressive real estate agent and had him take me to examine 40 houses over the next few months. I boiled them down to six and told my wife we had to go up to New Hampshire to look at these so she could make a final determination. This was July and we had to move by September. The day I arrived the real estate agent told us that one of the houses sold the previous day, so we were down to five viable homes. I took Eileen in to see the first house and she fell in love with it.

"Fantastic this is it, this is the house were going to take. Sign us up!"

"But this is only the first of five. I've spent the last four months looking at every house in the neighborhood. I boiled them down to five. You have to see them all before you make a decision. We are going to see all five today."

"But I want this house. I don't care about the other four." The argument went on for about a half-hour and she reluctantly agreed to see the other four houses.

When we finished the fifth house she told me," They were all lovely but I want the first one we saw."

We bought the first house and lived there for 25 years. The kids all went to Bishop Guertin and Mount St. Mary's in Nashua. They all went on to college and subsequently all of them received graduate degrees from various universities. If you have to buy a new house be very cautious and very thorough. It can influence your life for years. Mine did and we're all very happy.

THE END