



BEN LEE AND FAMILY IN RANCHO PARK, 1986



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Ride into the Danger Zone

By Ben Lee

It had been a while since I ventured into a movie theater- two and a half years to be exact. Most of the reason centered around Covid and not wanting to be in an indoor space full of partially/non-masked people. Knock on wood, I still haven't gotten it yet and I didn't think going to a movie justified the risk. If I'm going to get Covid, I rather it be from attending a wedding, concert, party, trip or some other major event; but not from a random movie outing. The risk vs. reward equation didn't add up. There is also part of me that just prefers to watch movies from home. I like controlling the volume, both from what's coming from the screen as well as other audience members. Even before the pandemic, I became increasingly less tolerant of those around me crinkling their wrappers, chatting with their friends or even picking up cell phone calls. Why endure all of that unnecessary irritation when I can choose the film I want to watch, at the time most convenient for me, from the comfort of my bedroom: all without the headaches of hunting for a mall parking spot, sharing an armrest with a stranger or being disgusted at overpriced concessions?

But my movie theater absence ended when we went as a family to see *Top Gun Maverick*. It was a perfect escape and unabashed celebration of a fun, summer popcorn film. Apparently, it had been completed for a few years, but Tom Cruise wouldn't allow it to be streamed at home and held its release for when people felt more comfortable venturing back into the theaters. I'm not sure why it was such a great movie. Part of the appeal is its nostalgia for the original. For teenagers in the 1980s, *Top Gun* was a cultural touchstone that helped define a generation. We all flocked to Westwood and waited in a line that stretched around the block (hence the phrase "blockbuster.") The soundtrack was so iconic that you'd be hard pressed to find anyone of a certain age who hears "Danger Zone," without imagining fighter jets soaring through the air or "Take my Breath Away," and not associate it with *Top Gun's* blue-tinted sex scene.

If you were lucky enough to have a best friend, he was likely the Maverick to your Goose or vice versa. We probably envisioned ourselves getting



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a little older and drunkenly serenading the pretty girl in a bar, shocked to discover later that she was our boss at the new job (oops). A few of us, in awe of the aerial feats and death-defying bravery of the pilots, were inspired to enroll at the Naval Academy and learn dog fighting tactics. My cousin Andy is one of those people. He made it through the Academy and after multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, he is now retired from combat fighting and is currently hard at work from the ground in Maryland, still serving his country.

I'm not sure the new *Top Gun* will have the same staying power as the original. It's a good movie on its own, regardless of its homage to the first but I'm not convinced the teenagers seeing it for the first time will be repeating the lines thirty years from now. I do think, however, they will come to appreciate the dedication to the craft Tom Cruise has shown. Regardless of how you feel about his religion, his outspoken views on anti-depressants, how (if you believe the tabloid reports) he seems to ignore his child who left Scientology in favor of those who stuck

with it... it's impossible to deny that he is an enthusiastic performer wholly dedicated to entertaining an audience. He's one hundred percent committed to giving movie-goers what they want in as realistic a way as possible.

Some are saying that Tom has single-handedly revitalized the sunny summer movie experience after so many years of darkness. His promise of a good time that can only be had on a big screen lured many of us who otherwise had no interest in venturing back to the theater, to brave it once again.

Maybe the same can be said for other summer activities, too. Perhaps there have been outings you've been avoiding but now feel empowered to get back out there and try again. If the crowds at my Sunday Open Houses are any barometer of a return to normalcy, I can report that my listings have absolutely seen a return to pre-pandemic numbers. People know that Covid will likely be around for the unforeseeable future and it's important to learn how to safely live with it: How to decide when it's worth it to attend a big gathering, a long awaited trip, a

movie or an Open House. Or maybe if numbers are too high, it's smarter to sit it out instead. The answer isn't the same for everyone and we each have to balance that risk/reward navigation for ourselves.

But whether it's traveling to far off lands or just going to a friend's backyard bar-be-que, getting back to any semblance of a normal summer can still feel strange and daunting yet slightly exhilarating, too. I hope that however you choose to spend these next few weeks, they're filled with whatever fun that resonates with you.

And, should you feel the need for speed... I recommend eating overpriced popcorn while watching an ageless movie star fly billion dollar planes in a dark theater with surround sound in the company of other middle-aged guys/gals reliving their youth. Just remember that if you're still a bit nervous being back into the theater, it's perfectly OK to wear a mask. Even *Maverick* puts on a seatbelt before each ride into the danger zone.

My featured listings

BEN LEE PROPERTIES

Cheviot Hills - NEW LISTING!



3211 Castle Heights Ave \$3,195,000
5 Beds/4 Bath 2,971 Sq. Ft., 8,750 Sq. Ft. Lot

Effortless, elegant, exquisite newer construction from Thomas James Homes. Open floor plan with lightly hued hardwood floors creates an easy, breezy flow from the foyer to dining room, living room to kitchen. The front two bedrooms provide lovely, far reaching views and the Master Bedroom suite includes a large walk-in closet and a beautiful bathroom with a tub from which one can enjoy a lovely tree top view. Near the award winning Castle Heights Elementary School.

Rancho Park - GREAT NEW PRICE!



10629 Blythe Ave \$2,950,000
4 Beds/3.5 Bath 3,100 Sq. Ft., 6,126 Sq. Ft. Lot

Seamlessly blending elements of both Spanish and Traditional styles, this perfect family home on a quiet, tree-lined street in Rancho Park exudes warmth, elegance and grace at every turn. Hardwood floors throughout lead to the formal dining room basked in natural light and then to an enormous Great. Massive master suite offers a beautiful Vanity/dressing room area, and a renovated white marble and slate bathroom with two sinks, spa-style steam shower, toilet room and sunken tub.

Cheviot Hills - GREAT NEW PRICE!



2848 Motor Ave \$4,250,000
5 Beds/4.5 Bath 4,246 Sq. Ft., 7,485 Sq. Ft. Lot

An extraordinary property in Cheviot Hills: with the glamour and design of a palatial estate without sacrificing the warmth and charm of a beloved family home, this stately Mediterranean is a masterpiece of craftsmanship and detail. Additional amenities include: Sonos central smart panels to control tv, sound system, lighting located in the family room, impossibly high ceilings, sweeping views, multiple fireplaces, front balconies and generous storage space. A truly exquisite property that will make an impression.

Beverlywood - COMING SOON!



1920 Bagley Ave
5 Beds/4 Bath 3,358 Sq. Ft., 9,533 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheviot Hills - COMING SOON!



10326 Walavista Rd \$3,995,000
6 Beds/6.5 Bath 4,525 Sq. Ft., 6,362 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheviot Hills - COMING SOON!



3064 Motor Ave
3 Beds/2 Bath 2,600 Sq. Ft., 6,504 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheviot Hills - FOR SALE!



– LORENZO –
Best Location in the Neighborhood!
6 Beds/8 Bath 7,500 Sq. Ft., 8,500 Sq. Ft. Lot

You may be curious about the new construction home being built on Lorenzo. Call Ben tel:3107046580 or send him an email mailto:ben@benleproperties.com to learn more about this stunning property.

Marina Del Rey - IN ESCROW!



4275 Corinth Ave \$2,650,000
4 Beds/4 Bath 3,763 Sq. Ft., 11,388 Sq. Ft. Lot

Situated on a massive corner lot in a quiet Culver City neighborhood. Surrounded by an orchard of mature trees that include guava, avocado, pomegranate and a variety of citrus, the foliage provides both privacy and farm-to-table nourishment. With limitless appeal in an enviable location conveniently located near the shops, restaurants and studios of Culver City, seize this phenomenal opportunity to reimagine a true showplace.

Cheviot Hills - SOLD!



10394 Glenbarr Ave \$8,750,000
6 Beds/8 Bath 6,972 Sq. Ft., 8,576 Sq. Ft. Lot

A gorgeous new construction that redefines luxurious California living. Every detail is a work of art. Every feature, designed with care. Spacious bedrooms, all ensuite with high ceilings and generous closets. Surrounded by lush greenery, the serene backyard offers a lovely swimming pool, hot tub, al fresco dining area and outdoor kitchen. A truly remarkable and exquisite estate worthy of your immediate attention

Beverlywood happenings

Janss Family



By Michael Harris

Michael Harris, my father in law, had written two books and was working on the third, More Westside Stories, when he passed away last December. This is an essay that will appear in that book which will be published posthumously this fall.

The area of West Los Angeles known as Westwood was largely the responsibility of the Janss family. The original agricultural tract was owned by Arthur Letts, a real estate developer. Letts' daughter Gladys married Harold Janss in 1911, thereby creating a marriage/merger between these two real estate development families. The Janss family was responsible for the subdivision and development of that tract into Westwood, California. At first Janss tried to sell the area as a real estate investment opportunity because of the many studios that were coming to the Westside. Among those studios was the Harold Lloyd Studios which was located at the now site of the Mormon

Temple. There were other studios that were planned or established on the Westside and Janss promoted the opportunity to get in on the ground floor with the studio developments. Because none of those planned or short-lived West Los Angeles studios made a go of it, Janss did a pivot. He transferred approximately 400 acres of his Westwood land to the Regents of the University of California to establish UCLA in the Westwood hills instead of downtown Los Angeles. The result was a university town that has greatly prospered. The Janss' brothers headquarters were located in the giant dome building that is still one of the most iconic structures in the village. The multi-level Janss Steps are climbed by thousands of UCLA students daily. Luckily the original racial covenants that were in place are now a relic of the past as it's unfathomable to ever imagine Westwood businesses closed to people of color, as was the case only a mere 100 years ago.

RAFFLE NEWS

By Ben Lee

Thank you to an overwhelming amount of raffle entrants to win 4 fabulous tickets (plus parking) to see our boys in blue beat the Giants on July 21! Congratulations go to Jerry and Diane Klayman! You are the lucky winners of Dodgers tickets this month. Hope you enjoy seeing the game and please bring us home a win!

To all those who entered and didn't win, don't worry! There is always another raffle around the corner. This month we are raffling off a \$50 gift card to Hijo de su Madre. The classically trained Yucatecan chef had been creating astounding Mexican vegan delicacies from a food truck, but has recently opened a brick/mortar

restaurant on Westwood Blvd. Food so authentic and delicious, you'll barely realize that the burritos, tacos and bowls are meat-free! To enter, simply send an email to: ben@benleeproperties.com and write 'MADRE' in the subject line. That's it! We'll draw a winner at the end of the month and let you know by email. Good luck!



Shop the Lange Estate Sale!

By Ben Lee

After a several month hiatus, the annual Lange Foundation is back in business! Benefitting the Lange Animal Rescue Foundation, this enormous sale raises money to help rescue, rehabilitate and rehome companion animals from all across the city. Started by Gillian Lange in the 1970's, the Lange Foundation has saved thousands of animals and is funded in large party thanks to proceeds from this sale. Ranging in items from pianos to silverware; vintage clothing to housewares (and pretty much everything in between) there is definitely something for everyone in the family. New donations are accepted daily so the inventory is always changing and it's never the same experience twice! The sale opened its' doors mid-June and will continue through August. 2512 Santa Monica Boulevard, Open for donations or shopping Wednesdays-Sundays from 11am-5pm. The cats and dogs (and even some horses!) thank you in advance.

