

TIMELINE (#15A)

THE BROWN ROOM & AWARD

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. I lived in Lloyd House, West Quadrangle, for my first 3 school years (1953 – 1956). During my first year, I lived with Bill Parks. During my second and third years, we were joined by Jim Black.
 2. Lloyd House was extremely fortunate to have a treasure, the Brown Room, which was unique among all dormitories.
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STORY 1

The following excerpt was lifted verbatim from my very first letter from U of M to my parents, 9/14/53 (1 day after I arrived at Lloyd House):

“They have a room down the basement called the Brown Room, named after a kid that stayed here [Lloyd House] in 1948 that was killed when a train hit the truck he was riding in while hitch-hiking here from New York; his father gave him enough but he pocketed the money. The father donated \$10,000 for the room. It's got a \$1,000 record player built into the wall, all modern furniture, books, dictionaries, & encyclopedias. It's really nice.”

STORY 2

English 11-2, October 29, 1953

THE BROWN ROOM

“We have a large study room in our house which was built two years ago by a Mr. Brown in memory of his son who once lived here but was killed in an automobile accident. This room is one of the best places a person could ask for in which to study. Its walls are soundproof, it has no noisy television set to turn it into a theater, and its phonograph plays only soft, classical records. It has a library of perhaps two hundred volumes, the Encyclopedia Britannica, and all the latest magazines and newspapers to help you in your research. Only the most modern furniture is found in it and the inlaid carpet seems at times to be three inches thick. The room has a wonderful lighting and heating system which almost makes a person want to study. Food or drinks, which would dirty its floor and soil its furniture, are not allowed within the door. Put all these things together and you have a beautiful room and a wonderful atmosphere to study in.”

STORY 3

Excerpt from Lloyd-Tab-Lloyd, October 11, 1954

1. The Don Brown Memorial Room is open for business. The room is for the men in the house to use, but for obvious reasons, we have to make a rule or two. Naturally, only someone who knows how to run the Hi-Fi can be allowed to do so. So only people on the committee, whom I know are qualified, can keep the room open. Everybody can get on the committee, though, so see me in room 311, if you should ever want to use the Brown Room when it isn't open.

2. WHO WAS DONALD JOEL BROWN?

A life story of Don Brown's all-too-short lifetime is beyond the scope of the present editorship of the Lloyd-Tab-Lloyd. However, the following was discovered in our file of old undated Lloyd Tab-Lloyd issues and may be of interest:

BROWN DEFIES SCIENCE

Donald Brown, well-known and beloved freshman of Lloyd House, this afternoon at 5:30pm attempted and almost succeeded in accomplishing the impossible. Don made a gallant effort to consume 60 raw oysters within the space of one half-hour.

The crowd was tense as they gathered in back of the arena, then a mighty cheer arose as Mr. Brown entered the room and sat down calmly awaiting his task. I had checked earlier in the day with authorities of the University medical and biology department. Both agreed that this task, after a somewhat lengthy treatise on the human stomach and intestines, was possible. Don chuckled merrily when he heard this. "We shall see," he said, "I Don Brown will defy all science."

Mr. Brown began his meal with great gusto, and although he did not finish the 60, he did manage to put 48 of the little devils away. Perhaps Mr. Brown could have completed the repast if he had paced himself a little better.

At any rate, Don has proved himself a man of courage and intestinal fortitude. We offer our profound congratulations on such a remarkable exhibition. In fact, after eating those oysters, he consumed the pork chop dinner tonight. (Ed. Note: On interviewing Don a few minutes ago, his only comment was "burp.")

STORY 4

In memory of his son, Mr. Brown not only donated the funds to build the Brown Room, he donated a \$100 scholarship annually to a Lloyd House resident. To qualify for this unique honor, the resident needed a 2.7 (B-) GPA and must have lived in Lloyd House for at least 3 semesters. In March, 1955, I (Tom Boyer) was one of only 11 residents who met these requirements. Our house council winnowed the field to the final 4 contenders, of which I was one. Through a complex selection process, the resident judged to have made the most significant contribution to Lloyd House during the year was declared the winner. An alternate, who would win the monetary scholarship only if the winner didn't return to Lloyd House, was also selected. In 1955, the scholarship was awarded to our house president, Harry Burke. I was not selected as the winner or alternate.

The following year, another scholarship was presented at a banquet on 3/20/56. This time, although I still didn't win the monetary scholarship, I was selected as the alternate (from a field of 111 residents). I was very proud of this award and received the recognition of my peers and a hearty round of applause. My plaque reads: *"This is to certify that THOMAS J. BOYER, in recognition of his scholarly achievements and of his outstanding contribution to Lloyd House, has been awarded the Donald Joel Brown Memorial Fund Award."*

The new president of Lloyd House won the monetary scholarship, returned to Lloyd House, and received the \$100 award. For reasons not associated with this scholarship, my 2 roommates and I moved out of Lloyd House and into independent housing the following year. My Memorial Fund Award plaque has been proudly displayed on walls of my homes for over 58 years now.

STORY 5

During my most recent trip to Michigan from California, I visited the U of M campus with my friend Ada Jane Akin and our personal tour guide, my cousin Kathy Hopps on 10/16/09. Kathy drove us to West Quad and finagled a way into Lloyd House (which now requires a card key to enter). After checking out my old rooms at #211 and #217, we went to the basement to check out the Brown Room. I was extremely disappointed to discover that this illustrious room, as well as the adjacent recreation room had been converted into common student living quarters.

Shortly after this Michigan trip, I called my old friends (of 55 years), Larry Green (in Michigan) and Dan Weinstein (in New York state). I lived in Lloyd House with these gentlemen for a year or more. After I told them that I had visited the U of M campus and gone into Lloyd House, the first question each of them asked concerned the well-being of the Brown Room. Both were aghast and stupefied to learn of its dismal fate.
