

Valley of the Sun Real Estate Update

February, 2007

What My Grandmother Might Say

I usually use this space to keep you up to date on the latest happenings in the local real estate market, but we will be breaking from tradition this time around. The past month marked a very special occasion, so instead of focusing on current events we will be looking back into the past.

My grandmother, Margaret Irene Clark Wegner, was born 100 years ago, at the end of January. I am pleased to report that Mimi, as she is known in our family, is in fine spirits and enjoyed a trip to the symphony to ring in her second century on the planet. She then presided over a celebratory gathering of her extended clan, enjoying cocktails with her great-grandchildren before settling down to dinner for 20 in the private dining room of the wonderful facility where she lives. She remains a witty conversational partner who is eager to discuss the issues of the day. After dinner, the path back to her apartment was enlivened by the dozens of art prints she has acquired for the facility over the years to brighten the hallways. The next morning, she happily watched as Taran spilled his collection of building blocks on her coffee table, and she was all smiles as she helped him build a house for his stuffed animals.

All in all, I am amazed at her resilience and positive attitude, and I can only hope that I am doing as well as she is after the 59 more years it will take me to approach her longevity. And I think back on how dramatically the world has changed since she was born, all the way back in 1907. Arizona was still a territory, and wouldn't become a state for another 5 years. She has seen automobiles progress from steam and electric power, through the dominance of the gasoline engine, and now a return towards electric vehicles. She crossed the Atlantic on a steamship from England to live in America at the age of two, and has now traveled the world by jet and seen Russian and American astronauts living in a space station.

Despite all these changes and many more, I think my grandmother would also want to note the big things that have remained constant through her life. Most prominently, I think she would praise the value of a strong family and an active

mind. No matter what unexpected events the world may hold for us in the next 100 years, it certainly seems like the support of family & friends and a willingness to take on new challenges will always be the foundations of a long & happy life.

I hope that I can bring these qualities to my professional life, too. Buying or selling a home is intimately related with other aspects our lives, so it is important to me to be able to provide the best possible service during a process that can be trying even at the best of times. Each new client comes with new challenges to meet, and the ever-changing market keeps me on my toes as well. If you are thinking about embarking on a real estate adventure, I'd be happy to share it with you!

On the Home Front



After enjoying a dusting of snow during our trip to Boston, it was nice to return to the relative warmth of the Valley. As you can see here, Taran is eager to pitch in with some help in the yard. We'll be looking forward to all the help we can get soon, as Jill is expecting our second child at the end of March. So I guess family is both a constant in our lives, and also a source of constant change!



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Recipe of the Month

Mimi's Sherry Cake

This recipe has been in my family for at least 60 years, and it is quite possible that it comes from my great-grandmother. My mom & her siblings have very fond memories of this cake, and it was the featured dessert at Mimi's 100th birthday dinner. Like most of my grandmother's recipes, it is easy to make and will fill your kitchen with warm & happy smells. It's very rich, very moist, and if you think it may not be the healthiest thing you could make, just look at how well-preserved my grandmother is!

- 1 package yellow cake mix—approx 1-pound box
- 1 package instant vanilla pudding mix—approx 3.5 ounces
- 4 eggs
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup sherry
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg

1. Combine all ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Beat with an electric mixer for 4-5 minutes at medium speed until smooth.
2. Pour into a greased 10-inch tube cake pan.
3. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes. Cake is done when a toothpick inserted in the cake comes out clean.
4. Cool in pan, then invert onto serving plate.

Because it is very moist and gets a nice flavor from the sherry, you don't really have to frost the cake. But if you want to sweeten it up, here are a couple of options:

Sherry Frosting:

- 1/2 pound soft butter
- 1/2 pound powdered sugar
- 5-6 tablespoons sherry

Lemon Frosting:

- 1/4 cup soft butter
- 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

For either recipe, combine all ingredients in a large mixing bowl and blend with an electric mixer until the frosting reaches a light & fluffy texture. (Be careful when you begin to mix, as the powdered sugar will tend to fly out of the bowl!) Either recipe can be modified to suit your tastes by adding a bit more liquid to thin it out or more sugar to make it thicker.

You can also serve the cake unfrosted with a scoop of lemon sherbet or vanilla ice cream.

Culture Corner

Quick reviews of some recent favorites

Books: I recently enjoyed **The Uses Of Enchantment** by Heidi Julavits. With a complex structure of flashbacks & multiple perspectives, the story focuses on a very imaginative girl who may or may not have been abducted, and the impact of her experience on herself, her family, and others. It is an interesting exploration of the boundaries between what is real and what is not, and how the stories we tell—real or not—can come to define us.

Movies: I can't call it a pleasant movie, but **Children of Men** is certainly a very powerful film, both visually & emotionally. The story of a ravaged near-future society, and its uncomfortable parallels with our contemporary culture, kept my eyes glued to the screen for two hours and I was out of breath at the end.

Food: Like many Valley restaurants in unassuming locations, I have driven past **John Henry's** at Elliott & Rural countless times without ever eating there. This one is definitely worth a visit. The northern-Italian menu is nicely complemented by a friendly wine list, and attentive service rounds out an elegant evening.



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