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The Wall and I

In 1965 Maggie and I moved from Baltimore to Washington, D.C., (i.e., still early in our marriage when we didn't have much in the way of furniture). There was a blank wall in our Dorchester House apartment and we didn't know what to do about it. But we had a lot of books we needed to find a place for. We found a place in Georgetown that sold floor-to-ceiling poles and brackets, with which we could place long boards to make bookshelves. We bought three poles and pine boards which, after staining to look like walnut, became quite presentable.

After moving on to Los Alamos in 1967, we shipped the poles and boards and we made a bigger three-pole unit that occupied most of a wall in our bedroom. The shelves filled up with, beside books, souvenirs we bought on our trips to Mexico and elsewhere. Along with a few squash trophies. After another move in 2019, much later, to Brookdale Senior Living in Santa Fe, the poles and boards came along with us, and it all ended up looking like this:



It was now 2024 and I decided it was time to move back to Michigan, this time Grand Rapids, to be near family. Once again the pole, brackets, and boards came along with the rest of my furniture to Porter Hills Village. (See "Moving to Grand Rapids" for details about the glitches involved). A few days after the movers arrived, with a lot

of help from my cousins in getting me settled, the living room of the apartment looked like this:



That is, not much different from what the wall-unit was like back at Brookdale.

Actually it was a bit of a problem getting it to look like that. What you don't see is that the ceiling is not something solid. It consists of somewhat-soft tiles, not something that the poles with their springs and rods could push into to make a solid connection. However, Cousin Steve is a pretty handy fellow around the house, and he put together some cardboard shims that filled the gaps between the tops of the poles and the ceiling tiles. Fine, problem solved without drilling into the concrete walls.

Well, not really solved. About a week after it was up, it all decided to collapse and crash to the floor around 3:30 AM. A terrible mess, with broken glassware and crockery. Of course, the Nambe-ware trophies, a few of the wooden things, and two of the heavier glassware pieces survived. Picking them up and storing them away, it was then just a matter of Cousin Ann and me vacuuming up all the shattered glass from the oriental rug. Now, came the question – should I even *try* to re-create the three-pole structure? Perhaps with attaching some U-Bolts to the concrete walls? Would that even be allowed?

Perhaps indeed. It might now be a good time to finally retire the poles and boards. They had served us well for over fifty years. With a visit to the Design Quest

down on 28th Street, I found and bought a replacement bookcase which *leans* into the wall. Things in the living room now look like this:



You will notice that this bookcase contains somewhat fewer things than in the photos above.