



## A Moving Tale - Part Thud

By Ross and Joy-Lynd Chamberlain

**W**e thought we were done with all that. The packing, the hauling, the dust, the losing and finding, the pressure. Nine months ago, as recounted in *C. Ross Town: A Moving Tale —Part II: Three Years Later*, Joy-Lynd and I had gone through all that and more as we moved to a house we

intended eventually to buy and possibly live in for the rest of our lives.

It was not to be.

The woman from whom we were renting that lovely home on Petal Avenue had originally wanted to move out entirely and sell the place at her leisure. But we couldn't afford the full rent that would let her live elsewhere, so she agreed to stay in her sizable bedroom there, leaving the rest of place pretty much to us, for a rent that essentially covered her mortgage payments. At the time, we thought that this arrangement might last a year or two while we paid off some outstanding debts and accumulated the credit that would let us buy the place. Our first six-month lease was supposed to be renewable with that concept in mind.

Unfortunately, she developed cabin fever; she desperately wanted to get out of the one room, and reneged on that pretty much verbal deal. She was prepared to go with us month by month for a couple of months while we pursued arrangements with a mortgage broker. Somehow, another original concept, that we would get a loan to pay her her equity in the place and we would simply take over her mortgage payments (which were soon to be reduced), also slipped away into the never-never. (Actually, the combination of loan payments and mortgage probably would have totaled more than the new mortgage payments would, so that's no big deal.)

Meanwhile, my job situation had changed. *Electronic Games* had gone bye-bye almost immediately after our move; it was replaced by *Fusion*, but my position as managing editor was pulled out from under me, and only the very good graces and optimism of Arnie and Joyce Katz kept my salary going since. The optimism faltered around the beginning of the year, when alternate magazine prospects appeared especially dismal. Arnie and

Joyce encouraged me to seek alternate employment. They kept me on while I was doing so, but three different flights of résumés (to local publishers, radio and TV stations, and to ad and PR agencies) netted only a couple of very tentative possibilities "not immediately, but down the road." While there is some reason to hope, now, for me to stay on with them indefinitely, as *Escapade* is taking root in the chancy soil of the World Wide Web, I get the sense that things are still pretty shaky and could fall apart any minute.

This was not an ideal atmosphere under which to undertake a commitment like purchasing a house. Joy-Lynd and I generally kept mum and played our hands close to our vests, so to speak, but as time dragged on without progress in the mortgage and down-payment situation, Suzanne developed a definite case of the ancies. Finally she drew in a realtor to handle things and—I gather at his recommendation—had a notice drawn up for us to be out of the house by the end of March.

Oh, we were still first on the list to be considered for buying the place, but the house had to be empty of us and our possessions as of March 31. Sure. Right.

So, still avoiding any appearance of rushing to get out, like packing, we began looking for some place else to go. Joy-Lynd subscribed to a service called Rent Helper, and we got some listings of houses for rent in the range and areas we sought to live in.

Despite a large number of listings, we found few that were satisfactory, and a number of those that were likely prospects were gone by the time we phoned the contact numbers.

By midway in March, Joy-Lynd had reached a

kind of sense of futility, and I was having periods of panic. We had moral support from many of our friends, and Joy-Lynd had promises of physical help for the actual move when it took place, from fellow members of her church, but where were we going to go?

We extended the territorial range of the house listings from Rent Help and got another set of listings, which I went over for suitability. Crossing out those that would not be available until April eliminated many; chopping those with rents beyond \$800 or so and those without refrigerators also trimmed the set. I called three or four of those remaining. One I couldn't get a reply from though I kept leaving messages with the contacts' kids—teenagers who sounded like they didn't give a damn. The house sounded good, it even had a pool! But it had been available since mid-February and I began to understand why. There was another one in which the contact was a rental agency; when I called to inquire about it, I was told I should drive by the place and if I liked the area and the looks of the place I should give them another call. Both of these were not far from where Arnie and Joyce live, so I decided to do just that.

The first was on a street very close to I-95, the expressway. I didn't see the specific number, but I got sense not so much of a dingy, run-down area but an un-cared for one—the houses close to each other, some lawns were unkempt and had chain fences around them. The second was also a couple of turns off Decatur and only a couple of blocks away, but the neighborhood was tree-lined and shady, the lawns green and cared for. Again I couldn't see the house number, but there was a house with a row of short Lombardies or Italian Cedars in front of the door and the houses that flanked it had numbers on either side of the number I was looking for... 1004 White Pine Way.

This was late evening, too late to call back to the agency, but the next day I did call them, and, happily, the place was still available. By a fluke, as it turned out—the house had also been listed in the newspaper, and a couple had already agreed to rent it, then backed out for some reason.

The rental agent, George Morrissey, showed it to us that Saturday afternoon. We had arrived a few

minutes before our appointment, and he came about ten minutes late, so we had a little time to explore the outside. There was an open gate to the back yard, which was lush with green grass and two sizeable shade trees (I don't know the variety of tree; I'd not be too surprised if it were one of the varieties that supply pollen pollutants to the valley, however). There was an open door in the back, but it only led into a space where the utility meters were; there was a locked door within that Morrissey later showed us led into a pleasant little room unaccessible directly to the rest of the house. We've turned it over to storage.

When he arrived and we got a look at the interior we were as impressed as we had been with the exterior. The front door leads directly into a long, carpeted living room that L's into dining space and a kitchen at the far end. At the back, off the stem of the L, is a slightly sunken room clearly once a back porch but now finished and carpeted; doors from that and the kitchen open to a pantry area where the refrigerator was waiting, unplugged and door agape. Here there are hookups for a washer and dryer. That the place was not already supplied with these was one of the few disappointments in the place; we'd gotten spoiled in the last two places we lived, here in Las Vegas. Off the living room is a hall to the three bedrooms. These, too, were disappointingly small by comparison with where we had been but that's all a matter of perspective; I've seen smaller bedrooms in many New York apartments. One, called the master bedroom though it's not larger than the others, is supplied with a tiny bath with an enclosed shower, sink and toilet. The room also sports a compact walk-in closet. A larger tiled bath with a tub/shower combination runs off the hall next to one of the remaining two rooms. Both of these have decent closets, though the room toward the back of the house has a somewhat larger one, and indeed is slightly larger than either of the two in front. We initially designated that room as my office, though that's now in the front corner room... There are a three closets off the hall—a coat closet near the front, a storage closet toward the center (where the air conditioning unit's filter must be replaced each month) and a linen closet at the end. Joy-Lynd and I took to the place very positively all in all.



There were other people interested in the place. In fact, somebody stopped to inquire about it just while Joy-Lynd and I were there, and another car slowed and eased by. Someone also stopped by the next day when I came back to meet Morrissey (who was showing the place to yet another prospect) and give him our application and a nominal fee for a credit check. So we had a day or two of suspense before we got the call from him that our application had been approved. I guess we gave a good enough *impression of stability*...

We had to sign a long and complex non-standard lease for the place; Ghu help us if we default or fail to keep the lawn mowed. But it's a great little house—significantly smaller than the Petal Avenue place but it has slightly more space than we had in our apartment on Fort Apache Road. We are walking in paths through it just now, and will be throwing a lot of stuff away that we probably wouldn't have had to had we succeeded in staying at the other house.

We arranged to start our lease a few days ahead; it was already the last week of March by now. We let Suzanne know that we would be out by the 31st. She was a bit put out, but accepted it. We began some packing, and over the next couple of days got some things into the new house. I got off early Friday. We took Joy-Lynd's bed over in the station wagon for her to stay over night, so she could be there for the cable installer, while I remained to welcome her friends from church Saturday morning. They arrived in a bunch of cars and trucks that morning, so I got the brunt of the volunteers' reaction to the lack of actual packing... But their primary intention was to get the heavy stuff like my bed and other furniture over, and, in two trips, they did that. I got the impression that there was a slightly smaller group for the second trip. When they were done there were a lot of the leftover boxes still sitting in my garage/office from the old trip, that we had thought they were going to take, and an awful lot of stuff still in the house like dishes and loose unpacked things that Joy-Lynd and I were going to have to deal with. But at the new place it was already beginning to look like "home," and with the beds there we had our first night there.

We spent the rest of the weekend going back

and forth packing our cars at Petal Avenue and unloading them at White Pine Way. We tried different techniques, where I drove one car and packed it, then returned and picked up the other car to take back while Joy-Lynd unloaded the other and put stuff away. This didn't work where I had loaded some of the heavier boxes, but otherwise it seemed to suffice. It seemed to work better when we both came, packed and went back to unpack. Except that whatever techniques we used, and though we were tottering and exhausted by the time we went to bed, the Petal Avenue house was not emptying fast enough.

We got an extension from Suzanne—and from Arnie and Joyce—to keep working on Monday, April 1. Somehow the April Fools Day aspect of that day got thoroughly ignored, though in retrospect I suppose we'd been fools not to do what we finally got around to doing that day—we rented a U-Haul truck.

We loaded it up about halfway with stuff we had stored in the front of the garage space—halfway on the van floor, not nearly that in terms of cubic space—and took it back to unload. Somehow this took us until late enough in the day that, after we stopped to eat and we returned to the old house, it was dark. And so was the house.

Well, of course Joy-Lynd had had the utilities turned off—we were supposed to have been out by then—and Suzanne had not thought to have them turned on again in her name. Joy-Lynd, miffed at Suzanne's attitude about the whole thing, had not gotten around to reminding her... which rebounded on us that night.

We had some candles. Little light from the street lamps came into the house, but they and a moon that was approaching its full phase helped once we got the stuff outside. On the other hand, the wind had started rising. Thank Ghu and all his little ghulets that the weather was practically ideal throughout our move; we'd made our last move in early Las Vegas summer and that, my friends, is no picnic.

The moving process now became a steady, plodding marathon. Suzanne came out to the kitchen at one point while Joy-Lynd was wrapping glassware in newspaper in the candlelight—when

we came in we'd seen she had candles of her own in her room.

"Isn't this romantic!" she remarked to Joy-Lynd.

"No," Joy-Lynd responded tersely. Had I been there, I might have tried to take the edge off by saying something like "It wouldn't have been my choice for a romantic setting," or something dumb like that, so it's probably just as well I wasn't.

We'd placed a folding chair outside and Joy-Lynd and I both had to sit down more and more frequently as the evening wore on past midnight. We also had her station wagon there, which we were loading with stuff we'd packed into shopping bags and a supply of paper bags she'd picked up at a supermarket; fragile things and things we thought would not travel (or stack) in the truck. When the station wagon was full, she drove it back to the new house to unload, while I maintained my efforts in loading the truck.

Well—not quite. I sat down for a minute and probably 20 minutes to half an hour later opened my eyes...

She came back an hour and a half later; there was some kind of construction going on on I-95 and she got shunted onto I-15 and the streets somewhere along the way. As the wee hours dragged on, she took another load in the station wagon and the truck gradually filled. Somewhere in there Joy-Lynd had to go and try to find some new candles. There were some Jewish Passover candles available, but these burned with such a small flame that they weren't good for what we needed—we couldn't see by them, so she went out again and found some flashlight/lanterns.

Our goal now was to have everything out, and the keys left on the kitchen counter, and be away by 7:30, the time Suzanne normally appeared in the morning on her way to work.

We almost made it. In fact, we did have the stuff out and the keys on the counter by then, but we had a few things left on the driveway and walk when she came out. There was a huge stack of boxes and other things, including an old TV set, on the corner to be picked up by the trashmen that evening; some of the boxes were being blown around by the

continuing gusty wind. And Joy-Lynd was in the cab of the truck, head down, feeling miserable. Suzanne fussed around the garbage and stuff a bit, but was soon gone, and we managed to get the last of the stuff into the car and truck and we took off, for the last time as we thought.

The truck was due back at 9 and there was no way we were going to make it, so we called U-Haul and requested another day with it. No problem. Both of us collapsed.

We did rise some time that afternoon, though just when I don't recall. It didn't take us as long to unload as it did to load, though Joy-Lynd wasn't up to doing much carrying. After midnight the truck was still not entirely cleared out. I got a few hours' sleep and finished it before about 7, but we just got the truck back to U-Haul about 8:30 and had to wait for it to be inspected before we got away. I went to work, but was still walking like a tired man 20 years my senior—it takes longer to recover from this kind of thing than it used to—and was sent home early.

Even now, almost two weeks later, my knees protest any kind of bending exercise and we are still walking in paths throughout much of the house, though truth to tell, much less so that at the start. I did have to return to the Petal Avenue address once, when we discovered we'd left a drawerful of flatware behind, and Suzanne was gracious enough to leave it in a safe place for me to find (she was away at work).

Of course the first thing we did was set up our computers. We're sharing the recovered porch room for that, and it seems to work pretty well. It took some re-routing of phone wires, for the modem connections—both of us were anxious to get on-line for differing reasons. After that... well, we'll get to the rest of the unpacking over time. We'll have to throw away stuff we probably never would have otherwise, but in the interests of simplification of our lives that's probably a good thing.

With Escapade's prospects improving, who knows? We may even have a chance to relax here in our new domicile for a while! As in the commercial— "Life is Good! Hahahaha..."

*Ross*