

THE

# New Lake Times

May/June 2023

## NOT ALL

By Julliann Wood

Recently there was a posting on Nextdoor by a neighbor living in Simi Valley. The lady was frustrated by the nightly noise from a major construction project directly behind her home.

Someone suggested that homes backing to commercial properties sell for less than homes in more desirable locations. True, but she responded that when they bought their home, it was a "more desirable location." They'd had a glorious view of an open field.

Neighbors, this is where it becomes important to use a "knowledgeable" agent, not your cousin Vinney, the agent that dropped a potholder on you doorstep, or a variety of choices not based on "facts."

Facts like: What is the Realtor's area of expertise? How long have they been licensed, active? What neighborhood do they specialize? There are many good reputable Realtors but not all can adequately represent you in all your Real Estate transactions.

I specialize in our neighborhood. Not Beverly Hills, gated communities in the Valley, or apartments in Van Nuys. I also specialize in land - "dirt."

Yes, I've made mistakes. Hopefully not many. But if I'd sold that lady her home I would have checked the "use" (Zoning) of the lot next door. Our duty to our clients (fiduciary relationship) is to protect them, not just sell them a house with "nice carpets," great kitchen appliances, or a big flat screen TV.

Be aware, that vacant lot next to you will probably not always be vacant forever. Some years ago, Bob and I sold a house in West Hills. It had a panoramic view of the entire SF Valley. We represented the seller. We disclosed that the extra parking space "could be" on the neighbor's land. There was no survey, so it was not known for sure.

We had that lot listed for sale. It was priced well and we'd encouraged them to buy it. They didn't. It sold. The new neighbors were the proverbial "neighbors from Hell."

The homeowners sold and moved. The lesson: Their agent may not have read/understood the disclosure. They didn't take the opportunity to protect their property by owning the adjacent property. While the new neighbors may not have been "friendly," the homeowners chose to "fight" with the newcomers. A welcoming plate of cookies could have gone a long way.

If you have a thirty-unit condo development in Beverly Hills, I'm probably not your best choice for a Realtor. If you are buying or selling land or houses in our neighborhood, I'm pretty sure I'd be your best choice.

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**"Most Won't, Julliann Wood"**



# DUAL AGENCY

By Julliann Wood

Not familiar with the term? Dual agency is when one Realtor represents both buyer and seller.

Prior to getting his Real Estate License Bob's Realtor (Sharon McBroom) taught him that the Realtor had a fiduciary responsibility to their client. She taught him that the agent's commitment was to protect the best interests of their client.

Over the last twenty three years Bob instilled that belief in me -- always protect the client's best interests.

Can a Realtor represent both the buyer and the seller and still protect the interests of both? We believe so.

For example, if I represent a seller, I will do my best to get the very best price and terms. Yes, I will disclose all pertinent information. But, in the sale of raw land it is incumbent upon the buyer and his agent to do a thorough and complete investigation. It would not be my responsibility to suggest that the buyer get a soils test, determine the location/cost of utilities, etc. Buyer beware.

But, were I to represent both parties all would be aware of all

conditions that I knew about. I would also be aware of how to reach a sales price mutually agreeable to both parties. Both parties will benefit.

One of Bob's largest sales (his broker's largest transaction at that time) was negotiated at the seller's kitchen table. The terms were written on a yellow pad as buyer and seller reached an agreement.

I've had a buyer question how I could adequately represent his interests if I also represented the seller. When I told him that I was absolutely able to create a transaction fair to both parties he told me, "I don't want 'fair,' I want to beat the seller down and get a bargain."

Yes, I've unfortunately seen this attitude over the years. Often a land buyer, seeking to take an unfair advantage of a seller, has found that while his aggressive agent negotiated a lower price, that agent did not adequately protect him. Such things as easements, utilities, percolation test, mergers, etc.

It is especially true in land sales but also in residential home sales. If you are looking to "steal" and take advantage of the other party, beware. If you want a transaction that benefits buyer and seller, call me.

The Rotarian's moto begins: "Is it the truth?" "Is it fair to all parties?" I'm not a Rotarian but I live by that moto.



# WHAT A MESS!

BY JULLIANN WOOD

Several neighbors have called me about their septic problem, failure. They've asked if I knew the cause or possibly the solution. Yes and no.

During my career I've sold many houses with a septic system. Many in our neighborhood have old, very old, systems. Not one of my clients had to have their system replaced.

Unfortunately, out-of-area real estate agents are usually not familiar with septic systems, or how they work. Typically, an inspector for a buyer will note that a licensed septic company be hired to "certify" the system. Again, many (most?) homeowners and out-of-area agents have little understanding of how the system functions.

In many (most?) instances the septic company will recommend that the system be replaced, when some minor repairs would solve the problem. Why? Are septic companies "crooks?" certainly not. But, a "repair" may yield only a small profit and open them up to a major liability sometime in the future.

Even before I was licensed, I was taught how a septic system worked. (thanks Bob) One time I sold a home in Granada Hills (Old Granada Hills) that had sewage "backing up." The panicked homeowner had called someone who advertised online. They recommended abandoning the system and connecting to the sewer that was now available. Who could argue with that. A sewer hookup would solve this problem and any "septic" problems in the future.

My septic company unclogged the mainline and pumped the tank for a few hundred dollars. The other guy's estimate was several thousand dollars.

What about today? Why are some systems failing? The most obvious, at least to me, is that the rains (floods) have soaked the ground to the point that the leach lines or seepage pits are quite literally "under water." If the water table is so high that the system can't drain, it won't work.

While that is the most likely explanation, all systems will eventually have to have their septic tank pumped. Your tank has two sections and where the solids are broken down (liquefied) by bacteria. After years, things that are not able to be liquefied build up.

Problems? Not sure what to do? Call me. No, I'm not a licensed plumber, or septic engineer, but I can refer you to a honest company that will give you straight answers, and solve septic problems at an affordable price.





By RLW

Let me start by acknowledging that I am old. About as old as our President. But being old can lend a certain perspective that compliments rational thinking.

When I was in grade school (1950's) they taught us that there was a "coming ice age." One like a previous Ice Age with mile high glaciers that carved out the Finger Lakes (Western NY) and formed Long Island (NYC). As a child I worried about a mountain of ice coming down the street I lived on.

In college (Cal State 1970's) my professors warned of acid rain, global warming, overpopulation, depletion of fossil fuels, etc. Acid rain was going to dissolve many structures, kill flora, etc. Global warming was going to melt the ice caps, kill the polar bears, and raise the level of the ocean- NYC, Miami, LA, etc., would be underwater. These disasters would happen by the year 2000.

On a lighter note, Hale-Bopp Comet was, for some, to signal the end of the earth. Yes, at least one group committed mass suicide. Then there was the Mesoamerican calendar. Life as we know it would end December 12, 2012.

Please, I have concerns about our planet and ecology. My parents and I composted, recycled, and strove to protect the environment decades before most of you were born.

I realize that some will applaud the State's outlawing of gas appliances in homes. Though I may disagree, some (many?) see this as a vital step towards limiting greenhouse gas emissions and

saving Mother Earth. Could be, but at what cost?

It is estimated that retrofitting will cost the homeowner an average (some higher, some lower) of \$30,000. Replace the stove/oven, water heater, central gas heat, etc. With about 14,200,000 homes that works out to about \$426,000,000,000.

For any of you that are products of "new math," that's 426 Billion. Oh, for you pool owners, what will be the electric cost for heating your pool with an electric heater? Do they even make one?

But is there an ever greater "cost?" First, how many "brown outs," and "Black outs" have there been recently? Do you suppose somehow Edison has a magic wand and suddenly there will be enough power for everyone, all the time?

Many neighbors have noticed that power costs have doubled, perhaps due to inflation. Once everything you do, heat your home, cook, heat your shower, drive your Tesla, everything will be supplied by one power (electric) provider. Could you think that this power company (name anyone) would not be tempted to take financial advantage of the stranglehold they would have?

Is there even a remote possibility that if you fail to support some government interest you might have your power cut off? Just asking. I have relatives that lived behind the Iron Curtain (Google it) and they could attest that sometimes similar things happen, for the "common good."

Protect the environment? I imagine everyone would advocate for the environment. But how much freedom are you willing to sacrifice?



# RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY...

By Julliann Wood

Well, those who have wished (Prayed?) for rain have certainly received at least as much as they'd hope for, and a lot more.

We've all been thankful that our lawns have been watered, can be watered this summer, and that maybe once again we're able to take long showers and flush the toilet- every time. But there are some consequences to having this much rain.

Last year's solid, hard baked soil has in many instances become soft- marsh like and unstable. Many of my neighbors are now experiencing large old trees that are toppling over due to this mushy soil and wind.

This year has seen many beautiful old oaks come down, causing damage, in some cases significant damage. If history is correct, next year could be another wet season. More trees will likely become unstable and fall. Now is the time to act.

Your Oaks and other large trees should be inspected and trimmed or cut down if they are deemed to be unstable, rotten, or otherwise a danger. Please note: Ventura County does not permit the removal or cutting branches unless a licensed arborist has inspected the tree and has recommended cutting, pruning, etc.

I value our oaks, coast live oak, interior live oak, California black oak, canyon live oak, and California scrub oak. In no way am I advocating indiscriminate cutting of these historic trees.

I am advocating that if you have an oak that could pose a hazard, get an arborist to diagnose the tree's condition. In the long run it could save you money and maybe save your life.

# HELP ME...

## AM I MISSING SOMETHING?

By RLW

Finally, a wet winter. Your lawn and plants have been saved and are growing well. Ah, but that's not all. There are also the chaparral plants like bay laurels, coyote brush, and chamise, as well as "brush" and dry grass.

All the rain will cause the hillsides to blossom and the coming hot summer will once again make those hills a potential inferno.

Start NOW! Cut and remove as much vegetation as possible. The wind (fire) will come from the Northeast driven by hot Santa Ana's. If you have any type of pine tree, cut it down. Yes it's beautiful and has been there for decades but if this year's fire ignites the tree, odds are your home will burn too.

Think you won't have a fire until fall? Could be. But a fire could come as early as June. Better to be safe.

When (not if) a fire comes, bring in anything flammable, lawn chairs, etc. If (IF!) you intend to stay fill your trashcans with water. There may be no (none) water for your hose. The fire trucks may be drawing all available water. Put out towels by the trash cans. A wet towel can put out a small fire before it spreads.

I stayed in Box Canyon during all fires from 1979 to 2017. Nothing on my property burned. Do I recommend that you stay and fight the fire? NO! If you are knowledgeable, strong, and have a defensible position, maybe.

Most will (should) flee. That, too, takes preparation. Do you have your important papers, irreplaceable family items, valuables, etc. ready to be taken with you in a moment's notice? What if you are at work when the fire erupts? Most likely the roads will be closed. Do you have comfortable shoes/clothes for that hike up the canyon to rescue pets or valuables? If you can't get to your home, do you have a change of clothes, toothbrush, etc.? It could be several days before you are allowed to go back to your home.

Whatever you think you will do, plan now. Not sure what to do? Contact your fire department. Look on Google. Talk to neighbors who have survived previous fires. But above all start cutting those weeds NOW!

# WHAT'S A GIRL TO DO?

by Julliann Wood

I'm a "Big Girl" and can (do) handle millions of dollars in transactions, but sometimes I get frustrated.

Yes, and yes again. I too am tired of robot phone calls requesting money or offering products and services I don't want.

Yes, I too advertise so that neighbors are aware of my services. But you won't get a robot call. You won't get a bunch of flyers touting my success, coupons offering some discount, etc. But I do send out The New Lake Times.

The Lake Times was first published by Bob Wood about 40 years ago. That was before the internet. He attempted to write articles that would be of interest to our neighbors. When he retired it became my responsibility to write articles, edit, pay for printing and mailing. Yes, probably more expensive than some "Just Sold" postcard from my compilation.

Why am I upset? A neighbor has contacted me wanting me to stop sending her "junk." Seriously, while I don't consider The New Lake Times to be Junk, I also respect my neighbor's desire to not have the news letter delivered, and added to the tons of trash Waste Management removes daily.

It is nearly impossible for me to eliminate an address from the mailing list. A Title Company provides the database with all homeowners' addresses for the neighborhood. It is nearly impossible for them to remove one name. They do however follow national Do Not Mail registries. Meaning if you're on the Do Not Mail list, the Title Company will not include your address in the database.

I did some additional research and was able to find the following information from USPS:

## *How do I remove my name from mailing lists?*

*Anyone who wants to reduce the amount of prospect marketing mail they receive may register for the mail suppression service called DMAchoice provided by the Association of National Advertisers (ANA), which is independent of the United States Postal Service. To "Remove" your name from common mailing lists, you may register, along with a nominal \$4 processing fee for a 10-year registration period at [www.DMAchoice.org](http://www.DMAchoice.org).*

*This service will not eliminate all promotional mail. It does not apply to promotional mail from companies or organizations that consumers have an existing business relationship (banks, membership services, etc.). It also does not apply to local retailers, restaurants, and political organizations. You should expect to see a major reduction in the overall volume of prospect promotional offers received.*

Neighbors, please, I don't have a degree in Journalism. I do my best to write about those things that effect you and our neighborhood. Disagree with my opinion? Let me know. Write an article addressing you concerns, your perspective, with few exceptions I will publish your opinion, even if it differs from mine.

But please, help me to make a better community.

## NEIGHBORS RESPONSE: "IS THERE A SOLUTION"

In my previous issue I wrote an article questioning the recent rise in homelessness and how to tackle this issue. I received a response from a homeowner in the community discussing the many challenges that homeless individuals face. I'm including her response below in appreciation.

-Julliann Wood

In the latest copy of New Lake Times you penned a piece titled "Is There a Solution?"

The homeless situation is not new, either here in California or in many other states. But it has reached catastrophic levels in recent years for quite a number of complex reasons. It's not the single fault of any particular political leader or party, but an accumulation of factors.

Among those are: The US government stopping investment in housing projects for low income people decades ago, the housing crash of 2009 (caused by risky loans), the huge number of foreclosures that followed, the decline of "mom and pop" landlords and growth of corporate investors buying up larger amounts of rental properties than in the past, their manipulation of rental housing pricing, forcing people out of rentals they could no longer afford who are in low wage jobs or on fixed incomes (elderly, disabled, unemployed, low income workers), a

rising gig economy that often puts those workers at financial risk, the countless people involved in NIMBYism resisting building new housing of any type, let alone for the homeless, the skyrocketing costs of homes and rentals, the growth of drug abuse of not only of street drugs, but the misuse of prescription drugs (pushed by unethical doctors and big pharma), laws that don't help those with mental health problems be placed involuntarily into proper care, (Reagan did have something to do with it, but block grants to the states for mental health care did even more harm because many states chose not to spend those block grants for that problem), the unmanaged COVID pandemic which brought the economy to a grinding halt. The list goes on and on.

Not all homeless people are "creepy" or "druggies" or whatever. But they're all victims of a complex series of events often out of their control. This doesn't mean all the efforts to tax us and build more housing units to help resolve the problem is without ineptness, unnecessary complications, or even corruption. However, I suggest you not write such an article without showing a tiny bit of knowledge of what led to all of this, and show some empathy for those victims living on the street.

-Your (gratefully housed) neighbor.

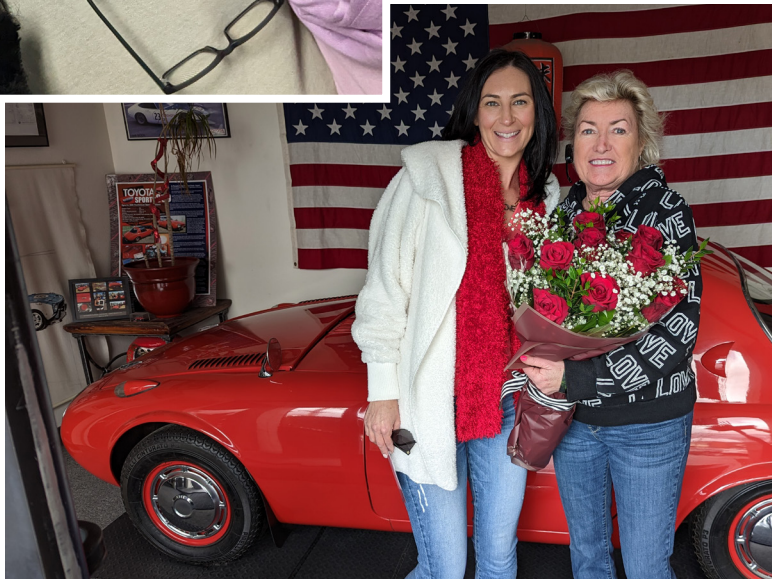


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