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Rancho Park



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A Tale of Two Vacations

By Lilli Lee

You know the saying: When the cat's away, the mice will play? Well we are experiencing a bit of that in our house this week but by 'cat,' I mean Ben and 'play' really translates to me handling the April newsletter while he's in Hawaii with our eldest son, Mason. So, I hope you enjoy this month's batch of articles... just think of it as those Vogues that get guest edited by someone cool and famous. But instead of Kate Hudson or Michelle Obama, you are stuck with me: Lilli Lee- wife of Westside real estate superstar Ben Lee. I'm reporting for duty from Cheviot Hills, selflessly caring for two of our three sons while Ben's sipping mai-tais with Mason, having adventures tailor made for two crazy guys on the town. I hope this isn't already coming off as bitter. Or at least not VERY bitter. To be perfectly honest, I'm actually happy holding down the fort. Happy may be too strong a word- it's more that I'm OK sitting this trip out and truth be told, it's Ben's turn and here's why. We have a tradition in our family that started when Mason was about to turn 10 and I was antsy to go to New York City. Spencer was 7 and Vinnie not quite 5 and I needed a break from the rigors of being a stay-at-home mom of three young sons. So, I had the idea to take Mason to New York for the weekend, just the two of us. He has always been super easy and a go-with-the-flow kind of fellow and I was excited to spend some alone time with him after being so distracted by the wants and needs of the other boys. We jetted away, leaving Ben to care for the younger brothers for a few days. We enjoyed all the best tourist attractions New York had to offer: Broadway shows, views from the tops of tall buildings, steak dinners, rock climbing in Central Park, the giant Lego store and so much more. The highlight of the weekend was being able to give the gift of autonomy to a sweet 10 year old boy who had spent the last decade having to compromise and share his mom with the siblings who followed him. In New York he was afforded the rare gift of getting to do what he wanted, not what was an agreed upon activity between brothers. This was a novel concept for him and he was thrilled!

You might wonder how I was able to squire Mason away without suffering the guilt and protests of the three



men we left behind. That part was surprisingly easy! I told the other two brothers they'd get their turn with me when they each turned 10. And to a despondent Ben who was not only jealous that Mason and I were off on an adventure, but slightly terrified at having to take over duties for the other two, I promised: "If I can do this with them when they're 10—you can have 'em at 15! Take them wherever you want!" and WHOOSH! With that we were out the door and on our way to a fun filled weekend away.

Fast forward five years and the other boys indeed got their NYC weekend with me and each trip could not have been better or more meaningful. But somewhere in there Mason turned 15 and that promised solo trip with dad didn't materialize. It wasn't for lack of trying but between camp commitments and family trips taken all together, the summer of 2019 came and went without time for them to do anything alone. Then 2020 hit and the pandemic/lockdown/quarantine that came with it made travel an impossibility. Mason's 16th birthday coincided with a summer in which everything became too stressful and tense and scary to break away for a guys' adventure trip. But as we were rounding the bend of January 2021, Ben was more than ready to get out of dodge (Cheviot Hills) for a bit. He had been surfing every couple of days here in town and was anxious to hit the shores of Hawaii for a challenge and much needed change of scenery. With airline miles about to expire and the assurance that Covid precautions were plentiful, he booked all five of us on a trip to coincide with Mason's spring break from school,

thinking we would all be excited to get away. I am not ashamed to admit that I panicked. Thanks to the threat of Covid, this past year has thoroughly terrified me. The thought of being on an airplane, in an airport, having to constantly worry that one of the boys would touch something or forget their masks or someone might cough in our vicinity sent me into a tailspin of dread. This trip looming on the calendar not only filled me with anxiety but it also magnified how differently our ideas of relaxation have changed since the onset of the pandemic. In order for Ben to fully decompress, he needs to be out of town (although something tells me he's already ran into somebody he knows on some remote Hawaiian beach!). When he's in his office, which for all intents and purposes has become home, or out walking around the neighborhood, he is unable to fully escape the world of residential real estate. I, on the other hand, am able to take a break from the toils of my day-to-day life by ordering take out and ignoring school surveys and zoom sessions for a while. Under normal circumstances I love getting out of town as much as anyone—I truly do! But for me, the thought of staying home- safely ensconced in our boring, Covid-free bubble was infinitely more relaxing than traveling. Beyond that, the other boys who were not on Spring Break would've had to log-on to school at 5am Hawaiian time every morning. That small detail sounded pretty miserable for everyone.

And, as much as it kills me to miss an adventure, a deal is a deal and it was Ben's turn. I wanted him to experience with Mason at 16 what I was lucky enough to enjoy with each

of our boys at 10. Spending one on one time together is a gift that is only ours for such a short amount of time. They missed the chance at 15 and he won't be 16 for much longer. Then it's really just a blink-of-an-eye before he's off to college and wanting to spend vacations with friends over his parents (I hope not but who are we kidding?!). There's also the other important lesson this past year has taught us: don't put off tomorrow what you can do today. You just never know when a whole year will be gone without the chance to do what you once took for granted.

So while those two are off snorkeling, sipping smoothies and sunning themselves silly- I'm fairly happy to be home. The other brothers are zooming into school at a decent hour and we are trying to make our staycation fun in its own way. And if they get too jealous of what they're missing, I can promise them that they'll each get their turn with dad when they're around 15 or 16, too.

And here's a little surprise they don't know yet— primarily because I just thought of it: when they each turn 21, no more solo trips. It'll be Vegas, we're all going and you are invited. It will be the biggest, craziest adventure of all. Because what would a kid on his 21st birthday want more than to party in Las Vegas with his parents, brothers and all of you? See you there and gear up because the first few rounds are on Ben Lee! (See what I did there? This is what happens when he goes to Hawaii and leaves me behind with two kids and free reign over the newsletter. It's really the least he can do!)



My featured listings

BEN LEE PROPERTIES

Cheviot Hills - NEW LISTING!



2815 Club Dr. \$3,825,000

4 Bed / 4.5 Bath 3,497 Sq. Ft., 9,250 Sq. Ft. Lot

Traditional home with exquisite contemporary interiors. Completely remodeled in 2020 with no expense spared. Chic open floor plan with sophistication and warmth is an entertainer's dream. Remodeled chef's kitchen with black quartz center-isle and top-of-the-line appliances opens to both formal and informal dining rooms. Accordion doors unite the indoor living areas to the expansive backyard with al fresco dining and full kitchen & pizza oven, plus extra large infinity edge pool and spa. Gym with bath opens to pool area. Dramatic two-story entryway with custom staircase leads to the family bedrooms and upstairs laundry. Master suite includes gigantic walk-in closet and spa-like bath. The most sophisticated home technology equipment available - top security system, designer lighting plan, Sonos sound system, etc – all can be controlled from a cell phone. This sleek residence is as sophisticated as it is luxurious. Built with unparalleled craftsmanship and an artist's keen sense of design!

Beverlywood - NEW LISTING!



1242 Edris Dr. \$2,950,000

4 Units - 2 Beds/1 Bath Each 4,168 Sq. Ft., 6,878 Sq. Ft. Lot

Traditional style 4-plex investment property in prime Beverly Hills adjacent location. Just a stone's throw from great shopping, restaurants and houses of worship. Located one block north of Pico Boulevard between Beverly Drive and Beverwil Drive. 2 bedrooms/1 bath each. Nicely updated kitchens and baths. Classic details included separate living and formal dining room, hardwood floors, crown moldings, etc. Air Conditioned. 1 private garage for each unit. In unit washer/dryers. Large lot with room for pool or grassy yard. 1 unit currently vacant. Wonderful upside rent potential.

Woodland Hills - NEW LISTING!



21901 Burbank Blvd #220 \$695,000

3 Bed / 2.5 Bath 1,699 Sq. Ft.

A spacious two-story condominium in Woodland Hills, this 3 bedroom/2.5 bath townhouse is nearly 1,700 square feet and nestled within a tropical paradise. Hardwood floors, and an open floor plan, there is a fireplace in the living room, wet bar, formal dining room that leads to an outdoor patio and updated kitchen that features stone floor, stainless, high end appliances and plenty of storage plus powder room downstairs. Open and airy, the master bedroom offers a large walk-in closet, balcony and beautiful bathroom. Additional features include a laundry area with new washer and dryer, private 2-car garage, swimming pool, tennis courts, club house, park with picnic area and a tranquil, natural setting of lush trees and babbling creek. Near shops, restaurants and the Warner Center Park - come see this oasis within the city today!

Beverlywood - IN ESCROW! Beverlywood - IN ESCROW!



2839 Medill Pl \$3,575,000

5 Bed / 4 Bath 3,703 Sq. Ft., 7,953 Sq. Ft. Lot

A house unlike any other in the neighborhood, this one needs to be experienced in person to be fully appreciated. Stately, inviting and bursting with personality, this mid-Century Mediterranean, perched high on a quiet cul-de-sac in Cheviot Hills, boasts what are arguably the best views of the city from a variety of different balconies and vantage points. A true tropical escape with an astounding amount of space to run, play or entertain. A much treasured and truly special home that deserves your immediate attention.

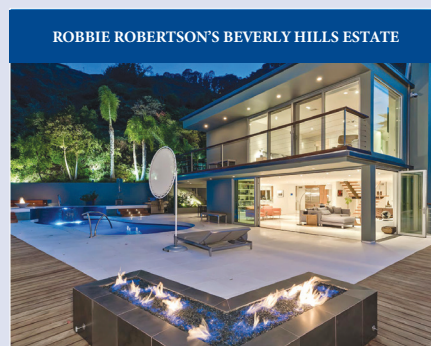


9320 Oakmore Rd \$3,995,000

6 Bed / 4.5 Bath

A stately Mediterranean style manor on a tree lined, quiet street in Beverlywood masterfully combines sophisticated elegance with familial warmth. A grand foyer opens to two rooms at the front of the home: an intimate formal living room with fireplace and lovely view of the neighborhood and a handsome private office. Each bedroom is bright and airy with generously sized closets and the front two bedrooms also have balconies. Please visit this gorgeous home today as it certainly won't be on the market for long!

Beverly Hills - SOLD!



ROBBIE ROBERTSON'S BEVERLY HILLS ESTATE

5 Bed / 5 Bath 3,219 Sq. Ft., 43,542 Sq. Ft. Lot

More moments from the Beverly Hills Hotel yet a world away from the busy city, find your peace in this gorgeous sanctuary of a modern home - sleek and chic with a minimalist, mid-century aesthetic. High ceilings, open floor plan, dark walnut floors, clean lines and walls of glass set the tone for the formal living room and dining room open to the state-of-the-art kitchen. Utterly private with long gated driveway and room to park at least eight cars. Quartz floored and temperature controlled garage.

Beverlywood - SOLD!



9124 Beverlywood St \$1,595,000

2 Bed / 2 Bath 1,513 Sq. Ft., 4,861 Sq. Ft. Lot

This Spanish style home in Beverlywood is the perfect blend of romantic charm and modern living. This beautiful home originally built in 1931 has been meticulously updated to reflect the needs of today's buyer. The bedrooms are both generous in size with ample closets and attached designer bathrooms. Step outside to the private and sophisticated backyard and enjoy patio dining surrounded by mature citrus trees, overflowing flowerbeds. New central air system.

Rancho Park happenings

Westside Stories

By Michael Harris

The Los Angeles City Hall at 200 N Spring Street downtown was completed in 1926. It was designed by John C Austin, John Parkinson, and Albert C Martin. Visitors can attend Council meetings and see various exhibits and displays that are available for viewing. The building is based on an Egyptian mausoleum and is similar in appearance to the downtown library which was built just before it. The finding of the King Tut tomb by Lord Carnarvan and Howard Carter in 1922 apparently had a substantial influence

on both buildings. The City Hall tower was supposed to be the tallest building in Los Angeles so until 1964 no structure in the City was permitted to exceed its height. After 1964 that requirement was ended. There have been numerous movies using City Hall as a location which include, War of the Worlds, The Two Jakes, Barton Fink, Father's Day, Liar-Liar, and Never Been Kissed. The seat of our local government is always worth a visit and to climb the imposing Spring Street steps although for security reasons they have changed the public entrance to a side door.



If you enjoy reading these vignettes each month, you may want to check out my father-in-law's book, Westside Stories. It's a memoir/history of growing up on the Westside of Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s with great photos, anecdotes and stories. Perfect for the history buff/enthusiast in your family! It's available for purchase on Amazon, just search for Westside Stories by Michael Harris.

Space Talk

By Lilli Lee

Have you or your children ever wanted to hear all about a real astronaut's adventures in space? Well now is your chance! KidScoop Media is presenting an evening with Col Terry Virts that will be OUT OF THIS WORLD! You'll learn all about his three missions to space as pilot of the Space Shuttle ENDEAVOUR. The event will be held over Zoom on April 18 from 5-7pm and in addition to hearing from Col Virts, there will be a Live Auction, interactive goody box of cool gifts and a preshow during which you can learn to make cosmic mock/cocktails. Tickets are available at: kidscoopmedia.org and proceeds go toward providing scholarships for KidScoop Media: an awesome organization that matches kids with unique experiences and opportunities. A few years ago our son Spencer was able to take a backstage tour of Hamilton on Broadway and interview the musical directors! In



the past kids have had the chance to interview presidents, dignitaries, celebrities and more! Supporting the organization helps all kids get the opportunity to participate so I hope you order your tickets to spend an evening with astronaut Terry Virts today!

Lasagna Love

By Lilli Lee



I signed up to be a "Lasagna Mama" a few months ago and I love it! "Lasagna Love" is an organization with local chapters all over the country that matches people who may need a hot, home cooked meal with volunteers who enjoy cooking and want to give something back to those who need it most. You can sign up to either give or receive a meal. If you opt to volunteer, you can set the parameters in terms of how often you are willing to cook, how far you will go to deliver and what kind of lasagnas you're willing to make. I said I could do it once a week with deliveries within 7 miles of my house and I could handle vegetarian or meat but couldn't accommodate vegan, gluten free or kosher. Every time I get a match, I feel so excited to make food for someone and the recipients are beyond appreciative of the gesture. You really are making someone's day better. To sign up or learn more go to: www.lasagnalove.org

Raffle News

By Lilli Lee

I hope you all had a festive St. Patrick's Day. Congratulations to John Beccaria! You are the lucky winner of the \$50 gift card to Irish Times Pub

and Restaurant. Thanks to everyone who entered and apologies if your name wasn't drawn this time. But don't fret too much because we're offering something very fun for our raffle this month! It's a complimentary meal for four at the Griffin Club on Motor. You can sit outside on the beautiful terrace overlooking the tennis courts and

city while enjoying a delicious meal prepared by the club's award winning chef. A truly luxurious experience! To enter, just send an email to: Ben@benleeproperties.com and write: GRIFFIN in the subject line. That's it! We'll pick a winner at random at the end of the month and notify the winner by email. Good luck!

