

800 lb gorilla in my garage

The phone rang on Monday, February 25th at 10:30 a.m. The caller asked for final directions to my home. According to my calculations, he was about thirty miles away. (Now, I have to get used to kilometers and neglect miles; get used to centimeters and meters and neglect inches and feet. As the old saying goes, “it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks,” but at least, this human canine has no choice but to learn.)

The phone call was a welcome gift that morning. I gave the driver directions and judged that it would take him about forty minutes to get to my house. Immediately, I went to share the good news with my family across the road. I returned, opened the gates into my short drive way in preparation and waited in anticipation.

Thirty minutes later, I got another call from the driver. He just wanted to make sure of my directions as he called out some familiar sights he had just passed. I assured him that he was on the right road. Ten minutes later, I saw the white van make its way toward me. I beckoned him forward and he began to reverse into my driveway. It was a day to remember. The time was 11:15 a.m.

He opened the back doors to reveal a familiar sight. I recognized it immediately. “This is your stuff,” he said. “I know it is, I’ve been waiting for it for almost seven weeks. With dolly in hand, he gradually unloaded the 812 pound gorilla into my garage.

While he emptied it, we chatted about his moving experiences. He told me about his travels with the moving company to many parts of Europe and even into Russia. I asked about language adjustments, Customs regulations and often being away from family for long periods of time.

Soon, the van was empty. The boxes, the golf clubs and my favorite bike all seemed intact. The driver was on his way back to Dublin. I just stood there in silence looking over my stuff. I didn’t want to open the boxes immediately and see if all the contents survived, especially the breakables. I wanted to savor the moment.

The last time I saw the boxes stacked together was on a weighing scale at the moving company in Gulfport. Prior to that, through a series of misinformation, we negotiated through the changing information from the moving company. Some time later, I received a tracking number and confirmation that my stuff would travel from New York on a cargo ship called the “Atlantic Companion.”

Almost daily, I checked the information provided. The anticipated date of departure was in theory, not in practice. As the Atlantic Companion crossed the Atlantic, I checked its positions. On February 8th, it anticipated docking at Liverpool, England. Logically, its next port of call should be Dublin but, alas, it went on to Gothenburg and other north Atlantic ports.

Through it all, the Irish moving company kept in contact with me, making sure that I had supplied all the necessary and up-to-date paperwork to allow my shipment to clear Customs without having to pay duty. On Friday, February 22nd, I received a phone call that said my shipment had cleared Customs. We had achieved another milestone on the journey.

A journey of almost 5,000 miles had ended. Its journey mirrored my own journey. My shipment contained books I had read and been enriched by; golf clubs that yearned to wear out rather than rust out; a bike that wanted to test its endurance on Irish country roads; DVD’s and CD’s that gave me pleasure in stressed times; memorabilia for pivotal moments on my journey and of course, retirement presents to help relive special memories.

Slowly, over the next few days, I defrocked the gorilla and make him more palatable. I realized I was not changing one parish for another. Instead, I was still in transition. I was changed, not being changed from one place to another. I realized that life is a journey, not a destination; that there is no last chapter to any of our lives because the last chapter, when it is eventually written, will be called, “to be continued.”