

Tale of Two Tours

Our House on the Home Tour alias Let's Get Chores Done – Fast!

by Julie Turner

May 1998

In May, 1998, our home at 817 North J St. was included on the Tacoma Historical Society Home Tour. Ironically, my husband, Jay, was the one who said, "Yes, we'll do it." I KNOW he didn't consider the many little chores such a "yes" would bring.

We painted things we'd meant to paint for years, rearranged pictures, moved furniture here and there, and cleaned out cubby holes. Then he thought we were done!

However, the biggest eye-sore in our house was the main upstairs bath and I had been urging a re-do on it for years. My chance had come! I insisted on refurbishing the bathroom and he finally said okay.

The centerpiece was to be a 6 ft 6 inch claw-foot tub that needed to come up from the basement to the second floor - - 2 steep narrow flights. He swore it weighed 650 pounds and he wasn't going to do it. I was sure there was a way, because I longed to have a large, deep, cast-iron tub for leisurely soaks.

So, I invited several young sturdy male family members to a lasagna dinner; I said we'd eat after the tub was upstairs. These fellows said, "No sweat!". Ha!

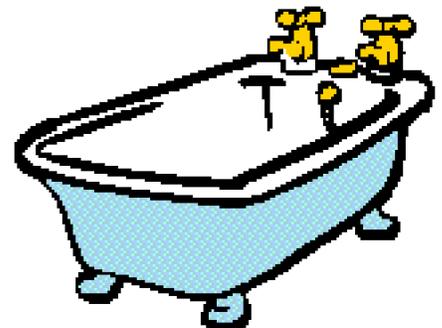
These husky men have weight lifting equipment, and lift all kinds of weights for fun. But when it came time to put that muscle to work, things were different. "But Auntie Julie, this tub is heavy!" they exclaimed. They did sweat moving that tub and they earned their dinner. Jay earned his dinner, too because he did tag along behind giving encouragement. Me, I joined in on "One, two, three heave."

Problems didn't end there. Jay had to find out how to pick this tub up so he could put a new floor down under it. I had to figure how to move it so I could paint it. I painted it green, at Jay's suggestion (only to find out later that he was joking). And the rest of the bathroom is in contrasting colors. It looks good if I do say so myself. We were pleased with the results and happy to be done – finally.

Done! Well, not quite. Two weeks later we had a waterfall in our dining room - - right below the new bathroom. It took that long for a leak to decide to show up and let its presence be known. So, more tear-up and more repairs and more painting - the dining room this time. Now we were done. Let the tour start.

Tour? What tour? We left that day and shuddered when we were told that over 1000 people saw the new bathroom. Was it worth it? Come by the house, see the little plaque by the front door and ask Jay what he thinks. I might even let you take a bath!

And, do try having your home on the tour. You learn a lot about your house, meet new people, and yes, get a lot of chores done.



Open House is More Than an Open House

By Holly Minniti

May 21, 2003

Like a lot of people these days, I seem most motivated by deadlines – not the arbitrary - "I'd like to lose 10 pounds by summer", but rather the inflexible - "I've got a tenant moving in on the first and have to have the apartment completely ready by then", no excuses, kind of deadline. So, Fred and I jumped at the chance to move our home projects to the top of the priority list by agreeing to be on the annual Historic Home Tour. Maybe I'd better clarify that, after all, Fred **will** read this... **I** jumped at the chance. Fred was supportive because he knows what motivates me and he knew we'd finally get a bunch of those nagging little projects completed.

What I expected to be about a dozen item punch list grew into a full, double columned page. Stripping, repairing, priming, painting, installing doorknobs & hinges, and re-hanging the doors was probably the largest overall project. We also had a long laundry list of the usual items that, as homeowners, we begin, over time, to not see. Nothing like going through your house with new eyes and recognizing, in one fell swoop, all of those long forgotten, "I'll get to it later" projects! As seems the norm with us, after a pretty good hiatus from working on the house, we spun into a renewed frenzy to meet this latest deadline...

Of course, the reality of the whole commitment to being on the tour didn't really hit me until Friday evening. I had about a dozen strangers in my house – looking to me for information on our home. They packed our parlor and I realized that this was just the tip of the ice burg... We were going to have over 1500 people – that's 3000 feet through our house over only two days! What had I done?

Thank goodness that the Historical Society has been doing this for years. They are very efficient! I know that I had the best docents! They were knowledgeable, knew what to ask me, and promised that they'd take good care of my home. And most importantly, they assured me that I would, indeed, live through the weekend. Alas, they were not all powerful. Their wishes for nice weather were ignored. But the sideways rain and cold didn't keep the people away. I naively thought that we'd have nice lulls in visitors throughout the day. If that happened, it happened only during the three hours Fred and I decided to duck out on Saturday morning to visit his father recovering from surgery.

Saturday afternoon I had kitchen duty. Wow – am I boring! After about the 100th time of telling about what our kitchen used to look like – I almost nodded off standing there. But people were really good sports. The visitors were all very gracious and complimentary.

We ended Sunday evening with my bribe to have neighbors help out as docents – Minniti spaghetti and meatballs. Needless to say, we spent a long time around the dining room table sharing our meal and wine, rubbing our sore feet, and comparing stories. It was the ultimate culmination of several months work and an incredibly hectic weekend. If you'd have asked me that following Monday if I'd do it again? I think I would have told you, you were nuts. But now, as I relish the fact that I can give a slight nudge to a door and have it shut completely with a satisfying click – I know I would do it all again!



North Slope Historic District: One of Tacoma's Treasures