

Retirement in S. Louisiana

It's been nearly a year since moving down to south Louisiana after 40 years in River Grove. My younger brother, Marshall, and I bought a house in Crowley where I grew up. Marshall is a priest and lives 35 miles away, but comes in on weekends. He'll be retiring in three or four years.

Because all of my family is down here, I knew that I would be moving back eventually. The opportunity to buy the house came up last summer (2011) and I decided there was no need to wait. We closed on the first of September, taking immediate possession of the house at 230 Fairway Drive in Crowley. When I got back to River Grove the following week, I began preparations for the relocation.

The house on Fairway Drive in Crowley is only fifteen years old and in excellent condition. People not from the area often ask if I live next to a golf course because of the street name. In fact, this would have been true fifty years ago. A new country club was built on the other side of town in the early '60s and the old golf course was subdivided into lots. I wouldn't be surprised if I dig up a golf ball or two when I'm working in the yard.

The move itself was quite a job. I had to have some work done on my condo before it could be put on the market (It's still on the market). Going through closets and cabinets was something else! I must have made half a dozen trips to Goodwill with everything from clothes to small appliances. I donated some of my books to the library at St. Cyprian's School, the remainder making the move.

My target date for the physical move was November 1st and I missed it by just one day (I wanted to beat the bad weather we can get north of Memphis in late fall). The last couple of weeks in October were spent packing boxes with everything but furniture and hanging clothes. I was impressed at the efficiency of the moving company. They had everything, including furniture, loaded into the truck in under four hours.

Fortunately, there was already a spare bed in the house here on Fairway Drive so I didn't have to "camp out" before the moving van arrived. Unpacking and getting things put away wasn't nearly as hard as packing. The house has a lot more storage space than my one bedroom condo and I have the luxury of an enclosed garage for the first time in my life. With the mild winters down here, I won't have to worry about shoveling snow off the driveway! I won't miss the winters and all of the difficulties associated with deep cold and dangerous driving. But I still have many good memories about

the beauty of that first snowfall in November or December. Snow is a rarity in S. Louisiana.

Of course, there's a weather related downside on the gulf coast: Hurricane Season. We've been lucky so far this year: only one named storm (Isaac) in early September decided to pay a visit. As it turned out, most of the damage was east of here and we didn't even lose power. But until Isaac made landfall, all of the coastal parishes (counties) were under a hurricane warning. The day before the storm moved onshore was spent moving patio furniture and buying staples like canned meat and bottled water. I was lucky in having gassed up my car several days prior to the hurricane warning because the local filling stations were low on gas and the lines got pretty long. Even the threat of a hurricane is a major disruption.

Living in a condo for forty years, I never had my own yard or garden. Things are different now. There are four fruit trees in the yard: two orange, one lemon and one persimmon. One of the orange trees didn't bear this year, but the other one is so loaded some of the branches are nearly touching the ground. My brother and I have been putting in flowers and ornamental plants in the back yard and around the patio.

Since moving in, my brother and I have gotten new furniture, mainly for the living room. Fortunately, most of my old furniture has been put to use. We've also added table and floor lamps, pictures and other wall decorations. My brother and two of my sisters did a lot of painting in the house before I moved down.

Being in a house near family has allowed me to play host on holidays like Thanksgiving and Fathers Day. The kitchen and back yard barbeque have been well utilized the last few months. I'm not much of a cook, but my three sisters fill in.

As for expenses, the utilities and property taxes down here are a little lower than in Cook County (but I still have the taxes on my condo until it sells). Gasoline is a lot cheaper too. It hasn't gotten above \$3.60 a gallon over the summer. One new expense for me is the state income tax. Louisiana only waives that tax on teachers who taught in the state (We had talked about that at one of our breakfast meetings). I wonder if Illinois taxes the income on retired teachers who relocate from other states? I also had to pay a hefty fee (\$600) to re-title my car last year. Nobody ever said moving is cheap.

All in all, the adjustment to living in Crowley after 40 years in Illinois has been smooth. I still wouldn't trade my teaching career at Triton for anything.

I never had any regrets about my decision to move up to the Chicago area in 1971. I will always treasure the years teaching with my colleagues in the Science Department. And I will never forget the many friends I made at Triton and in River Grove.

John H Boulet
Crowley LA