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Happy(ish) Birthday

By Ben Lee

It's hard to contemplate September without being reminded of a few hard truths: no matter how long it's been, I'm still expecting kids to go back to school after Labor Day, not before. The 23rd technically marks the first day of fall but September is always hotter than the summer months preceding it. And, last but not least, September is my birthday month and this year marks a 'big one'.

I face each birthday with equal parts dread and gratitude. I try not to dislike it as much as I do knowing full well that there are many people who don't have the luxury of getting to age another year. I know I should appreciate the gift of life but the actual day looming on the calendar is what sometimes gets me down. For me, a birthday acts as a sort of Stop Sign at the gate of fulfillment and temporarily transforms me into a philosophy major. How could I be this old when I haven't yet achieved everything I set out to do in life? What is the meaning of it all? Sometimes I spend my day squabbling with people or being frustrated over minor issues or delays within the real estate world. Does the meaning of life involve arguing over obtrusive tree roots, negligible lot lines or haggling over minute, forgettable details that in the long run really don't matter to one's ultimate happiness?

Of course, at this time of year it's easiest to give in to melancholy and fixate on the negative because the grass is always greener. No doubt when Mick Jagger was dancing into his golden years, he too focused on the hardships of his field: maybe he grew tired of the less than perfect hotel accommodations, demanding fans and subpar sound quality of the venues? Doubtful, but you never know.

Birthdays also remind me of those I once celebrated with but now no longer can. It's hard to think of the day of my birth without missing my mom who was obviously there from the beginning and gone way too soon. I think of my grandma, too, who not only never missed a birthday but also had the convenience of remembering it every year since she married my grandfather on the exact same day, just a few decades earlier. I miss those calls when she'd wish me a happy birthday and I'd respond with, '...and Happy Anniversary to you!'

Let's be honest. There is just a lot to getting older that is stressful. The small aches and pains that used to occur in one's twenties take on a more serious tone now. What used to be brushed off as 'nothing' may very well be 'something' and that's just another something to worry about. It's not as easy to recover from a late night party; and just try surfing or frankly walking around the block without stretching first. Not a great plan!

But as easy as it is to wallow in the misery of getting older and all the daily minor headaches associated with it, there are some good aspects of aging, too. Hang on while I google what those are. Hmmm... ok, here's one: no longer having to be up all night with young babies. Having a stronger sense of self and worrying less what others think about you. Not having to learn new tricks but choosing to explore interesting opportunities if the mood strikes. Of course, just being here is a win. And no one says getting older means you have to act old. My buddy Mick Jagger may technically be considered old but as far as I can tell, that small detail doesn't prevent him from living his best life.

So, this year I'm really trying to move out of my normal birthday funk and embrace the occasion. I've acquiesced



and am trading in the usual small dinner with family in favor of a slightly bigger party with friends. I'm trying to approach this big milestone with a "look what I've done!" in a celebratory context versus a "what have I done with my life?" philosophical question. I'm reminding myself that while there will always be some mean people in the world, the nice ones massively outnumber them and at the end of the day, as long as my family loves me, that's what matters most. When I'm blowing out the obscene number of candles on my cake, I'll try to recognize that while I'm not curing cancer or dowsing wildfires, I still have much to be proud of and have achieved a great deal while wandering the earth.

If one of the benefits that comes from aging is the gift of wisdom, I'm hoping to unwrap that particular present in the days, months and years to come. I'd like to approach getting older with not a sense of dread but badge of honor. I may be entering the second act but instead of succumbing to the flashy sports cars and silly clothes of a typical midlife crisis, I rather look forward to seeing all the fun new experiences that this next chapter brings. And if you're a fellow Virgo adding a candle to your cake this month, cheers to you and I hope you have a very happy birthday as well. May we all keep rocking on in the manner of the great Mick Jagger and never age while getting older. Here's to a great year ahead!

My featured listings

Cheviot Hills - FOR SALE!



3227 Shelby Drive \$4,595,000

4 Beds/4.5 Bath - 3,875 Sq. Ft., 10,168 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheviot Hills – FOR SALE!



3316 Shelby Drive - \$2,849,000

4 Beds/4.5 Bath 2,586 Sq. Ft., 5,678 Sq. Ft. Lot

Beautifully Remodeled Pool Home in Cheviot Hills! Very spacious, Open floor plan with plenty of natural light shining in every room. Perfect for a family and entertaining with amazing indoor-outdoor living as THREE large 10-foot wide, glass bifold doors completely open up and expand your living spaces. The highlight of your primary suite is the gorgeous custom bathroom that is more like your private spa retreat as it features a sauna, free-standing tub, large rain shower with jets, double-vanity, and marble tile throughout. Each spacious bedroom has their privacy as well with a custom bathroom for each bedroom. This home has been beautifully renovated with meticulous attention to detail and countless great features which include a second primary bedroom, tons of storage, wide-plank hardwood floors, high ceilings, recessed lights, skylight, a large balcony and 2 Juliet balconies, 4 parking spaces, 2 HVAC systems, 9 olive trees, steam dryer, and more

Santa Monica – REDUCED BY \$500K!



1027 Ashland Ave - \$2,495,000

3 Beds/2 Bath 1,518 Sq. Ft., 8,528 Sq. Ft. R2 Lot

Stunning like-new remodel in a quaint pocket of Santa Monica's Sunset Park, mere blocks from the beach and moments from the shops and restaurants of Ocean Park Boulevard and Main Street. Exquisite 3 bedroom/2 bathroom, 1,518 sq ft home on a MASSIVE R2 8,528 sq ft lot! Beautifully designed and inspired by the sand and shore, the home boasts beachy hardwood floors, colorful blue accents, bright and airy bedrooms with large closets. French doors lead to the enormous backyard and allow natural light to flood the interior space. The open kitchen has Frigidaire stainless steel appliances, walk-in pantry, banquette seating and extensive storage. The primary suite features a large walk-in closet and beautiful bathroom with sunken tub. This lot is so large, and favorable zoning provides the rare opportunity to BUILD UNITS OR ADDITIONAL STRUCTURES behind the main house with the possibility to subdivide. A must see!

Cheviot Hills – REDUCED BY \$300K!



9825 Altman Ave - \$3,695,000 or Lease for \$14,500

5 Beds/5.5 Bath 3,539 Sq. Ft., 6,677 Sq. Ft. Lot

Nestled within the natural beauty of a rustic, quiet cul-de-sac in Cheviot Hills, this brand new construction on Altman Avenue is a hidden neighborhood gem. Five bedrooms, five and a half bathrooms and exclusive in its luxury and craftsmanship, every detail of this beautiful home has been thoughtfully considered. Personal touches that include coffered ceilings and fireplace in the formal Living Room, colorful walls and classic finishes provide personality. The private, grand backyard is freshly landscaped, surrounded by trees and has both patio and grass areas, perfect for parties. Upstairs are four of the five bedrooms and each are en suite with large closets and far-reaching, beautiful views. Upstairs laundry room, landing lounge with built in desks, two-car attached garage, in-wall wine display and an abundance of smart storage solutions. Located in close proximity to the award winning Cheviot Hills Elementary School, come see this handsome home today.

Cheviot Hills happenings

Neighborhood Goods and Bads

By Ben Lee

Last month I put out the call, asking for you to tell me the things you like (and dislike) about your neighborhood. The goods and the bads, if you will. I received many thoughts on the matter and there were many of you who agree on what's

great and not-so-great about living in this area. On the positive side, you like how pretty it is, the friendly people, the good schools. You like walking to restaurants and Rancho Park Golf Course. Ironically, the golf course also appeared on the 'needs improvement' list. Additional items that should be addressed: burglaries/

safety issues, the homeless problem, street repairs/trash accumulation, and we need to fix the dangerous sidewalks. One neighbor suggests forming a community cleanup program in which volunteers help collect the litter that builds up in shared spaces. It really does take a village to improve our neighborhood but given

everyone who contributed ideas all said that the people who live here are the friendliest, kindest around- no doubt we can work together to make our already fabulous community even better.

Wine Night

By Lilli Lee

A big thank you to Beverlywood Resident Laura Klein for hosting the Neighborhood Wine Night last month! Everyone had such a good time and the highlight is always meeting new women who live nearby. The next one will be generously hosted by Deb Gleiberman on October 26th at her beautiful store DL Rhein on Motor Avenue. Get a head start on your holiday shopping while gathering with friends and neighbors. Please contact me if you'd like more information and/or to be added to the evite list: lillilee@yahoo.com or 310-650-7735. Hope to see you there!



Be a Hero

By Ben Lee

My aunt and tireless dog rescue activist Melissa Levy is conducting a workshop to explain the ins-and-outs of how to foster a dog. There are so many animals in the city who need homes but often their stays only need to be temporary

and that's where fostering comes in. She'll go over the basics about how to get your home ready for a four-legged friend and all the subsequent details that are involved. Please see the flyer for more information and I hope you'll consider fostering a dog who needs it. Thank you!

DOG FOSTERING 101 WORKSHOP

All Southern California shelters need our help.
Far too many good dogs are being euthanized for lack of space.

Fostering is the link to saving lives!

AT THIS WORKSHOP YOU WILL LEARN:

- Four signs that you are ready to foster a dog
- What type of dog is right for you
- How to get your home ready
- Responsibilities of fostering
- Where to find a dog
- Fostering Rewards
- How to get started
- How to say goodbye
- Fostering dogs with emotional or behavioral issues



WHEN: Saturday September 23rd at 4:00pm

WHERE: Roz Wyman-Palms Recreational Center
2920 Overland Ave Los Angeles, CA 90064

Hosted by: Melissa Levy and Reducing Animal Stress Non-Profit
For more info call: (310) 721-8746

RAFFLE

By Ben Lee

I love supporting local businesses and there is a new specialty shop on Robertson that deserves your patronage. "The Very Best Cookie in the Whole Wide World," truly lives up to its title. We were treated to a sample box of cookies and the taste was truly next level. No joke- I've never had a better cookie in my life and couldn't decide which one was my favorite. We are raffling off a sampler gift box so you can see if the Very Best Cookie is in fact the best in the world. To enter, send me an email: ben@benleeproperties.com



and write COOKIE in the subject line. We'll pick a winner at the end of the month and coordinate sending you a box of cookies soon after. Good luck!

ICE CREAM PARTY

By Ben Lee

Thank goodness our annual Neighborhood Ice Cream party was held the weekend *after* Hurricane Hillary. It was a beautiful, sunny day-

perfect to enjoy King Kone ice cream and connect with neighbors. Just our way of saying thanks for making me your #1 go-to realtor. Whether it's to list your home, find you your next home or just help make suggestions or offer advice, I'm proud to

be the one you call. I enjoyed seeing not only familiar faces at the Ice Cream party but also meeting some new neighbors, too. Hope you had as much fun as my family and I did!

