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7-15-2012

July 15, 2012: Our House

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Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2012). July 15, 2012: Our House. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/660>

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Title: Our House

Date: 2012-07-15T16:06:00.001-04:00

7/15/2012—There was a story in yesterday's Post-Gazette about cooperative householding by three women in their 60's who found themselves "divorced, leading active lives with full careers, living by themselves but never lonely." They faced the problem of aging and retirement on their own and decided to buy a house together. They now live together but separately. The story can be found here. The three have just self-published a book about their experiences entitled My House, Our House. I'm sure you can find it. The story tells us a great deal about our society. For example, these three are not life-long friends or family, as would have been the case in years past. After all, women have always outlived men and even without divorce women faced similar issues in the past. But in the past, the expanded household would probably have included mostly family members of one kind or another. Second, there are a lot of legal/financial issues involved in a Tenancy in Common deed for the house and a voluntary association to pay all the house-related bills. For one thing, when one of the three dies, the share goes to heirs, not to the other owners. That may mean that the home must then be sold. Third, there was no mention in the story about children or grandchildren. No one from the outside can move in, so the whole notion of a child needing a place to live for a time could not be accommodated. For that matter neither could a new romantic relationship. All in all, it is a unique mix of the communal and the individual. It is the sort of thing that is invented when close neighborhoods and families are rarer than they used to be.