

Cheviot Hills

The greatest neighborhood in the world

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The Ol' College Try



By Ben Lee

It's May! This is the month to celebrate mothers, Memorial Day and, for some college students, May marks the end of another school year. It seems rather inconceivable that we are already in the place with our middle son to even think about college. Just yesterday he was dressed up in a little suit graduating from Castle Heights Elementary. And what feels like mere moments ago, his older brother was pouring over college applications, stressed out with choices and decisions. Like most parents' going through such an experience with first born children, we were flying blindly with no clue what to do. Our parents weren't too involved when my wife and I were seniors applying to schools, so we took a back seat approach to our son Mason, too. Luckily, he's pretty type A in that he was very comfortable navigating the world of college applications solo. His high school (the Geffen Academy at UCLA) provided what seemed to be strong counselors to assist with deadlines and compiling lists of potential schools. When Mason's counselor quit in the middle of the process, we probably should've found outside help to get him over the finish line but figured he had come this far already, no sense bringing in anyone new at the eleventh hour. And our attitude (as naïve as it may sound) has generally been you'll get into some places, rejected from others and ultimately end up where you're meant to be.

Honestly, the whole college game is a racket. The kids we know are so over-the-top qualified to go to any elite school, there's absolutely no reason why they shouldn't be accepted at every single one of them. Seeing spots go to students with lesser resumes is demoralizing and depressing and should be filed under the 'sometimes

life isn't fair,' column. Then there's all this language we never had to deal with back in the 1990s: Early Decision, Early Action, Early Decision II, binding contracts, rescinding applications. It's a whole new world and it's complicated. Kids today work so hard in high school and then cram their available minutes with volunteer hours, activities, jobs, app developments, charity work and are still faced with disappointment because they have their hearts set on going to one of a few trendy or top-notch schools. I wish I could sit each of these astounding kids down and tell them that in the long run it really doesn't matter. Their worth or future is not built on what one or two colleges decide.

Mason was deflated when he didn't get into his top choice after being placed on the waitlist (Wharton). He got into a few schools but then got rejected from even more. This is a kid who never got below an A, had stellar SATs, was president of his debate team and on and on and blah blah blah. He still got rejected from top notch schools and was understandably sad, wondering what was it all for?? But at the end of the very long and arduous process, luckily he had two great choices from which to choose (which ironically happened to be the alma maters of both his parents): Wesleyan or UCLA. He ultimately decided to go to UCLA and even though all summer he mourned what might've been had he decided to go back east, today he's the happiest we've ever seen him. He loves being a Bruin and is having the time of his life.

Back when Mason was going through this process, and we couldn't travel due to the pandemic, he applied to schools mostly sight unseen. Now with the pandemic in the rear view mirror, middle son Spencer was able to spend spring break '23, touring a bunch of back east schools. Four out of five of us braved the freezing cold

weather (shockingly, Mason opted to spend his vacation with the entire UCLA Greek system in Cabo instead, go figure!) and together we visited 10 colleges in five days. It was a whirlwind! And did I mention freezing? But it was great to expose the boys to the beauty that is a small liberal arts education. The campuses were lush and green with ivy-covered buildings, hundreds of years old. I took them to visit Wesleyan and showed them my old dorm and the lawn where I'd sit with my buddies playing guitar. We took tours and saw friends' kids who are current freshmen at Brown, Tufts and Vassar. We heard enthusiastic tour guides explain why they loved their respective schools. We saw a Red Sox game and remarked how cool it would be to live in a town where you could actually walk to the hometown stadium. We saw beautiful schools with the rose-colored glasses of 'what could be' yet also with a slightly cynical eye knowing there's no such thing as a sure thing.

I guess what I'm saying as the next crop of students endeavor to start applying for colleges (including my fantastic son, Spencer): go easy on yourselves. You are already great and not only does the perfect college not exist, but where you go does not define who you are or the hard work you've already done. In many ways the college application process is a lot like being a real estate agent. You work hard, you present the best possible version of yourself or the product you're marketing but you're not always going to make the sale or get the listing. It happens all the time and when it does, it feels terrible! But being an adult means you pick yourself up and move on and hope for a better outcome the next time around.

So kids, if you're listening, keep your spirits up, know you'll get into somewhere and most importantly: please be kind to your parents. This experience is not easy for any of us!

My featured listings

Cheviot Hills – FOR SALE!



9825 Altman Ave - \$3,995,000 5 Beds/5.5 Bath 3,539 Sq. Ft., 6,677 Sq. Ft. Lot

Westchester - NEW LISTING!



6404 W 85th St \$1,199,000
2 Beds/1 Bath - 1,153 Sq. Ft. Lot

Beverlywood - NEW LEASE LISTING!



1153 S. Clark Drive \$12,995.00 p/mo.
4 Beds/4.5 Bath - 3,000 Sq. Ft., 6,249 Sq. Ft. Lot

Manhattan Beach - SOLD!



3528 Walnut Ave \$3,195,000 - List Price
5 Beds/3.5 Bath - 2,790 Sq. Ft., 4,645 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheviot Hills - LEASED! *Dream Home*



10422 Lorenzo Pl \$25,000 per/mo.
6 Beds/6 Bath - 6,600 Sq. Ft., 8,100 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheviot Hills happenings

Freedom to Discriminate

By Ben Lee

Thanks to newsletter reader and neighbor Dennis Orfirer for suggesting a book to me: Freedom to Discriminate by Gene Slater. It's a detailed look into the history of the real estate profession with particular attention paid to the abhorrent and blatant racism as expressed in the actions of the agents. At the turn of the century, a handful of a "real estate men," in an attempt to legitimize the profession and step away from nicknames like "shark," "shyster," and "scoundrel," banded together to create the Los Angeles Realty Board (LARB) to which

membership was only granted to white men. These (and subsequent members who joined the board) became known as 'realtors,' and developed the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) but only allowed whites to access it. The book delved deep into the legal statutes, amendments and covenants that went to exhaustive lengths to prevent people of color from living in certain neighborhoods. Of course, it was all marketed in terms of freedom. Sellers should have the freedom to sell their home (or not sell) to whoever they want. But heaven forbid a seller in a whites-only neighborhood should try to sell to a person who's Black, Hispanic, Jewish,

Mongolian(?!). The agents would swoop into "protect" the seller from making a horrible, irreversible mistake. It's horrendous especially when you consider that this was still going on well into the 20th Century and notable that so much of the discrimination practices took place in California, specifically Los Angeles. It's a shameful blight on my profession and I can only hope learning from the past ensures a better future for all. My father-in-law touched on this topic in his book, More Westside Stories and highlighted the fact that Harry Culver, the president of California Realtors Association and National Realtors Association, would

not allow minorities to gain membership in either group and he insisted upon restrictive covenants when developing Culver City. "Culver maintained that race restrictive covenants- to prohibit blacks, Mexicans, and Japanese- were appropriate." An early advertisement promoting the emerging neighborhood called itself a "model little white city." It was also known as a sundown town: no non-whites were welcome within the town limits after sunset. Both books provide fascinating histories of our city. I learned so much and while tough to read in parts, I encourage you to check them both out.



STEPS THAT CARE

By Ben Lee

Calling all Castle Heights Elementary families both current and alumni as well as everyone who wants to help put an end to cancer (and isn't that all of us?)!! Steps that Care is a beloved Castle Heights tradition that invites everyone to walk as a group with the shared goal of raising money to research finding cures for cancer. This year, the group is walking to honor two beloved women whose lives were tragically cut short due to cancer: Griselda Hueyopa and Heidi Adler. Both women were not just personal friends of my family but also mothers of Castle Heights students and treasured members of our community. If you are interested in joining the walk, meet in front of Castle Heights school at 9am on May 6th and follow the route around the neighborhood that Griselda would take every day at lunch before returning to her job behind the desk in the front office. If you can't make the walk but would like to donate, here's the link: <https://standuptocancer.org/?form=FUNXFHYSCSF&fundraiser=NBXYWMC&modifyDesignation=no> or standuptocancer.org



Lacing Up For Career Day!

By Ben Lee

I was excited to spend the day at LACES (Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies) last month in support of Career Day. I was not only impressed with the campus itself but for the enthusiastic response to this annual event. For those unfamiliar with the school, LACES is a highly academic magnet just east of Robertson that serves 6th-12th grades. Originally, before Palms Middle School was created, LACES was known as Louis Pasteur Junior High and was the alma mater of many of my relatives as well as thousands of other Los Angeles kids. I was joined by a host of other professionals to speak about their experiences in a variety of careers. Lawyers, doctors, plumbers, and artists all took a turn at the podium- even our lead officer Chris Baker was there to talk

about being a police officer. I shared my trajectory that started with excelling in school before embarking in a variety of industries before becoming a real estate agent in my 30s. I told them the journey is as important as the destination and if I had enjoyed being a lawyer more, I might never have found myself in the career in which I'm thriving today. I shared the plusses and minuses of being in real estate, namely that you don't get a salary and if you don't bring in business, you don't get paid! However, while sometimes unstable, especially when the markets turn downward, being an entrepreneur and your own boss can ultimately be incredibly rewarding. I hope I inspired a few of the LACES students to think about real estate as a future career and I was honored to be among such esteemed professionals also there to share a bit about what they do every day

RAFFLE

By Ben Lee

Thanks to everyone who entered the raffle to win the \$50 gift card to FlowerTruck LA. Congratulations to Gabriela Campa! You are the lucky winner this month and I hope you enjoy all the beautiful flowers from this unique organization. To everyone who entered but didn't win, don't worry! There's always another raffle around the bend. This month we are offering a \$50 gift card to GIFTED on Pico! Featuring an array of curated, beautiful items that will surely please all the dads and grads on your list, this is a delightful neighborhood store that deserves your attention. To enter, just send me an email: ben@benleeproperties.com and write GIFTED in the subject line. That's it! We'll pick a winner at random and let you know by the end of the month. Good luck!

