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by James Collins

On Saturday, November 7, I went up to the University of New Hampshire (UNH) to visit my grandson Joe Collins and take him out for lunch as a celebration. In the beginning of the semester he had been designated a Goldwater scholar – quite an achievement and this week he had been nominated for a Churchill award. Obtaining this would guarantee him a position to acquire a PhD from Cambridge University in England.

I spoke with Joe on the phone and set up the appointment to meet with him at one o'clock on Saturday. Joe informed me that he had been moved to new quarters this semester and gave me his address as 21 Madbury Dr. He told me I would recognize the area as it was the fraternity row when his father was in the school 23 years earlier. I told him I felt comfortable but would use my Garmin to make sure I got the right location.

I entered the new location into my Garmin and set off on my trip. I had no problem reaching the outskirts of the University on route 4 and entered near the agricultural section. At that point traffic appeared and it became apparent that there were police in the roadway routing people to parking for a football game that was about to start. I passed this minor tie up and drove down the main street of the University of New Hampshire. The Garmin then directed me to make a left and then a right. Finally, the Garmin announced, *you have reached your destination on the right*. I parked my car in an open space and looked around. I was in the middle of fraternity row but could not see the multistory new building that Joe described. The streets were empty but more concerning was the fact that there were no numbers on any of the buildings. The buildings sported Greek fraternity symbols that identified them as frat houses but there were no people visible on the street. I figured the football game attracted them all. Without numbers on the houses, you do not know which direction to go to find your address. I walked up and down about two house lengths on either side but no numbers were apparent. I decided to try one of the houses and asked the occupants where I was.

I parked when the Garmin said *you have reached your destination on the right*. Therefore, I decided to knock on the door of the enormous beige colored two-story residence. I arrived at the front door and could see there was a coded security entrance mechanism on the door, which was there to control entry. I knocked loudly on the door a few times. There was no answer and no response. I tried the door and much to my amazement it opened and led me into a foyer. I called out in a loud voice, "Hello, hello, hello, is there anybody here who can help me?" My answer was a deafening silence.

Beyond that was a second pair of doors, which opened inward with a very slight push. Now I viewed a 30-foot long living room full of large couches and chairs totally cluttered with clothes, books, empty coffee cups, magazines, and winter jackets of all kinds.

The floor was covered and littered with similar apparel and miscellaneous items. Most of the stuff was heavy-duty winter clothes. This was one of the warmest days New Hampshire had ever experienced in November and everyone was walking around in summer attire. Combat boots, galoshes and walking boots were everywhere in the room. I continued shouting trying to get attention or to find someone. It was like being in an empty train station.

I turned to the left and walked into another cluttered room, which was obviously the TV viewing room. Again, I saw nothing but clutter. Now there were books knapsacks and even an open pocketbook. There also was a wall cubby full of slippers. Obviously the owner's leisure attire. This room was 30 x 20' again full of couches and upholstered chairs and futons on the floor. I continued my entreaties for help but got no reply.

I continued walking through this room and end up entering the kitchen and a dining area for about 30 or 40 people. This area was clean and neat and my voice echoed off the bare walls but I received no response from a human being. It's an old saying if nine people tell you, you are drunk, lie down. I had gone through the entire lower floor of the house, hollering, looking for help but received none. There was a set of stairs going up, but I was not about to enter that region of the house. I turned around and went back outside.

Two young college girls were coming up the road. I stopped them and explained my problem. I told them I was looking for 21 Madbury Dr. but since none of the house had numbers, I didn't even know which direction to go. They smiled and giggled at my confusion and explained to me that though the Garmin told me this was the location I was searching for, I had a go about a half a block ahead and turn right. At that location, there were house numbers. I found Joe's apartment complex, which had heavy security. The guard would not let me in until I went to his computer area, verified Joe's name and location and I am sure they took my picture. He then took me to the elevator and I am sure he watched to make sure I got off on the second floor. I finally located Joe and we decided to go to Newicks, the fish restaurant, in Dover. As we walked back to my car, I described my adventure to Joe. When we reach the car, I told Joe, "The Garmin lied to me and I won't forget it."

Then I pointed to the beige house with all the Greek numbers on it and said, "Joe that's the frat house I went into to get help and directions but there is absolutely no security there and the inside is a total mess."

"Pop Pop, are you sure that's the house you went into?"

"Sure Joe, I was just there 15 minutes ago. Do you think my memory is going that bad that fast?"

“No Pop Pop, that’s not the problem. That’s not a fraternity house! That’s a sorority.”

I think I dodged the bullet with that one. It reminded me of the other old saying, “Fools jump in where angels fear to tread.”

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