

Richard R. Silbar
June, 2024

Moving to Grand Rapids

By the spring of 2024 Jere Turner's cognition of where she was and how to do things had deteriorated considerably. Her daughter, Kellie, who handled most of her affairs as her Power of Attorney, concluded that Jere needed more help than she was getting as an Independent Living resident at Brookdale. Kellie and her brother, Byron, decided to move their mother to Brookfield, a senior living place that was close to where Kellie lived in northern Arkansas. The new place had the advantage of also providing memory care for its residents. Jere's move took place in February.

I naturally missed Jere, as we had been quite close friends. My phone calls to her were sometimes answered. (She did not really understand her iPhone very well.) Unfortunately, my calls only served to make her unhappy about being away from her friends at Brookdale. I figured it *might* work better for her if I would come in person on a visit.

So I arranged a flight to nearby Bentonville on March 4, where I would spend a day and a half with Jere. Also unfortunately, my presence there did *not* make things any easier for Jere, who by then was also beginning to have trouble walking. Kellie suggested that it would be better for Jere to make the adjustment to the new place if I *didn't* call or visit her. I'm sorry to say that I took that advice and have only had indirect contact with Jere since. I've been told that, since then, she has come to feel much more settled in her new place, which is a nursing home with rather more help than she had at Brookfield.

So what does all that have to do with moving to Grand Rapids? Having gotten as far east as Arkansas, I decided to extend the trip to fly on to Michigan to see my various cousins and their families whom I had last seen about two years before. I arrived in the evening of March 7 and then returned to Santa Fe on the March 11.

Somewhere on the flights from Bentonville to Grand Rapids the following occurred to me. Just as Jere had moved to be closer to her Power of Attorney, so maybe I, at my advanced age of 87, should think about something similar. My POA's are cousin Ann Elizabeth and niece Janet Renee, both in Michigan. So, while staying with cousin Jean Claire, they all thought this was a good idea. A family thing.

Therefore they took me around to look at several Senior Living places in Grand Rapids. (There nearest branch of Brookdale was down by Kalamazoo, i.e. not very convenient, despite the big discount the corporation would give me if I were to move there.) The place which looked most attractive to me was Porter Hills Village, since it had a good location between Ann and Jean's. It also offered three meals a day instead of two. And,

perhaps most convincing, it offered continuous care from Enhanced Independent Living down to Memory Care. The monthly cost for a one-bedroom apartment (which is what I had at Brookdale) was about the same, albeit a bit smaller. It also came with a substantial move-in discount.

So, I went back to Santa Fe and thought about it, eventually concluding that, yes, I should make that move. I sent in the enrollment application with a deposit on March 15. I had to give Brookdale sixty days notice for my intention to leave, so the idea was to make the move around the middle of May. That is, before the Michigan weather got too warm and too humid.

My first chore-decision was find a moving company to transfer my stuff to Porter Hills, apartment A114. Someone suggested Mayflower Van Lines, which seemed to have good ratings on the web. Ann also suggested that I should ship *everything*, and the stuff which couldn't fit in the new apartment could be stored in one or another of the cousins garages. OK, pack it all up.

I called Mayflower, and they quickly transferred me to a subcontractor named Safe Ship Moving Services. This became a longish phone call with one of their agents about when they could come and pack everything up for the move and get it on the truck to Porter Hills. I walked around in my Brookdale apartment and described all the furniture and their sizes, what I had in closets and shelves, etc. This resulted in an e-mail with an estimate and a bunch of papers that had to be DocuSigned. I decided the estimate was reasonable and so I signed. Mayflower it was, and the packing-up was set to happen on May 12, a Sunday, which happened to be Mother's Day.

OK, how would I start for Grand Rapids on May 13? Driving my 2015 Prius by myself alone and all the way? A quick look at Google Maps said it would take over twenty-one hours to get there, i.e., three nights in motels. Hmm, probably not a great idea. Sell the car and buy a new one there? Arrange to have it shipped? In the end that's what I opted to do, utilizing another subcontractor called Safe Ship Auto Transport. We'd have the car picked up in Santa Fe, presumably on or before May 12. I therefore made airplane reservations for flights from Albuquerque to Grand Rapids on the 13th, with a stay-over at the Ramada Inn by the Sunport the night before.

Next chore: clean out my safe-deposit box at the Los Alamos National Bank (which had changed its name to Enterprise Bank and Trust). This mostly involved taking the collection of gold coins Maggie and I had bought in 1991 to a dealer in Santa Fe. They gladly bought them at current prices, which will hand me a large long-term capital gain when I do the income taxes for 2024. Oh well, one less thing I'd have to transport to Grand Rapids and now no need to set up a safe-deposit box there.

Speaking of banks, I had Ann set up a local checking account for me at the Lake Michigan Credit Union. That will eventually replace several of my Santa Fe bank accounts, but those won't be able to be closed down until later in the year, when a CD comes to fruition and after some pension and Required Minimum Distribution payments get deposited in the right places.

And here comes **the first glitch**. I was told that when the packers come to box things up and take the furniture to the truck, I would first have to pay them half the remaining balance on the moving cost. They clearly would be loath to take a check from me, nor would they be likely to be able to process a credit card. Aha, I could get two cashier's checks from the New Mexico Bank and Trust account to cover the pick-up and then the delivery of my things. So, I made the first of several trips to that bank, NMB&T, on Friday, May 10. Friday, because that branch would be closed on Saturday.

The teller there rightly asked, to whom the cashier's checks should be made out to and for how much? I guessed Safe Ship Moving and an amount about half the balance. On returning to my apartment it struck me I should call up Safe Ship to verify those guesses. No, they said, and the recipient – another subcontractor called A&S Packing LLC – would only accept cash or a postal money order! Really? So back to the bank with my useless cashier's checks to have them deposited back into my checking account. (Actually this involved *two* trips to the bank, since the first time I just brought the receipts, not the checks themselves.)

This (third) time, with the teller helping, we called Safe Ship and sorted out that, yes, A&S Packing *would* accept cashier's checks, made out to them and for the correct amounts (as Safe Ship calculated them). So, back to Brookdale with two precise checks just in time for Happy Hour.

At this point I began to worry about why I hadn't heard from Safe Ship Auto Transport about when they were going to pick up my car. **Another glitch**. So, calling them, I learned they were having trouble finding a driver who wanted to work on that weekend and, especially, to go out of their way to Michigan. Moreover, they thought they underestimated the cost of the transfer and it might be as much as \$400 more. Hmm, since I was supposed to be in Albuquerque Sunday evening. So, I suggested if I could leave the Prius in the Brookdale parking lot, with the key fob at the Front Desk. They could then pick it up whenever they found a driver. Good, they agreed that could work, and Annette at the Front Desk was willing to be the keeper of the fob. As it turned out, that was the way it happened.

There were no further glitches on Saturday, and I spent time packing up the contents of my file cabinets in labeled boxes. And packing a bag for the flight to Grand Rapids. And clearing the computer desk. And disassembling the TV and DVD player. Lots of

diddly work before the A&S Packing people started throwing everything else into unlabeled boxes. Safe Ship Moving informed me that A&S would be arriving sometime tomorrow, Sunday, between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM. That very wide window was never narrowed.

On Mother's Day I did the laundry and disassembled the computer (after the usual 9:00 AM backup to a flash drive). Then waited idly until the packers arrived at 10:40. **The next glitch:** there were two of them who spoke very little English, mostly Arabic. They would communicate with me using the Google Translator on their phones and by phone calls to their boss in New Jersey, who did speak (accented) English. The tall one, Khalid, came to the apartment, made a video scan of the rooms. Meanwhile the short one measured the steps to the elevator and down to the Penske truck (at that time still parked on the street). I handed over one of the cashier's checks to Khalid and then signed a DocuSign release form.

Oops, not yet ready to start packing. A phone call from Nick in New Jersey told me there were too many steps to the truck, for which I had to pay \$300. I could do that in cash. They also needed more space in the truck than the initial estimate called for. *That* would cost me \$1080 today and again on delivery at Porter Hills. I should have gotten a lot more cash from the bank but fortunately at *this* end they would accept a check written on my NMB&T account. And I had to sign another DocuSign form.

OK, they started packing, I finished disassembling the computer, and I then watched them carry all the boxes out. That done they then started taking out the furniture. By about 4:00 it was clear that they were unlikely to be finished before my Albuquerque shuttle pickup at 4:30. A phone call allowed me to change that to a 6:00 pickup, good. And the Brookdale kitchen was able to pack me a bag of food from lunch to take along to the Ramada and its microwave oven for a late supper.

The packers declared themselves done at 4:24 and they started to leave. It was good that I decided to check the rooms, and discovered that they didn't pack anything in the front closet! I ran and was able to catch up with them. They came back to clear that closet. Whew – as it had my winter coats and things I'd need in Michigan. A last check found a cane and a trekking pole were still in the rooms, but that I was able to stash them in the trunk of the Prius in the Brookdale parking lot. End of *that* long, extended glitch.

This left me time to use the john and to charge the phone in the common Living Room. The shuttle to Albuquerque did arrive on time at 6:00, picking me up at the Brookdale front door. The driver then returned to downtown Santa Fe to see if anyone else wanted to join him as a walk-on (I was the only client.) On arrival there, **another glitch:** I didn't have my cell phone! And not in my airplane baggage. No problem, said the

driver, "We can stop back at Brookdale on the way out of town." We did just that, and there it was, laying on the desk next to where I was charging it. A big whew!

That was the end of my leaving-glitches. The microwave oven at the Ramada provided my belated supper. The shuttle to the Sunport on Monday morning and the flights to Denver and Grand Rapids all went as scheduled. My cousin Dan Voorhees met me at the airport and took me home to Dan and Jean's house on Bradford Street. And soon to bed in what I still call Uncle Howard's apartment in the former garage.

In the morning I called Safe Ship Auto to learn that they were still looking for a driver. The major part of Tuesday was spent with Ann sorting out the Lake Michigan Credit Union account. And to see the empty apartment at Porter Hills, checking on progress for the re-arrangement of the right-hand closet. In the evening I went along to the Girl Scout meeting in which sub-cousin Olivia was elevated from Brownie to Junior status. Likewise the rest of the week and most of the next went by peacefully with no hints of when the moving van or car would arrive in Grand Rapids. The kids, Olivia and Jeremy Junior, decided to call me Uncle Dick instead of Cousin Dick.

The Prius arrived at Bradford Street around noon on May 20. How to pay the driver the balance of \$1120 on delivery. Of course I still did not have that much cash (I should have left Santa Fe with a bundle of it), but the driver was willing to take a check that Dan wrote. So now I had wheels again, but there was still no word about when the furniture would arrive. All that Mayflower/Safe Ship had guaranteed was that it would come in anywhere from two to twelve business days. They came on the tenth business day, Friday, May 24, again with a wide window between 8:00 and 4:00.

So on that day I went to Porter Hills and waited. They did arrive around 2:30. The same two Arabic-speakers who packed things up and in the same Penske truck. **New Glitches.** Again, they did not want to accept the cashier's check, at first. And they also wanted \$1050 more than that and yet another DocuSign form. I still did not have that much *dinero en efectivo*, but Ann and Steve were on their way and Ann had brought enough cash to cover it. After that, the unpackers then demanded more money because of the short set of stairs up to the door right next to A114. Ann refused, saying they could take the long way around through the front door, some 1500 feet away before walking down a rather long hallway to the apartment. OK, they decided to take the short route up the steps instead.

So they finally started unloading. Jean and Dan also arrived and we all pitched in. Much of the furniture was put in the places that my downsizing lady had suggested, but the bed was a total conundrum. We all quit at 4:30 and headed for home, leaving the apartment with all its boxes as is for dealing with on Saturday. I stayed the night again on Bradford Street.

Back to A114 in the morning, I was astounded to find that *someone*, I don't know who, had hooked up the TV and it was running! Just the usual set of channels, but no connection to the DVD player or to the Firestick and the internet.

I started moving what I could to be small storage area down the hall. Ann and Steve then arrived, and we stared at the Scandinavian-style bed until we figured out how it went together. To do so, Steve (a very handy man with a hammer and screwdriver) had to repair, using some angle-irons, the broken box that the bed frame sat on. Putting it all together, that is where I would sleep that Saturday night.

We also found a good place for Maggie's cedar hope chest and the horizontal file cabinet could nicely fit in the right-hand closet. Which could also accommodate the paper shredder and the color printer/copier/scanner. We also discovered that the tea cart was missing a big chunk of wood on one of its legs, but I decided to assemble it anyway. Something which we decided to put off was how to put up the wall-unit until Sunday. The poles supporting the shelving were, at this time, missing their springs and steel rods that held the poles in place against the ceiling.

We started emptying the many unlabeled boxes, putting away clothing and dishes in useful places. Steve left for his band practice, but Ann continued with that. Meanwhile I, having been invited by my three neighbors, to join them in the dining room for supper. On returning to A114, we opened a few more boxes before Ann also left for home.

On Sunday morning in some unpacking I found the missing springs and steel rods for the wall-unit poles. Good. After breakfast in the side Dining Room, I put back the files where they belonged in both file cabinets. I then began re-assembling the computer and its connections. Turning it on, it started to boot and then proceeded to go black. Oh, no, not again! In desperation I moved the power cord to the monitor over to a plug next to the Master Plug on the uninterruptible power supply. To my amazement, now it all works! I logged on and finally cleared some accumulated mail. To celebrate that I wrote a check to replace the cash that Ann had plunked down yesterday.

Ann and Steve arrived soon after. We stared at the poles for the wall-unit shelving and decided that, with a bit of cardboard as shims, they *could* be mounted in place *without* using the springs and steel rods. It worked, and after about an hour, we had them put and all the shelves in place. Much less of a problem than I expected. I went to lunch and the Tarrs went home. In the afternoon I mostly spent working on things that piled up in the computer. After supper, I finished opening the boxes and putting up the items that went on the wall-unit. It looked very much, in the end, like it had looked in the Brookdale apartment. A rather satisfying day, with mostly now only the artworks to put up and the TV/Netflix/DVD setup to get working.

On Monday morning, Memorial Day, more sorting and putting away. Ditto Tuesday and Wednesday morning, settling into a Porter Hills routine. After lunch, two maintenance guys come by to hang artwork on the solid concrete walls and to get HDMI's to work on the TV. After a few small things I could mount myself, it is only the hangin lamp that needs to be put up. I was essentially now all moved in.