

# Inspection and Introspection

**D**o you remember Placitas Land Company? We were housed in the little adobe duplex next to the former post office near the cemetery. I wish I knew the full history of this building. Maybe someone will call and tell me. But when Dick and I moved here 25 years ago, it had recently become Placitas Land Company, with buffalo logo on the door. It was suggested that I go meet with the interesting young men (Steve Gudelj and Rick Levin) who had an incipient real estate company. I barely knew what a real estate company was -- something to do with helping people sell or buy property. Accurate enough, if a little thin in the scope of things. It is this building that all these twenty-five years later I am trying to find a buyer for and am very tempted to buy myself. Not just for reasons of nostalgia, although there is plenty of that, but because it's a precious little building in bad need of restoration, a loving owner, and it is a rather unique property, as almost everything is in the Village. The world seems to agree, as in this slow real estate market, it is the one property I have listed that is getting a lot of attention. And I don't think it's just price.

So as I followed the inspector around yesterday and learned how the building had been made, maybe eighty or so years ago, he guessed, I thought a lot about the magic of Placitas. And there is a magic that's palpable. I know what the events were that brought me here, but it is surely spiritual the reason why I stayed. Can I explain it? I don't think I can. I did have a bit of a short history, a few years and a lot of learning, in that particular building, however. I used to prune the lilac tree, and I had plants in the patio. I pointed out to the inspector "Now this is where my desk was. I don't think there is any slab here, because bindweed grew up through the bricks and wrapped around the legs." I loved bindweed then. It was morning glory to me. Indeed the building was built with a concrete foundation of adobe thickness around the exterior and the perimeter of all the rooms. Then the builders came back and filled in the spaces with packed dirt, then sand and brick, and up went the adobes. No problem for bindweed to get in, given its root system and tenacious behavior. But that's fixable; everything is fixable.

We had canine, feline, and occasional chicken semi-residents among many other less-domestic creatures. We had families; we were a school car-pool stop. Our customers came in carrying compass and US Geological Survey maps and wore hiking boots. Not much in the way of "lookey-lous" in those days. If they found us, they surely needed us, whoever we were! I remember one day a guy from the State Engineer's Office came in and said he needed to

know where every well in Placitas was located. We sat down with maps, and I pointed out every property I knew of that had a well. I, of course, had only a few years exploring Placitas back then. What did I know about where all the wells were. No wonder I sometimes have trouble locating records down there. I remember at one point we had a receptionist/secretary carefully coiffed and painted with no secretarial skills. I can see her now, totally wrapped up in typewriter ribbon, her long red fingernails making a valiant attempt to disentangle herself, while the ribbon ran across the brick floor -- unwinding as it went.

Everyone in the Village came and went at one point or another so it wasn't hard to get to know the neighbors. We Realtors-in-training were always looking at interesting old properties, hearing history, "his or her story." We were a "hangout" spot. It was fun. Of course, Steve and Rick, in cowboy boots carrying briefcases, were "out there" working their tails off over something or other. I was used to working with men so I thought I would be part of this group somehow. Learn to kick dirt; drive a bulldozer; schmooze with the best of them, like I did back in New Hampshire with the farmers who would come to see if "the little woman" could learn to use her tractor correctly and then taught her how. I got myself some cowboy boots, but only threw out my back trying to walk in them. Never could catch up with those guys! Had to learn my own thing. So here I am: still in Placitas; still doing real estate all over the place; still gardening; still playing with canines (my twin "terrierists") that are only allowed in the present office on special occasions.

I've only "really lived" in three places: in Connecticut on Long Island Sound; in New Hampshire in a 200-year-old farmhouse on the side of Moose mountain; and in Placitas on the high desert plain. In Connecticut I know the Sound. I still have the navigational map in my head, though I haven't been sailing or big blue fishing in years. In New Hampshire I know the land, at least the 350 acres of it that were mine to care for. I know the old stone walls, the various pastures; the hay fields; the slopes of virgin timber; the apple orchard. I knew the creatures that I lived with, side-by-side: the bear; porcupine; hedgehog; deer; fisher-cat; birds and coyotes and their habits and hangouts. In New Mexico, at last, I know the land pretty well. I know the architecture, how buildings were built and how they are built. I know what grows here -- though not all the names. I know the creatures that live here. I even know a lot of my neighbors. I know a little history. I have a history. It feels good. Maybe feeling the magic of a place is really as simple as just feeling good where you are. ■



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