



Wednesday, August 7, 2002

## On guard at Meadow Brook Hall

Forget the corner office – Jon Levin believes he has one of the best work locations on the planet. As night guard for **Meadow Brook Hall**, he acknowledges the privilege, and responsibility, of guarding Oakland's treasured historical house museum.

"Meadow Brook Hall is irreplaceable," Levin said. "It would be terrifically difficult to find and assemble artisans capable of reproducing the hall's artwork and architecture. The hall cannot be entrusted to mechanical sensors and alarms. Human discrimination is required to sense and interpret potential problems such as fire, flood or intrusion."

Levin's history with Meadow Brook Hall dates back to his student years at Oakland in the early 1970s. He worked at Meadow Brook Hall as a security guard his junior and senior years.

"When the Hall is empty, it's one of the quietest and nicely furnished study halls around," Levin said.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in psychology at Oakland, Levin attended graduate school at the University of Michigan and then pursued a career in health care management. In 1995, after working 20 years in the corporate environment, Levin decided he wanted a career change.

"I thought about what made me happiest in my life, and I kept thinking about my position at Meadow Brook Hall," Levin said.

He applied, and returned to the job he loved as a student.

In 2000, Levin was appointed lead guard and supervises a staff of six guards, all Oakland students or former students. Levin's nights are spent walking through the 110 rooms of the mansion and monitoring the outside grounds. Between security rounds, he plays guitar, does yoga, reads and studies stock option strategies.

However, the midnight to 8 a.m. shift in an 80,000-square-foot mansion isn't for everyone, and Levin knows several guards who didn't make it through the night.

"There are many noises and sudden creaks and groans caused by temperature changes outside," Levin says. "If you hear one of these squeaks at 3 a.m., and you're not a rational person, your imagination could run wild."

He recalls an event that occurred around midnight on Christmas Eve in 1972 when he was alone in **Meadow Brook Hall**.

"Suddenly, a fire erupted in the fireplace. I was really startled because this was not a gas or electric fireplace, just an old-style, wood burning fireplace," said Levin. "Of course, one logically deduces that an ember from a previous fire was smoldering away until it resulted in combustion."

Levin won't confirm or deny the presence of ghosts at Meadow Brook Hall, but said he's on "friendly terms with the spirits."

The following John Ruskin quote is one Levin says reflects the attitude of those who designed and built **Meadow Brook Hall**:

"When we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight nor for present use alone. Let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for; and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stories will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say, as they look upon the labor and wrought substance of them, See! This our ancestors did for us."

### SUMMARY

Forget the corner office – Jon Levin believes he has one of the best work locations on the planet. As night guard for Meadow Brook Hall, he acknowledges the privilege, and responsibility, of guarding Oakland's treasured historical house museum. Levin's history with Meadow Brook Hall dates back to his student years at Oakland in the early 1970s.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, August 7, 2002  
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, August 7, 2002  
Article Start Date: Monday, November 3, 2003

