

The Walker House's Sweetest Angel

16 Aug, 12 /



Maxine Tibbits and Kathy

Life at the Walker House has been made all the sweeter by the almost daily presence of Maxine Tibbits, cookie-pie-bread-cake-s'mores baker extraordinaire. But it's not her delicious baked goods that brighten up our day; it's her delightful smile, infectious laugh, and positive outlook on life that bring us joy. She literally flies into the House on angel wings, and we are grateful for her presence (and baked good presents)! Thank you, Maxine!! You are an inspiration to us all.

Lodging: We're Almost There

26 Aug, 12 /



The Walker House had been abandoned for 3+ years before we bought it in March 2012, and so we have been working hard to beautify the building and the grounds. More importantly, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that every inch of the building is up to code so that we could open the House to overnight guests. Next week a Madison, Wisconsin company will install a new panel to the Walker House state-of-the-art fire

alarm system (our guests' safety is always our top priority), and shortly thereafter the state inspector will arrive to certify the Walker House lodging. We're almost there!

Keep checking the website for the opening date of the Walker House lodging, and **be the first guest to stay at the Walker House in the second decade of the 21st century.** We have many special programs and gifts planned. In the meantime, enjoy the photos of the Walker House on the site.

The Walker House Gardens

📅 1 Sep, 12 / 🖨



The raised garden beds that Randy Larson designed are overflowing with lettuce, pole beans (some are climbing to the second floor deck), green peppers, scallions, beets, carrots, and tomatoes. It's a blessing that the gardens survived the record-breaking heat waves we had this summer. We prayed daily for the farmers who lost some of their crops to the drought, and we thanked God daily for the privilege of being able to walk outside the front door of the Walker House and gather fresh vegetables for our meals. I'm especially thankful for the chocolate tomatoes that Randy planted. They have a brownish tint to them, and they have a delicious sweet taste...but there's no hint of chocolate.

The squirrels that live in the black walnut trees in front of the building are busy burying some of the walnuts in the soil around the garden beds. I guess Autumn is on its way.

The Magic "Tuck"

14 Sep, 12 / ☐



Roland Sardeson, accomplished stone mason, skydiver, and actor (not to mention a heck of a nice guy) came to our aid in July when we were trying to tuckpoint a section of the stone wall in the Pub. The mortar we were using turned gray after it dried, and so it didn't match the beautiful "gold-yellow" mortar in the other Walker House stone walls. On my way to do errands after we discovered the unsightly mortar, I met Roland in front of the Mineral Point Opera House. When I told him about the problem, he graciously offered to come down to the Walker House that very minute to check things out. Roland eyed the gray mortar, grimaced, muttered something like "Hideous," and then grimaced again. Turns out we were using the wrong sand. "You need local sand," Roland said. I had no idea what local sand was until I drove to Roland's workshop building and found a large mound of beautiful yellow-gold sand. Roland not only filled two 5-gallon buckets of the sand for me to take back to the Walker House, he also lifted the heavy containers into the trunk of my car and loaned me a special troweling tool. "How much for the sand?" I asked. He smiled and said, "If you need more, just let me know." He then proceeded to give me tips on how to do the troweling, how to keep the sand moist, and how much patience was needed to do a good job. I was deeply touched by his generosity and wisdom.

A month later, Roland stopped by the House and inspected the mortar job that was completed by Todd Tibbits, one of our local high school workers. Roland eyed the newly mortared wall, lifted his right hand to his chin, leaned back a bit, and said, "Fine job. Fine job."

Thanks for adding your "magic tuck" to the Walker House, Roland.

Chapter One: Welcome and Thank You

📅 24 May, 13 / 📄

We have been stewards of the Walker House since early March 2012, and, if nothing else, we've learned to develop a sense of humor. We started the journey with no heat in the building, no water (23 busted pipes), and a porta-potty by the bed. The doorframes and windows were crooked (and still are), and piping that should have been in walls appeared in ceilings. Can you believe that we wanted to open for business a year ago (big laugh)?

We are transplants from Maine to Wisconsin (almost half a century now), and we are immensely proud of it. At the Walker House, we feature a strong sense of place:

- Art from Wisconsin artists, especially Hollandale and House artist, Randy Larson;
- Night tables, writing desks, art rails, and hardwood picture frames constructed in-house from trees felled a few dozen miles from here;
- Beer and wine from Wisconsin breweries and vineyards, and root beer from the Brewpub across the street;
- Food homemade with local ingredients like Jerry Marr's beef and produce from our own organic gardens;
- Super-premium ice cream from Madison-based Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream.

At the Walker House, we celebrate Everything Wisconsin, including the state's boundless sense of humor. Please smile with us when you see the proud Pointers cooking for you and serving you—they are the ones who helped transform the “big laugh” of frustration into the “pleasant smile” of accomplishment.

We are starting slowly, and we hope to grow with input from you. Please tell us how we can serve you.

Kathy and Dan Vaillancourt

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Chapter Two: Reality Pubbing

📅 30 May, 13 / 📄

A progressive Catholic nun once told me, “If you want to make God laugh, just tell Her your plans.” We had grandiose plans for the opening of the Pub last week. We invited the wonderful people of Mineral Point to come to the Walker House to enjoy homemade pizza, sodas, beer, wine, and super-premium Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream. We planned to feed a few dozen people who would chit-chat with us and help us hone our hospitality skills. In fact, 200 people flocked to the Walker House—125 on opening night. We ran out of pizzas, out of heat in the ovens (a temporary glitch), out of workers (the three college boys decided they preferred construction work to hospitality work), and out of “gas” (we were just plain pooped). We imagine God was roaring with laughter up there.

We were not exactly a lean kitchen machine either. By the numbers, we took in \$1,190 (gross revenue), and paid out \$65.50 (state tax), \$2,000 in labor costs, \$50 for utilities, and \$650 in supplies. We were a tad inefficient, I suppose.

We’ve made a few adjustments for this week. No plans. No paid help. No food. No 5-hour open doors. We’re hoping for a crackling fire in the fireplace, cold drinks, ice cream, and warm conversation in the evenings. We expect God to be watching again, perhaps this time with a smile of approval.

Chapter Three: All in the Family

📅 12 Jun, 13 / 📄

A few months ago, Eileen Moore died (Kathy’s Mom) and so did Gilbert Vaillancourt (Dan’s Dad). Near the end of their lives, they were bound to wheelchairs, and yet they both dreamed of coming to Mineral Point and the Walker House to help us fix the House so that we could welcome people from all over the world. We, too, dreamed of their “homecoming,” and we worked hard so that they could wheel themselves throughout the House. It will never happen.

But that’s not the end of the story. A 20th century French philosopher Gabriel Marcel explained through his concept of creative fidelity that when persons cannot be physically next to us, their presence—a combination of memories, values, character, stories—can engage and influence us. It simply requires us to be creatively faithful to them. In other words, we can choose through remembering them to let them be near us, to engage them, and to find creative ways to let them influence us. This creative fidelity is powerful stuff and a wonderful way to keep living with the people we love so much when they are away from us.

When you come to the Walker House, we welcome you into our home, exactly as our Mom and Dad would have done. We are genuinely happy to see you, we want to hear about your day, and we want to share everything we have with you. And, like Mom and Dad, we function with modest financial goals: food and drink prices remain low because we want you to come back (we

just want to pay the bills and build an endowment—more about the endowment in a subsequent chapter); the price you see is the price you pay (as to the sales tax and gratuity, we'll pay them); and we drive our resources into purchasing real food, grown organically and naturally by us and our neighbors, and always homemade before we serve it to you. We're proud to say that, though Mom and Dad won't be at the Walker House, you'll definitely "see" them.

It's all in the family.

To Be Continued...