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Let's start 2021 with a much needed laugh or two - by Brian White

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For commercial real estate appraisers, most days are spent inspecting buildings, walking land, gathering data, crunching numbers and writing reports. The general public likely thinks that the life of a commercial real estate appraiser is dull and uneventful, however that is not always the case. The year of 2020 was one that was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. People are getting sick with some being very sick and others are dying. We have seen many businesses forced to close their doors. People are out of work. Unemployment spiked then retreated to higher than desirable levels. Overall, it was a year that was nothing to laugh about. As 2021 begins, there appears to be some hope with the vaccine being rolled out but recent increases in COVID infections is a reminder that we have a long way to go before we are back to normal or the "new normal." Being a "glass is half full" guy, I believe that a positive attitude and a sense of humor is often the best medicine, especially when things appear to be going in the wrong direction. So with that in mind, let's start the New Year with some laughs.

Over the years, several funny things have happened to me while inspecting various student housing developments located in Durham. When you get 18-year-olds living on their own for the first time, it is nothing but laughs (unless you're the parents). Once when inspecting a student apartment unit, I was taking a picture of the living room when a student asked me if she should move the rather large bong from the coffee table. I told her not to worry, mom and dad aren't going to see these pictures unless they work at the bank! There was another time when I was inspecting an older student housing building that, on the exterior, had the look of the building from Animal House the movie. I was taken through the kitchen having to hurdle piles and piles of empty beer cans and bottles to reach the living room. The living room was a rather large room complete with a shiny gold pole that went from the floor to the ceiling. I never knew they taught fire safety at UNH! One time when I was inspecting a sorority building, the house manager announced a warning that we were entering the second floor area. Immediately, there were numerous screams and several bodies went scrambling for their rooms. All I remember seeing was towels and legs, towels and legs. That's my story and I'm sticking to it!

My last anecdote has nothing to do with college students. I had an inspection of a light industrial building set up on the other side of the state. I was there about 15 minutes early when I entered the office portion of the building and approached the receptionist. The receptionist desk was part of a large open office area. There were six or seven office workers in this open but fairly compact area. Since I was early, I asked her "Is there a restroom nearby?" Again, this was a small office area and everyone could and was listening to our conversation. The receptionist responded, loud enough for everyone to hear "Are you looking for something quick or would you rather sit down?" Now, all of the eyes in the office are on me waiting to hear my next words. I responded "I said restroom....not restaurant!" The entire office exploded with laughter realizing the awkward misunderstanding of just one word.

I wish everyone a happy, healthy, rewarding and prosperous 2021.

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