

Music, Risk, Three-Eyed Frogs and Other Experiments: Life in Livingston College's House 15, Circa 1972-1975



By Joe Birish, LC'75

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I graduated from Livingston College as part of the Class of 1975. I lived in the House 15 dorm from the fall of 1972 to June 1975. House 15 was a great dorm to live in at the time, as it had a lot of students who were into an alternative lifestyle, which was typical of that time. Most of us were advocates for the legalization of marijuana, and House 15 was a fairly safe place for students to indulge in experimenting with pot and other substances.

This dorm had a real communal feel to it, as most of the students were really into the music of the era. Quite a few of us had big record collections and we enjoyed blasting our music very loudly. Board games like "Risk" were very popular, and we played them in the House 15 lounge several times a week. (I included a line about the Risk game in my song lyrics.)

Every Thursday night we had a low-stakes poker game (penny, nickel, dime, quarter betting only). The poker games started around 9 p.m. and sometimes would continue till 2 a.m.

Since the drinking age was 18 back then, alcohol kept the poker games pretty interesting. By midnight some players were not seeing their cards correctly!

In the spring of 1973, we had "House-15" T-shirts made up, and most of us purchased one. The T-shirt included a cartoon of a green three-eyed frog as our dorm mascot.

In 1973, I wrote an original song about some House 15 experiences, and I made a home recording of the song with me on vocals and guitar that summer. In 2014, I was going through my old tapes and rediscovered this song. I liked the original recording but wanted to add to it, so I copied the recording to an eight-track tape deck and added drums, a second guitar and harmony vocals. (Listen to the

[House 15](#) song [2 minutes, 51 seconds]. See the lyrics below.)

I also found a recording of an instrumental rock jam from the spring of 1973 that was recorded in the lounge of a dorm in Quad 2. It included me on drums, a bass player from House 15, and two guitarists from Quad 2. (Listen to *Quad Rumble* [3 minutes, 47 seconds].)

HOUSE 15

Original music and lyrics by Joe Birish (c. 1973)

I must be out-spaced, or is it spaced out?

That hash oil flavor has confused all my doubts.

The stairs are now cushioned, as I glide smoothly down.

The lights are much cooler, as my mind spins around.

Chorus:

All in 15, we came to know, some quite nice times, belonging and close.

We were together, partners in crime, parties and ludes, oh what good times.

Where are they now, in how many jails, who's behind bars and who's out on bail?

What we did wrong is a mystery to me, but the system can't stand, us kids being free!

I need some sleep, I need a rest.

I want to love you, but I'm such a mess.

Been partying all night, I've got classes to miss.

Here comes the daylight, and we've just finished Risk.

Repeat chorus twice.

Joe Birish (pictured above in 2001) is a 1975 graduate of Livingston College at Rutgers University. His opinions are not necessarily those of the Livingston Alumni Association or Rutgers University.

Email Joe (), and hear more of his original songs.

