

# THE New Lake Times

Nov/Dec 2021

## TIMES, THEY ARE A CHANGIN'

By Bob Wood

The latest newsletter from the California Association of Realtors contained an article that's more important to you, than to most Realtors.

The article declared that Single Family Zoning was "discriminatory." While I may not necessarily agree with those assessments, the abolishment of SF Zoning will have a dramatic effect on all of us. More so on homeowners than Realtors.

Should your neighborhood block or street go from one home per lot to two, three, or four homes per lot, your life will change.

Imagine your next-door neighbor, who sees the potential for a big profit, makes a few changes (adds an exterior door or two, a bathroom and kitchenette) and all of a sudden, he's making "big bucks" on his multifamily rental unit(s).

Ditto for a few more neighbors. All of a sudden you have many times the neighbors you had previously. Problems? Parking, increased number of people (residents, friends, guests...)

Well, won't it be a "better" neighborhood when it becomes more "inclusive?" Could be, but when I moved here in 1979 I kind of liked the fact that I had privacy and didn't have a lot of neighbors surrounding my home. Just sayin'.

I spoke to a few folks, and they opined that if there was a proposal to change the zoning, they and their neighbors, would vote against it. What "vote?" When the Building Dept requires a certain type of septic system, or that the home be so many feet "setback" from the property line, or hundreds of other regulations- did you "vote" for those regulations?

No, there is no vote. How many in Box Canyon residents voted for a Wildlife Corridor? Bureaucrats in the Building and Safety Department, the Planning Department, etc., make regulations. There is no VOTE. Seldom is there any way (simple way) of changing their decree. It's done for "the common good."

Please note, for those of you who think "recall," there is no one to recall. These are dedicated public servants who probably can't be fired and are seldom censured.

There will probably be a couple of options: 1) Turn that extra bedroom into an apartment. 2) Enjoy your new neighbors. Or 3) Move to someplace that still values single family home ownership.

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

# WHAT NOW?

BY BOB WOOD



Many have chosen or are choosing to abandon California. Yes, I've left. As a retiree, California was just too expensive. Others have left or are planning to leave for a variety of reasons. Reasons that may be legitimate or not.

From the perspective of your humble local Realtor, California has suffered decades of poor management. (Regardless of Political Party)

Expensive and limited water, why? Could it be that it's been over sixty years since Governor Brown (Jerry's dad!) started the California Aqueduct and Governor Ronald Regan cut the ribbon when water finally flowed to So. Cal. Yes, the Diamond Valley Lake was completed twenty some odd years ago, but it stores Colorado River Water. It does not create lakes that could store California's rainfall.

Oh, damming some canyon would displace animals and threaten that ecosystem. But couldn't that new lake provide drinking water for animals indigenous to that region? It could also create a new ecosystem for aquatic animals and fish. Just a thought.

Or, what about desalinization? California has hundreds of miles of shoreline on the biggest ocean in the world.

I live on (near) Lake Conroe. Our water bill is about \$80/month (includes water, sewer, and trash- picked up twice a week). We flush at will, take long showers, and water my lawn/garden frequently. Did Lake Conroe wipeout acres of ecosystem? Some of you will argue "definitely yes." But the lake has helped bring back the alligators that were historically indigenous to the area and has provided water for many other indigenous mammals.

When I left in 2017 DWP was having trouble with "hundred-year-old" pipes bursting. Couldn't a replacement program have been initiated fifty years ago? Say, a few miles a year. (Poor management?)

I keep hearing about power outages, especially in east Simi. Why? If powerlines can be damaged by the wind, doesn't it make

sense to bury them? New idea? Edison has been in business for over one hundred years.

We have long hot summers here. My electric bill is usually less than \$100 even in the summer. Yes, we had a major power outage this winter when the wind generators failed (froze).

When I bought gas recently, it was about \$2.90, up quite a bit from last year.

No. No! I'm not telling you that somehow Texas is the Promised Land and all y'all should move here. No, my point is that there is a major management problem, "back home."

You are taxed and taxed again in ways most can't imagine. You are paying for a department that sends agents out to regularly check markets (including The Chatsworth Lake Market) to be sure that they are not selling illegal eggs (eggs laid by chickens in cages deemed too small). Do any of you know that Department's annual budget? Or even its name?

L.A. City sales tax was raised to end "the homeless problem." How's that working?

Are schools (if they are allowed to open) still asking parents to help pay for crayons, art supplies, or band/sports equipment? I know it's been a long time but, in the 1980's The Lottery was approved to provide money for those very expenses.

Oh, a side note: Back in the day the Mafia ran something called "The Numbers Racket." Many police raids were made on those criminals who were eventually "sent up the river" (incarcerated in Sing Sing Prison). Today it's not called The Number Racket. It's not run by the Mafia(?). You call it the California Lottery.

Yes, California was so great when I moved there in 1968. I feel that it is somewhat less great today. Can it be truly great again? Absolutely! Throw the bums out. Get leaders that will lead. Politicians that will truly be "public servants."

Good Luck!

# KNOWLEDGE VS. WISDOM

By Julliann Wood

When I interview with a potential client for a listing to sell their home, sometimes I'm asked, "What can you do that \_\_\_ from \_\_\_ can't do? After all, they are from Beverly Hills (or they sell multimillion-dollar homes, or they have attained professional levels, etc.).

They may be a very accomplished and knowledgeable agent but usually they do not have the specialized wisdom to get the best price in our neighborhood.

Last year I sold a very special home in the Knolls. The seller had been cited by the Department of Building and Safety. He had to make extensive repairs to bring the home "up to code." It cost him nearly \$300,000 to comply with all Ventura County regulations. That is not a typo, he spent three hundred thousand dollars bringing the house "to code."

An out-of-area agent showed it to a couple who fell in love with this historic home. The agent, exercising his duty to his client, had a "home inspection."

Unfortunately, the home inspector was also from "out-of-the-area." He was perhaps more familiar with houses in the flatlands that were less than 20 years old. His report noted page after page of items that were "not to code." (Even though Ventura County Building and Safety inspected and approved of all the repairs.)

Of course, the sale was canceled, and the couple missed out on the beautiful home that they loved. They relied on an agent and an inspector who were not familiar with older homes. They lacked the wisdom to accurately assess the situation.

Last month I sold a quaint cabin in Chatsworth Lake. We had the septic, and the home inspected, before placing it on the market.

The sale canceled when the buyer's mother had an inspection. She was led to believe that the house was not on a proper foundation.

Bob had sold the house to the current owner in 2000. He'd known the previous owner who had pulled all the necessary permits when restoring the home. Originally, (1930's?) the house was merely built on top of large wooden beams laid on the ground. One of the permitted improvements was to jack up the house and put in on a cement foundation, to code.

There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Someone may have great knowledge but lack wisdom. Those agents/inspectors could have had knowledge but lacked the wisdom to see that our neighborhood is not the same as recently build tract homes in the flatlands.

## BLAME

By Bob Wood

For well over a year, I've heard neighbors blame someone for our current "situation."

"There are homeless here because; Ronald Regan closed the mental hospitals. Or it was Newsom's fault, Garcetti's fault, John Lee's fault, Trump's fault, etc." I'll bet there's someone who thinks it's my fault.

Yes, some (part of) our problems can be "blamed" on Government. But not all.

Inconvenient and costly interruptions of electrical service. Those who run (oversee) the electric company have mismanaged that service. We lose power because electric lines are blown down in Santa Anna Winds. Millions are being spent on tree removal to help contain future fires. Would buried transmission lines save millions (billions) of dollars?

DWP is technically a private company. Recently many of their "100-year-old" pipes have failed. (broken) Could reasonable management have realized 50 years ago that the pipes would not last forever? Could it have been prudent to start replacing a few miles each year? Do you wait until your tire to blowout on the 118 FWY before replacing it?

Do we have over 100,000 homeless because the homeless flock to So. Cal. because of the climate? Is the answer to build multistory apartment houses (condos), perhaps on Topanga? Are there other solutions that could better serve those displaced folks? Might they benefit more from a housing complex offering shelter, psychiatric and career counseling, and job skills training. (A small town with no "blue tents" has proposed such a plan, spearheaded by a nonprofit group of citizens, at a price far less that the Topanga proposal. See below.)

Recently the Governor requested (mandated?) a further reduction of water use by 17%. The California Aqueduct was started in the 1963, by Governor "Pat" Brown- Jerry Brown's father. Aside from the DWP's Diamond Valley Lake, there have been no dams built in over fifty years. I was fortunate enough to see that site prior to construction of the dam.

It rains every year. Are there no other sites that could be used to store water? Couldn't the benefits to indigenous animals be enhanced by a year-round supply of water? Just asking. Diamond Valley seems to have done much to benefit wildlife.

We have hundreds of miles of coastline on the largest ocean in the world. Is there some reason that prohibits desalination? Cost? Destruction of sea life? (Really!)

Do we have the funds for a desalination plant? The last estimate for the high-speed train project, if ever completed, will cost over \$100,000,000,000 (one hundred billion dollars.) So far, to the best of my knowledge, there is no train service from anywhere to anywhere.

Question- trains or water?

While California is a wealthy state with a wealth equal to all but a few countries, in some respects we seem more like some third world countries.

Perhaps we should work together to find practical solutions to our problems rather than seeking those more interested in their personal needs than they are in yours.



From The Courier of Montgomery County

# WHEN WILL IT END?

By Julliann Wood

We, in Southern California, have had an unbelievable run. Prices have risen for over a decade. Quite honestly, I have not seen a better market. Once a rarity, we now have sales in the million-dollar range here in Box Canyon. Amazing!

Will it end? You Bet! I remember when I started with Bob that it seemed like one day houses just stopped selling. Then prices dropped.

This will happen to our market too. "When" is the big question.

Someone recently asked me, "Julliann, if

Ok you may ask, but what if home prices drop to half? Yes, it could happen but when? Prices are anticipated to rise for the next few quarters. ("anticipated" is the catch word.)

Here is what I see. If you are buying a home now, not a spec house, it is most likely that you will have the most affordable house payment, for the rest of your life. Market values and interest rates may rise and fall, but you will be secure.

Planning to move in a year or two but want to buy? You are "rolling the dice" in



the prices are going to come down, should I wait to buy my home." It all "depends" but for most, it is a definite NO. Buy now.

Right now interest rates are the lowest in my lifetime. Looking at past annual rate charts, rates have been as high as 18%. 18%!!!!

Will they go that high again, soon, ever? I doubt it but many of my clients now qualify for rates around 3%. I can remember that 6% once was "a good rate." If, (when?) rates go back up to 6% your mortgage payment could about double from rates today.

hopes values will continue rise. Are there still opportunities for "flipping" houses, yes.

Flipping and "betting" on values increasing is just that, "betting." Some of you win in Vegas, but Vegas never loses. Same here. Some investors are/will make fortunes in the market. But I promise you, values will not increase forever. Interest rates of 3% (or below) will not be here forever.

For homeowners, your safe bet is to buy that dream home now. Questions? Call me.

# UNFAIR, BUT TRUE

By Bob Wood

I was just re-reading my article "Equal Justice" and was reminded of a friend I worked with at Camp Kilpatrick- L.A. County Probation Department.

Bill (not his real name) had gone back to school and passed the state bar. He was now an attorney in addition to being a Probation Officer.

If police arrest co-conspirators and these defendants can not afford private counsel, the Public Defender is tasked with their defense. One problem, co-defendants can not be represented by the same attorney. What if Jim says Joe did it and Joe says Jim did it? Technically The Public Defender's Office is the defendant's attorney. No matter how many attorneys there are in the Public Defenders Office, they are not separate from that office. That office may represent only one of those defendants.

What then? If Joe is represented by the Public Defender who will represent Jim, who is also unable to afford private counsel?

Here is where Bill comes in. The County will hire a Conflict Attorney. Bill is not part of the Public Defender's office so he can defend Jim.

Yes, but Bill has a "law enforcement" perspective (bias). The defendant has little choice in picking the attorney who will defend him. Bill tells the suspect, "If I'm going to defend you, you've got to tell me everything, exactly as it happened."

Jim, with very little encouragement, spills the beans. He tells Bill how he "jammed up" the victim, took the money, etc.

Bill shakes his head. "Jim, I'm so sorry. The best we can do is plead guilty and hope for a reduced sentence."

Bill probably sent more defendants to prison than many attorneys in the District Attorney's Office.

Bill later was granted a judgeship in another jurisdiction. Unfair, but absolutely the truth.

# LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

By Bob Wood

Some may dismiss this as Religious (Christian?) patter, but actually it is good practical advice. Over the decades that I have been a Realtor, many unfortunate situations could have been prevented (resolved) if there had been a little “love” shared between neighbors. (The Greeks might have used the word “Philia.”)

Let me share three notable examples of the lack of Philia- brotherly love:

1) “Back-in-the-day” new subdivisions sold homes that were not fenced (walled). As the homes were sold in a Granada Hills subdivision one new neighbor greeted his contiguous new neighbors and suggested that a block wall be constructed along their common property lines. Two of the

neighbors readily agreed, perhaps enthusiastically.

Alas the third neighbor “wasn’t sure” if there needed to be a fence and surely, he didn’t want to contribute.

Several weeks later the wall was constructed. The side facing the neighbor who wouldn’t contribute, was painted. It was a “stunning” dayglow pink.

That neighbor’s wife hysterically called her husband, demanding he come home and “fix” it.

He raced home and forcefully pounded on the neighbor’s front door (The one who had constructed the wall).

Wild and threateningly, he swore that he would sue for damages and that he had a “right” to repaint the wall because being on the property line meant he had the “right” to repaint it. He finished his tirade by informing the neighbor that he was calling his attorney.

Calmly, the neighbor responded. “The wall is not on the property line and was set back one foot on to my property. Be aware that if you touch the wall, you are guilty of trespass and should you attempt to repaint it, you will be guilty of vandalism.”

He then slowly reached into his wallet and pulled out his business card. “Please give my card to your attorney.” The card revealed that he was a Superior Court Judge.

2) A couple purchased a view home in West Hills. I’d represented the seller. There was a large lot next to them and it was for sale. After the close of escrow, I suggested that the lots owner was “motivated” to sell and that it could prove to be a good investment.

Like so many neighbors that I have known, they didn’t want to spend the money. Besides the lot had been for sale for a longtime, and “it couldn’t be built on.” Or so they may have believed.

Of course, it came to pass that the lot sold. In all fairness to the homeowners the new neighbors were perhaps not the “nicest” folks. The new landowners did a survey and found that the homeowners were parking on their land.

According to the landowners, they made several attempts to get the homeowners to move their car off the land.

Well, neither side offered the other a smile and a warm plate of cookies.

One day the homeowners found a notice from the towing company on their door. Their Mercedes had been towed to an impound yard. (They moved back to the flatlands.)

3) A new neighbor moved in and felt that one of the neighbors was doing something illegal, or at least destructive to the environment. (I did not, nor do I represent either party. I’ve gleaned these details from several seemingly reliable sources.)

As it came to pass the new neighbor was incorrect in the allegations made about the old neighbor. This resulted in the old neighbor erecting a “spite” fence and at sometime there developed a question as to access to the new neighbor’s property.

It is my information that resolution was sought through the Courts. To my best understanding the new homeowner was ordered to pave and improve the access across the landowner’s property.

Perhaps that “plate of warm cookies” could have avoided the cost of attorney’s fees and what ever costs of eventually paving to access.

(Should one or both of the litigants wish to comment, correct, or illuminate The New Lake Times as to any misrepresentations, we would be happy to print those missives.)

The point of this article: love your neighbor. Yes, sometimes that neighbor seems “unlovable.” But try. The Beatles told us “All you need is love.” Even the late Rodney King proclaimed, “Can’t we all just get along?”

Oh, definitely buy that “unbuildable,” “worthless lot” next to your home. It will be worthless until you have a new neighbor, maybe one you don’t like.

# ALAS

By Bob Wood

A few issues ago I wrote about how Pacoima, Arleta, and Panorama City had been new and impressive additions to the San Fernando Valley. Panorama City attracted people with its upscale department stores and fine restaurants.

Perhaps not so today. Crime, deteriorating infrastructure, etc. can be factors in its decline. I'd imagine few from Bell Canyon (Chatsworth?) go shopping there now.

As a Juvenile Investigation Probation Officer, we were taught that when visiting a client in those neighborhoods it was best to make your house call early in the morning. The "bad guys" are probably still asleep and in that it's cooler at that time of day, the house won't smell as bad. Oh, and never sit on upholstered furniture.

That was in the 1970's and a far cry from the 1950's when Ritchie Valens (Richard Valenzuela), visited his "Donna."

What's my point? Recently our neighbors in Box Canyon, the Knolls, and West Hills have been reporting an ever-growing crime problem. Porch pirates, vehicle break-ins, streetlights not working because the copper wire has been stolen, strangers hiding in their yards at night, people trying to open the door to homes at night, stolen catalytic converters, homeless people "invading" their neighborhood, etc.

Is this "the new normal?" What is causing this social change? Can it be reversed? Will Topanga and Desoto soon be Roscoe and Van Nuys Blvd, or worse?

What's the answer, or is there an answer? More police, more social services, permanent housing for the homeless, higher taxes to provide more services, reinstitute bail and/or longer sentences, stop incarcerating the poor while the wealthy post bond, make our homes more secure with surveillance cameras and high walls, recall the governor (not), move someplace "safe"...

No, I don't have an answer and probably those GI's who moved into the brand-new homes in Arleta after WWII didn't have the answer when the neighborhood started to deteriorate.

I work from home. I can tell you that in my neighborhood we have none of the previously mentioned problems. No, I'm not recommending that you move but I'm enjoying a peaceful life in Montgomery Texas.

# ANOTHER DAY OLDER AND...

By Jullian Wood

My dad used to play an old 45 rpm record by someone named Tennessee Ford. It was a song about a miner who labored all day only to be deeper in debt. Some feel somewhat the same today. Deeper in debt not to "the company store" but to ever increasing taxes, cost of utilities, gasoline, food, etc.

But, 2022 is almost here. If you're getting my newsletter, you probably live in a home, have power (except for rolling brown outs) and water (rationed), and food. Yes, many remember past times that seemed to have been better. But there's no going back.

Many of us will be thankful for our many Blessings on November 25th. December brings Christmas, Hannukah, Kwanzaa, etc.

New Year's is soon to follow. It's almost here. Jewish New Year (or Rosh Hashanah, was celebrated in September. Chinese New Year will be celebrated in February (Year of the Tiger), followed by Persian New Year (Nowruz) on March 21 (first day of Spring). Islamic New Year will be observed July 30.

But whoever we are or whenever we celebrate, most of us review the past year and make "resolutions" for the new year.

Most of us will celebrate the New Year this December 31st. Many will take time to review 2021 and make resolutions planning to make a better 2022.

Can we resolve to make 2022 better than 2021? Will most keep those resolutions?

Yes, I had "victories" and "defeats" in 2021. Will I be making a resolution to do better & to be better in 2022? Absolutely!

I Pray that all (ALL!) of us will work together to make a better neighborhood, better California, better America, and a better world for all.

# REALLY

By Julliann Wood

The other morning, I was driving through our neighborhood and was shocked to find some directional arrows had been vandalized. Of course, I was not pleased.

Yes, it is a pain for me to go back to the office, pick up replacement signs, and reinstall them. But that is not the real problem and shockingly, I'm not the real victim.

Is there someone out there that doesn't like Julliann? Seems obvious. No matter who you are, not all love you. Kennedy, Reagan, and Obama are good examples of well-loved people, that are not loved by all.

Julliann is not the real victim of this vandalism. The real victims are your neighbors. Neighbors who are trying to sell their homes or property are the one's injured by destruction of those signs.

Our neighborhood is confusing to some. These signs help potential buyers find your neighbor's homes. The signs aid in allowing your neighbors to get the best price in the quickest time. Those directional signs are placed there for them.

My expense and effort in replacing those signs are minimal. The cost in lost sales or decrease sales price, can be significant to your neighbor.

Do you feel I did something wrong to you? Call me. Let me know how I can help. But please, don't harm your neighbors.

# HAPPY (HOPEFUL) NEW YEAR!

By Bob Wood

Two years, COVID, unprecedented fuel prices, "brown outs," restrictions, water rationing, attempted home invasions, and ?????? What will 2022 bring?

The easy answer, "Who knows?" Those who believe in God ("The God," some God, any God) will pray that this year will be better. Alas, have read some of my neighbor's (former neighbors) comments, they seem to need not pray. They are happy with our status quo.

My prayers would be for a California/SFV/Simi to be more like the state I moved to in 1969. Low taxes, cheap gas, lots of water.....

Real Estate, my 1800 sq ft three-bedroom two bath home at 22233 Welby Way cost me \$25,000. Today that wouldn't be the down payment. The question most of our clients ask, "Will prices keep rising?"

Certainly not. They will stop rising, then drop some (not as low as when they started their spectacular rise). Eventually they will rise again.

The question is "when" and "what"

buyers, sellers, or speculators should do now?

Tenants: If you plan to be "here," wherever your "here" is, for the next five years or more, buy now. Rents will most likely not go down no matter what happens to home prices. Right now, you are spending thousands of dollars and have no tax benefits, nor equity build up.

If you would like us to explain why fixing your own leaky faucet, or replacing your own dishwasher is an advantage to calling the landlord, please call us.

Planning to sell your home/investment property? Call us. Every situation is different. I've been through "market changes" for over 45 years and can probably share some sage advice.

2022 will offer challenges and rewards. Julliann and I Pray that there will be more "rewards" than "challenges." As a State and as a Nation, we have survived (prospered from) challenges in past years. We have faith that whatever the challenges of the new year, things will be better.



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Thank you to all the neighbors for your trust & support throughout the year! I was able to successfully represent over 50 clients this year to sell, buy, rent, invest or start new projects in our neighborhood. Remember I am always here for you and any of your Real Estate needs.

Wishing all of you a blessed Thanksgiving, Happy Hanukah, Merry Christmas, Joyous Kwanzaa and a very Happy New Year! Lets go 2022!

God Bless,  
Julliann

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