

Open House is More Than an Open House

By Holly Minniti

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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!

