



If you happen to live in the small, brick, two-story house near the corner of Hoover and College streets, west of the campus and north of South Greek, you do not need to memorize your house number. Just say you live in the Cow House; everyone knows where it is.

Painted a stark white with strategically placed, large black Holstein markings, the Cow House is a campus area landmark. One of two identical houses built side by side by brothers in the 1930s, it was not to acquire its distinctive markings until much later.

Inez Wise purchased the house in 1966 from the original owner as a place for her future retirement. Inez was an English teacher living on a farm near Shawnee with husband Bill, a teacher and principal; both were OU education graduates of the mid-'50s. Inez wanted to be close enough to the campus to walk to the Union where she could eat in the cafeteria and talk to students. First using the house on weekends, she instructed Bill to leave his fishing and hunting gear in the laundry room as this was her "city refuge." An avid reader, Inez loved the OU library, the campus' Cherokee Gothic architecture, fine arts performances, as well as sporting events.

Inez and Bill's son, Paul, soon took over the house, living there with several Delta Tau Delta fraternity brothers until his graduation in 1968. One of his housemates, Dan Nelson, OU political science and law graduate, once saved the house from destruction by single-handedly carrying a smoldering sofa down the stairs.

Within days of her marriage to Paul, Susan Gunderson, '68 education, moved from the Delta Delta Delta sorority into 1023 College. Their son, David, was born a year later, the only time that one bedroom became a nursery. Paul's military obligation soon took the family to Fort Knox, Kentucky, where daughter Amy was born.

Now retired, Inez reclaimed her "refuge" until 1971, when Paul's family, plus Susan's brother, Jim Gunderson, a petroleum land management major from Fairfax, Virginia, moved back. Leaving



Paul, Susan and David Wise in front of the Cow House.

for Oklahoma City in 1972, Paul and Susan retained certain proprietary rights as the house began its long history as a rental home to an estimated 200 OU students. During football seasons in the '70s, David and Amy parked cars in the front and back yards at \$5 each. Susan claims the sight of a 5-year-old holding a "Park Here" sign in one hand, while eating a peanut butter sandwich with the other, attracted a loyal clientele who returned year after year.

David Wise came to OU as a freshman in 1987 and moved into the house with his best friend, Scott Freeland from Tulsa. David and Scott had a cowhide chair and in 1989 painted the front door to match the chair. The logical next step in 1990, with parental permission, was to paint the front of the house white with the large black Holstein spots. It was a stroke of unintended but inspired marketing genius; the Cow House was never again difficult to rent.

Amy Wise and a number of different housemates took over the house when brother David left for graduate study at the London School of Economics in 1991. A 1994 vocal music education graduate, Amy, who now lives in Edmond, moved in a couple of electric keyboards and filled the

house with music. On Amy's 22nd birthday, just before graduation, her now-husband of 15 years, Christopher Harrell, proposed in the front yard of the Cow House.

Today both David and his wife, Krista (Morton, '91 math), who live in Austin, and Amy and Christopher have children of their own and are looking ahead to a fourth generation of the family at OU. In the meantime, the Cow House saga has come full circle as Paul and Susan took the campus landmark off the rental market last summer with a post-retirement move from Houston back to where it all began—all 1,300 square feet of it.

After many years as a student residence, the house required some skillful refurbishing while retaining most of the interior features its alumni recall with fondness. The exterior, however, at first seemed a little too collegiate for the older Wises, and a fresh coat of all-over white was ordered. A horrified David protested, set up a Facebook page and solicited support. Hundreds of former residents and fans responded with pleas to retain the spots. Paul and Susan relented, reapplying freshly black Holstein markings.

"As aptly put by one former resident of the Cow House," Susan explains, "without the spots, it's just another house." —CJB