

THE New Lake Times

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YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

By Bob Wood

It's been a long time since 1977. That's the year I started my Real Estate Career. Lots of things have changed, many have stayed the same.

In the 1970s were many companies with just one office and as few as a half dozen agents. In some cases, if you could spell "commission" you'd get a desk. Well maybe that's a bit of an exaggeration, perhaps not much.

Forrest E. Olson was an innovator. He trained agents. New agent or "old timer", from another company, you spent a week training in Fast Start. He taught simple things like, don't walk on the client's lawn. Don't park in their driveway. And most importantly, how to serve the client's best interests.

He, his brother, and partner Carl, also developed a network of prestigious offices that covered nearly half of the state.

They were successful not by cutting commission but by providing the best service and getting the best value for the client.

Many of the major successful Companies you see today were influenced by Olson's Fast Start.

But, for decades there have been companies that have promised to save you money. The offered discounted commissions "to save you thousands of dollars."

There was a Big Red Something, a company that would "Help," and many more. Most of them have gone the way of the 25-cent hamburger. (I don't dare use their real names. Some five-desk office some place in the Mojave probably still has a franchise and will want me taken before the Board of Realtors for making unfair remarks.)

Most successful Realtors (not all) belong to multiple-office corporations or franchises. With the invention of copy machines, faxes, and the internet (none existed in 1977) communications became instantaneous. Hundreds of agents could be linked instantly.

But there is a reality, each desk costs the broker money each month. There is little space for a part time agent who is not dedicated to excellence.

In 1977 the entire purchase agreement (all of it) was written on one 8 1/2" x 11" piece of paper. Bought a house anytime in the past twenty years? It's hard to count all the pages, or to figure out what they mean.

That's why it's vitally important to hire a true full-time professional that not only know what all those pages mean, but important information about your home, your neighborhood, and possible unusual conditions.

Folks, in our neighborhood some homes were built before there was a Department of Building and Safety. There are homes that have the septic system under the house or on the neighbor's property.

Some easements may no longer provide the access they were intended secure fifty years ago.

Julliann had a out-of-area agent's client back out of a transaction because the home inspection report listed dozens of code violations. The seller had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars bringing the home "to code" and it was deemed to be in compliance with all regulations by the Department of Building and Safety.

Unfortunately for the buyer, the agent didn't have the knowledge to adequately represent this buyer. The transaction was cancelled when there was no need to do so. The out-of-area agent was not qualified to assess this home, or perhaps any homes in our neighborhood.

Save by getting the lowest commission rate? Maybe, but you usually get what you pay for.

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WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

BY DR. MANIJEH MOTAGHY



When we think of the problems in our society, of those who make bad choices, feel entitled to criticize others and even ourselves it is mostly because we don't really know our own default mechanisms. Scientists have identified 8.7 million types of species on the planet earth. Only one of those 8.7 million species is the human species. Unlike most other species, the human life does not have a set standard manual. We have the advantage of choice and the impossible task of standardizing our species to follow one "human manual." We cannot get our kind to behave in exact same ways and flawlessly follow a system. Not like the birds, lions, lizards, sea creatures, and other species do. The wisdom of life and existence is not coded within our human software.

Life is complicated for us, humans.

We are born with an empty human software and have to program a life template by learning from the simplest mental and physical movements to emotions and feelings, to building relationships with others, with the world, the planet, and caring for ourselves.

Only in the recent years, neuroscience has discovered our brains' built-in biases. These biases are powerful tendencies, which have both positive and negative effects such as Novelty Bias.

Our attention catches something new, something exciting, something different, not so mundane. It's great for our learning and development. Think of a one-year-old crawling around, looking at everything around with a desire to know, to touch, to feel and take in. We continue learning from everything and everyone around us and as adults listen to speakers, watch videos to understand something or fine tune a skill. Without this Novelty Bias there would be no science, no medicine, no creativity. We think, analyze, and embark on new unknown territories to solve problems or improve situations. The alertness from experiencing novelty propels us to spread the new knowledge, new idea, new ways of life so we can grab others' attention. It's a really powerful mechanism to help build both personal and collective cultures.

The negative side of it is that we can also be attracted to false information or bad news around us, feel propelled to spread it in the same way and pollute the minds of others.

Then there is Truth Bias, another wired default function of the human brain. Having to predict and manage countless functions and budget body resources, fact-checking every little information or perception for our brain is not possible nor seem as pertinent to our survival.

Therefore, whatever we think, feel, hear, or conclude, the

brain makes us believe them as true.

Think of the Truth Bias as sort of a built-in naivety and trust in our own thoughts and in what comes to us through the external world. Now a days, we have access to knowledge and numerous perspectives and ample rights to be independent and chose. Nonetheless, what we think, no matter how faulty it might be, seems true to us. Some of us grow up rarely questioning the validity of our interpretations and assumptions. If people's actions and beliefs don't match our own "truths" we attack and criticize them. Critical thinking to find out the truth is one of the most important skills not every human learns. Without it there's nothing but conflict, hate, anger, unhappiness, feeling victimized and stuck.

To seal the deal on thinking what we think is true, the brain has Confirmation Bias. It chooses to pay attention to anything that confirms our stories and feelings. This too is an important function in the building blocks of learning. However, our inaccurate understandings would also be confirmed because our brain could only see validating evidence to what we think is true.

Wrong understanding can lead to act inappropriately or keep us stuck in denial, fantasy, or judgment, fear, and anxiety.

So, what are we to do?

The first thing is to realize how incredibly difficult it is to be a member of the human species without proper knowledge and training of how the human mind, heart, brain, and emotions work. From your own experience, you can extrapolate that there are no perfections and that all beings, not just humans, want to be fed, be happy and healthy. No being likes to live in fear and be sick or go hungry. No one likes to be judged and blamed.

The second thing is to broaden your heart's capacity for kindness and a warm understanding for any human failure. Given that we all have these powerful biases ingrained in our brains and minds and can be wrong at any given time, we can pause, breathe, and question things with curiosity

and goodwill. It is very helpful to be able to question what if I'm wrong about this thing that bugs me? What if there are a hundred other reasons for such and such situation. I, for one, have experienced being wrong about an opinion or a fear or worry. Knowing others who think they are right also can't see their own truth and confirmation biases. Knowing it's possible to believe in a false idea, we can pause and be more patient, gentle, and become motivated to get to the bottom of things. If you have a realization or conclude that everything you know about everything may be wrong, you may feel overwhelmed and avoid this process.

So, take it easy and look at one little thought at a time. To practice thinking critically with curiosity and goodwill, inspect a thought that's not so emotionally charged. For example, maybe a neighbor is placing their trash bin somewhere that doesn't make sense to you. You may not care much, but you feel a little judgmental about them. Maybe a few subtle other activities have confirmed that they're inconsiderate. Become curious about this current example of the trash bin. Look more closely at the environment. Maybe it's because they need a little space to get out of their driveway. Maybe the ground is on a slope and the bin may role down, maybe it's because when the trash truck picks up the bins and puts it back down it damages the wall they built around their garden, and they want to protect the wall by leaving the bin further. Maybe they can't see how this might affect you and if they did, they'd definitely change it to not make it difficult for you. There may be many other reasons, other than just being inconsiderate, and you won't know if you believe the first thought that occurs to you.

This is not easy work, but well worth it to help feeling at ease both internally and in your relationships to the world. This is how we can reduce unnecessary discomfort and stress.

Hope this is helpful.

By Dr. Manijeh Motaghy
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PONDS

By Bob Wood

I was told story about a hypothetical farm. A farmer had dug two ponds in order to provide water for his livestock. He also stocked these ponds with fish.

Both ponds were fed by the same stream. Clear, sparkling mountain water flowed freely, constantly filling the ponds.

While both ponds were similar, they eventually became very different. One pond was surrounded by a lush grassy field where the farmer kept his prized horses. The second pond had originally also been on a lush grassy plane, but the farmer had eventually used it to raise hogs.

The hogs wallowed and rooted in the pond. Slowly the once clear water became cloudy and fetid. Of course, the fish had no ability to change these conditions. Only the farmer could make changes.

Older fish saw the change as slow, gradual. There was not much difference from day to day. Of the now murky water, many felt that "It's not so bad."



Young fish had never seen the water when it was clear. They assumed all ponds were like this one and that there was nothing wrong with muddy water.

After awhile the fish in the muddy pond doubted that the clear water in other ponds existed. They vehemently ridiculed "clean water fish" and denounced them. They claimed their pond to be superior and that those living in the pristine pond were deplorable.

The clean water fish enjoyed their home and pitied their neighbors but could do nothing to help them.

Just something to think about.

IN THE GARDEN

By Bob Wood

Last spring I watched my Morning Glories grow. I sat by my Koi Pond waiting for the first bloom. They grew, spreading across my fence, tentacles of green reaching and stretching. Note: I said grow, not bloom.

I watched all spring, and all summer. September brought fall. Still, I watched and waited. Brilliant green, but not one bloom.

As I write this, it is October. The Harvest season. The time when plants wither and give up their fruits.

But, here in mid-October, my Morning Glories are finally blooming. Is it some fluke of nature? Have we not heard that God shares his love through nature's beauty? Was this late bloom a reminder that His time is not always our time? Is it coincidence that the variety of these Morning Glories, is Heavenly Blue?

Just asking.





ONE MORE TIME

By Wood

For a couple of decades, I have implored my neighbors to protect themselves in two ways.

First, Love your neighbor. So many needless and expensive situations have fomented because of one neighbor asserting their “rights” over the folks next door. Many have found that the neighbor also had rights. Sometimes that neighbor’s rights were in fact protected and ended in a high cost to the complaining neighbor.

Second, get ready for fire season! When rains, brush grows- “thrives?” Come late summer, Santa Ana winds will come and blow fires across California. Normally (many times) they will finally be contained just beyond PCH.

Cut brush, pine trees (all varieties), and remove any/all combustibles from around your home or any structures on your property.

Yes, pine trees. I had a neighbor who “loves” his majestic pine. That pine is just east of his home. The Santa Ana’s blow from the northeast. When (not “if”) the fire comes to that neighborhood, that tree will be like a huge torch blowing unquenchable flames on his home.

Also, stay or flee? Whatever your decision, prepare. Not sure what to do? Check with the Fire Dept. There is also a plethora of information online. What ever you are going to do, prepare now.

NONE ARE SO BLIND AS THOSE WHO WILL NOT SEE

By Bob Wood

I would include those who do not remember. Perhaps it is only “old people” who knew a different “reality” of life in California.

When I moved here (1978) California was a different “world” from that of today. Yes, it was a long, long time ago. But it existed and for the most part it was a truly wonderful place.

There were few homeless encampments even in downtown LA. Yes, as an old Jewish man once said, “The poor will always be with us.” Unfortunately, in the past decades poverty has spread, like mold on a slice of bread.

I have a friend that lives in a now upper middle-class area of the San Fernando Valley. They feel safe. The homeless are not living on their street. They have an iron fence, a dog, and guns. But will they be safe next month, next year...

Way back when, minors could be arrested for truancy, curfew violation, and incorrigibility. Was that truly unfair to youth? Or was it actually for their protection and the protection of society?

As a Juvenil Investigator (LA County Probation Department), I was given cases of youth that were arrested for: streaking (remember “streaking?”), shoplifting (a blouse from May Co), Vandalism (a famous actress’s son broke into a neighbor’s home and defecated on the

woman’s wedding dress- yes really.), and many offenses that seem “petty” today.

But no one was afraid (very few if any): to park their car in the street in front of their home, to walk streets in the West Valley after dark, that they might be verbally assaulted (or otherwise) by a mentally disturbed homeless person, or many other things we endure today. The “new normal.”

Now many have security cameras, inside and out. Some have acquired dogs, not for the love they give but for perceived protection. There have been postings on social media about carrying Mace. Electric “stunning” devices and firearms are denied to most citizens. Despite some of the strictest firearm’s laws in the nation, criminals still have them.

No, Julliann and I don’t have the answers. Will a new Governor solve problems? Based on the recall, most think not. Will a change of City officials return us to safer days of yore?

Like a fish that spends its whole life in muddy water, some have not known of another, brighter, freer California. I’m thankful that I’ve been there, I know it existed.

NEGATIVE?

By Bob Wood

Recently a neighbor commented on some of the articles in The New Lake Times. She felt that many of my articles projected a “negative” perspective. Maybe so.

For some time, I have seen slowly creeping changes in California that, for me, seem to bring a lack of freedom. Is this an accurate assessment or negativism? (Perhaps I should not have read Orwell’s 1984 or Animal Farm)

Let me be clear. In 1968 I joyfully emigrated to this wonderful Golden State. Its weather, lifestyle, and freedoms enthralled me. Yes, I’ve now chosen to move from this land of milk and honey. In my case it was to be close to my daughter and to better be able to afford retirement.

California is still a land of vast opportunities. The weather is the envy of much of the U.S. (world).

Yes, some could point to California’s high cost of living, crime, perceived oppressive laws, etc. But every region, state, or city has its drawbacks. Snow-subzero temperatures. Historic murder rates in some “back East” cities. Lack of amenities, no upscale shopping (Saks, Neiman Marcus, etc.). Neanderthal gun/environmental laws. Possible discrimination (color, sexual orientation...). Tornados. Bible Belt mentality. Pick your “poison.” There are no perfect places to live during our lifetime on earth.

So yes, I have “emigrated” for my own reasons. If you find California to be your particular “Valhalla,” revel in it. Please, I do not wish to “rain on your parade.” I will always love the California that I called home for most of my life-49 years.



WHAT’S BEST

By Bob Wood

Girls will best understand this, but all of us have had similar experiences. You go out on a date and have a good time getting to know someone new. But, then it’s time to say goodnight. Things change.

Somehow, he’s not interested in leaving. Weakness, curiosity, excitement overwhelms caution and good sense. Well, most of the time (almost always) it turns out to be a mistake.

Recently something similar is happening in our neighborhood. An agent will present a marketing plan, discuss pricing, and advantages of using his/her company.

All good so far. But then there’s the “close.” You want to “think about it.” Perhaps compare and contrast that proposal with other area experts. But he/she won’t leave. No matter what the hour they sit there meeting objections, refusing to leave until you “sign.”

If they are so persistent, won’t they also pursue your sale for the highest and best price? Well ladies, how many times has that hot and heavy midnight situation worked out well?

Be strong. Get a second opinion. His (her) demanding that you make a major decision (before he leaves) is not for your benefit, but for his benefit. One more conquest.

Men, unsure of what I’m saying? Talk to your wife or girlfriend.



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