

Valley of the Sun Real Estate Update

July, 2006

Milestones in Education—and Ignorance....

In Arizona, it's pretty easy to get licensed as a Real Estate Salesperson. There are several schools you can attend, and they all offer very flexible schedules. The class work is not unduly challenging, and if you devote yourself to an intensive schedule, you can finish the course of study in just 2 weeks. Pass the school test, pass the state test, pay the Department of Real Estate, find a Broker to work for, print up some business cards, and you're in business.

Not surprisingly, the ranks of agents here in the Valley swell noticeably when the market takes a big upswing like we saw last year. Many agents establish long & successful careers by learning the marketplace, continuing to develop new skills, and providing excellent service to their clients. And then, of course, there are the agents who come in expecting short hours, easy work, and big paychecks, who typically manage to cobble together a few deals with friends & family before dropping out of the business altogether when the market slows.

I got into selling houses almost by accident, but it turned out to be a great fit for me. In fact, I have enjoyed my work so much that I recently went back to school to get my Broker's License. In Arizona, a Salesperson can perform all the tasks needed to buy or sell a house, but they must work for a Broker. When the state licenses you as a Broker, they certify that your knowledge of the marketplace, the contract process, and business ethics are strong enough to allow you to work on your own, and even to supervise the work of other Salespersons. I am very proud of this accomplishment, and pleased with the increased responsibilities I will be able to take on here at Lucas Realty Group.

It is my hope to continue developing my skills and my knowledge, and another recent event made it clear to me that there are plenty of things I don't know. I passed another significant milestone a few weeks ago, when I had my 40th birthday. I gave some thought to putting together a blow-out celebration, but it never quite came together and I was happily looking forward to a nice dinner with a couple of friends.

It never occurred to me that their request to meet at 5:30 on a Saturday evening might be a bit unusual, and it seemed perfectly reasonable to follow them back to their house to pick something up afterwards. It wasn't until I walked into the garage packed with the 30 people my loving and oh-so-devilish wife had invited to the surprise party that the pieces fell into place for me. I simply had no idea that there was anything going on, while Jill had arranged not just for my parents to fly into town but even got a back-up babysitter so our regular sitter could go to the party!

The irony, of course, is that so much of my professional time is spent making sure my clients don't experience any surprises. The focus of my work with buyers & sellers is educating them to understand the dynamics of the marketplace and what their best options might be. But in this case being caught completely off guard was a real treat!

On the Home Front



Now that summer is here—118° last week!—we're all looking for ways to cool off, and Taran has become quite attracted to our hose. Any time we go out in the back yard, he asks us to turn it on, or he toddles over to the sprinkler heads and asks us to make them run. He even asks for us to turn on the mister system, and I don't think he's ever seen it on—he just knows it's something the hose plugs into, so it must be fun!



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Recipes of the Month

In the summer heat, you may notice your appetite diminishing right along with your desire to work in the kitchen. Here are a couple of quick & flavorful recipes to help keep you eating healthy even when it is too hot to whip up a full meal.

Spinach and Bacon Salad

1 pound spinach, rinsed
slices thick-cut bread,
for croutons
4 Tbs sunflower oil
1 garlic clove, crushed

12 slices of bacon, cut 3
into strips
4-5 Tbs dressing, bleu
cheese or vinaigrette
Salt & Pepper

1. Tear the spinach leaves into large pieces & place them in a good-sized serving bowl.
2. Make croutons by removing crusts & cutting bread into cubes. Heat oil in a skillet, add garlic and cook 1 minute. Add bread cubes and cook, stirring frequently, until golden & crisp. Lift out the croutons & drain on paper towels.
3. Add the bacon to the pan and fry for 5 minutes or until crisp. Lift out & drain.
4. Sprinkle bacon over spinach in serving bowl. Spoon the dressing over the salad, add salt & pepper to taste, and toss. Add croutons & serve immediately. Serves 6.

Asparagus with Parmesan

1 1/4 pounds Asparagus
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 Tbs olive oil
1 Tbs dry white wine

1 tsp white vinegar
3 garlic cloves, crushed
1/4 tsp herbes de Provence
Salt & Pepper

1. Trim the woody ends off the asparagus.
2. Mix the oil, wine, vinegar, garlic, herbs, salt & pepper in a large bowl. Toss the asparagus in the marinade, cover, and let stand for 15 minutes.
3. Sprinkle the parmesan on a plate, and roll the asparagus in the cheese to coat it. Arrange in a single layer in a large baking dish.
4. Bake at 400° for 15-20 minutes, until lightly browned & sizzling. Serves 4.

Culture Corner

Quick reviews of some recent favorites

Books: A colleague of mine recently loaned me his copy of **A Confederacy of Dunces**, by John Kennedy Toole. Originally published in 1980, it's the story of a brilliant but delusional writer and the unlikely array of characters he encounters in the New Orleans of the 1960's. You'll have fun reading along as Toole winds all the threads of his plot in to a funny & well-plotted finale.

Movies: Philip K. Dick was a prolific writer, and many of his sci-fi stories have made it to the big screen. The latest is **A Scanner Darkly**, and it addresses some of his favorite themes: memory, identity, and the struggle of the individual to survive the grinding and ever-present machinery of a corporate state that hovers somewhere between dysfunction and outright malevolence.

Food: We've been to **The Melting Pot** a couple of times recently, and we always enjoy it. Whether you are going out to meet with friends, or planning a romantic night for two, they have the atmosphere to suit you. The fondue is great, and the production they put on with the service makes every meal feel like a special event.

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