I HAD A DREAM

By

Bob Mulloy

Yes, I had a dream. It was a little whimsical, but I would like to share my dream with you just to keep our profession on the lighter side and perhaps even to see if you care to share my dream. The last names have been left out to protect the innocent.

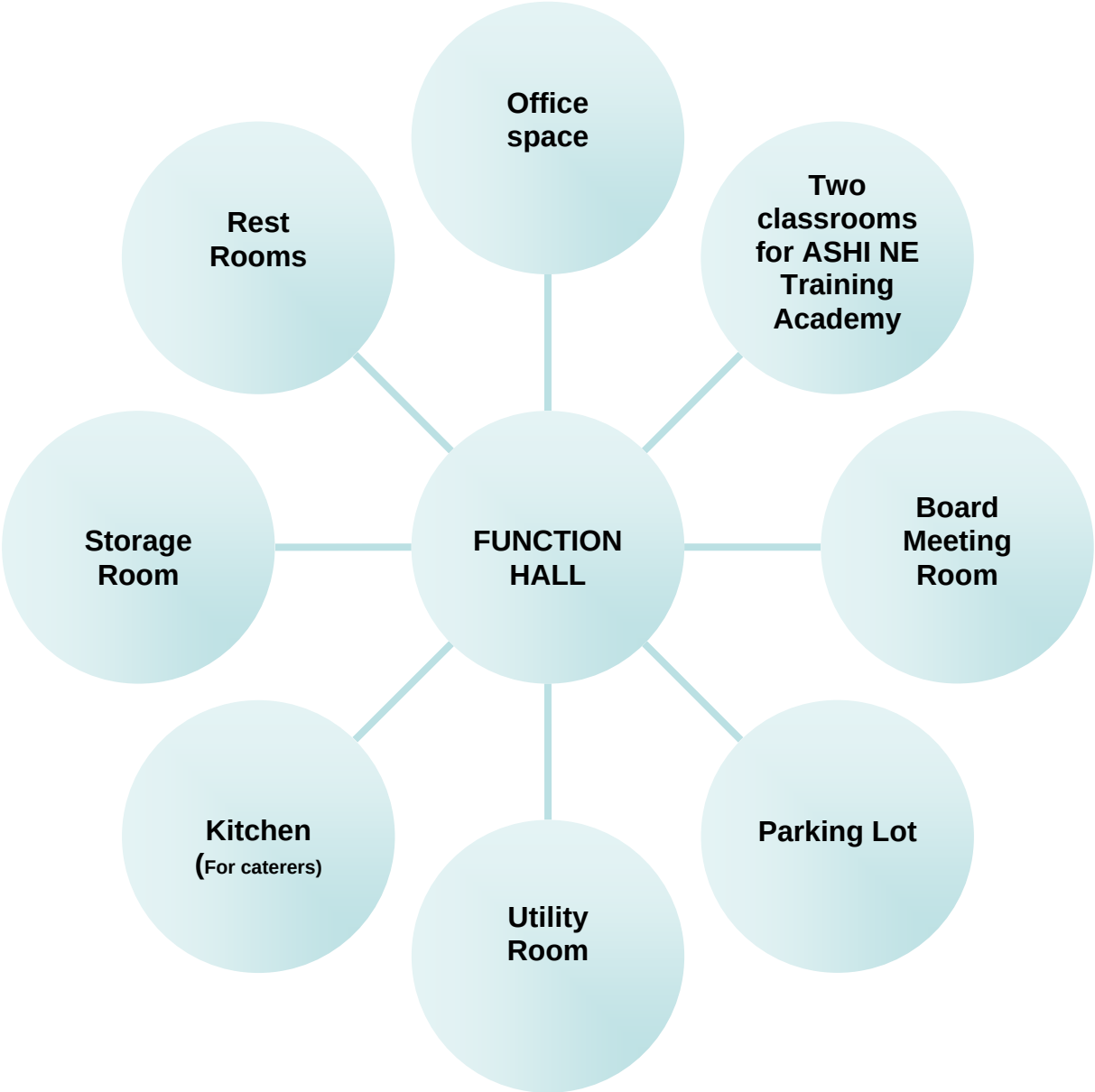
The dream started this way. An anonymous benefactor donated some land to ASHI New England and the Board decided to use the land to build a permanent home for the Chapter. All members were enthusiastic about my dream and the Board's proposal, so they unanimously passed a motion to build ASHI New England a home. The members voted to form a "Building Committee" charged with conducting a feasibility study and creating a master plan. The motion passed by the members also contained a requirement that each member actively participate in either the planning or construction of the new facility with the eventual goal of a "good old New England barn raising."

While playing Monopoly, Paul K. did a bit of financial research and determined that the Chapter would actually make money for other Chapter objectives by constructing its own building. With Chapter camaraderie and donations, the new building would have no mortgage, and with the elimination of monthly facility rental fees and seminar rental fees, additional money could be saved and utilized for other Chapter objectives. Plus by renting the function hall to others, an income would be realized. Paul K. (alias the treasurer) rolled the dice and won a "get out of jail free card" for the Chapter!

The Building Committee polled the membership to determine who could provide design, engineering and construction assistance. To no one's surprise, the Committee discovered more than enough talent within the Chapter to build anyone's dream home. And so it was decided to proceed with the project. Remember, it's only a dream.

Members began "brainstorming" possible uses for an ASHI New England building during several round table discussions. In addition to hosting monthly meetings and occasional seminars, the Chapter decided to host regular "home buying seminars" for the public at a nominal fee. Lennie L. was overwhelmed by the idea and decided to communicate the Chapter's goals to all media sources. Not to be outdone, Jim O. suggested that we not overlook the potential for educational opportunities. He proposed that we seek State approval and establish the "ASHI New England Training Academy" - and thereby insure that all future home inspectors receive a professional education. A few members wanted to rent the hall for their next wedding reception.

Bill S. recommended that the Chapter develop a "strategic plan" and offered his architectural expertise to guide the members in the design process. "In order to build a facility that Jake could not find fault with," Bill S. proposed that "the Chapter go slow and plan ahead." His strategy was to assist the Chapter identifying purpose and spatial needs, eventually leading to the drawing of final construction plans. He prophesied that a bubble drawing would aid in the conceptual design process so that each space within the new building would accommodate the needs of the Chapter. And so with bubble gum in hand, Bill S. created the following diagram for chapter consideration:



To speed up this dream before I loose your attention, the planning was completed and the Chapter endorsed the project wholeheartedly. Ron P. (the Italian Stallion) was instrumental in soliciting all affiliate members and vendors to donate construction materials and especially in getting “This Old House” to underwrite the entire project. Green construction, modular and site-built options were all considered.

The Building Committee made its final presentation to the Board and the membership to make my dream a reality. A date was set for site preparation, foundation construction and the member’s barn-raising day in the limelight. Don L. rolled his eyes in fear of the cameras’ filming certain ASHI members holding a hammer. Nevertheless, he shouted “wagons ho” and make sure you show up ready to get dirty and grow blisters. Did anyone contact the “House Detective Show?”

Now in my dream, the entire planning and construction only took one day. Of course it was a warm sunny day and everyone did show up to help. Norm Abrams was flabbergasted when every ASHI member arrived wearing a plaid shirt! Sophie was in charge of a well-stocked refreshment stand with

enough food for an army. Al brought along a few kegs of beer for all. As for me, I was on a break just standing back and taking in the whole scene, amused at what I saw.

Mel C. was elected as “Clerk of the Works.” He was very comfortable sitting beneath a large ASHI umbrella with the blue prints spread out on the table. He gathered everyone around the table to offer a short prayer and words of encouragement, but then cursed when he found that the batteries in his bullhorn were dead. A Candidate was sent shopping for batteries ASAP. Mel gave out assignments like a general and the troupes accepted his words without reservation. The “great white father” had spoken!

Dennis R. was thrilled to have drawn the assignment of writing out invitations to brokers for the house-warming party.

At this point, someone mentioned the word “PERMIT” and everyone froze in their tracks. “No problem,” said Jack D. “The local building inspector promised that he would be here and by golly there he is now just parking his car.” The inspector no sooner got out of his car when Greg F. began a discussion on the building code with the guy. It seems that the project required a “change order,” so Jack D. proposed an amendment to the State Building Code to correct the oversight. Everyone was aghast at the sight of Jeff M. sneezing inside his respirator!

Ken K. was in charge of materials. It was a humorous sight watching him measure a 2 x 4 with a slide rule yet!

Arnie G. was busy in the basement with some guys named Keyes. They were arguing over the proper placement of the rebostat on the new high efficiency HVAC hydro-hybrid super duper space age no-fuel mechanical total house system. They agreed to spin Arnie G, around three times and just place the thing wherever his two-section nose pointed.

Bob O. had to be restrained because of his graffiti. It seems he was writing by-laws all over the building. Don L. was spotted sitting under a tree mumbling to himself, “Why me Lord?”

Ron P. was kept busy as the “head gofer.” Anytime Ken K. announced a material’s shortfall, Ron P. would call his cousin (Louie the Leg-Breaker), and donations of building materials would suddenly appear on the property. Paul R. was busy as traffic manager, directing people where to park or where to drop a load (after all, he was the only one fully insured).

Dean S. was sighted six blocks away looking through a transit while Dan D. (being the tallest member) held up the stick. Don L. was later called to bail them out. It seems they were caught focusing on the wrong window!

Al M. had his hands full trying to steady a 40-foot ladder for Paul C. who was trying to see if the new building would have a water view from the ridge line. The balancing act was a sight to behold!

Bob C. had his hands full with the mess in the backyard. It seems his Title 5 inspection was knee deep but making progress. He reminded me of Art Carnie working down in the sewer.

Alex S., wearing his old “Vote for the Duke” tee-shirt, was assigned the dubious distinction of straightening out all of the nails dropped by Jimmy M. He was seen picking up nails weeks after the building was completed.

Mike A. and David N., the roofing crew, had no head for heights so they formed an assembly line from grade to the middle of the staging only. From there, they could hold their breaths and pass one

roofing shingle at a time to Lisa A. to fasten to the roof. She proved to be deadly with a nail gun. With a little extra air pressure, she could fire a nail from three feet away and score a bulls-eye on each shingle that she hit. The ones that she missed, well let's just say that the terrorist alert was elevated on that day.

It seems that our menagerie was drawing a crowd. So Paul K., being an entrepreneur, set up a booth to sell tickets and lemonade. He also set up yellow tape as a barricade and tried to keep the laughter down to a dull roar in deference to the file crew from P.B.S.

Barbara S. & Guy O. were circulating among the Chapter members selling raffle tickets. The prize of the day was to be a "weekend for two far from New England."

Yes, I had a dream. I was able to sit back and enjoy the show. I seldom remember my dreams, but the sight of our Chapter working as a family to achieve a monumental goal was inspiring. Who knows, perhaps some of you may even share my dream. Do you think it could ever become a reality? I just hope that Don L recovers from his breakdown and that his therapist is not an ASHI member.