

1015 Mariposa

“Get your shoes on, Betty, we’re buying a house!” Back in 1957, my dad saw a new listing. He already knew the street; he had moved to Berkeley in 1938 to attend the university and he walked and walked the neighborhoods. His parents moved to Berkeley from Fresno in the early 1950s; and my mother’s grandparents had moved here from Albuquerque in the early 1900s. Dad struggled to put the financing together, but it all worked, and we settled in. My little brother was a wee toddler then, and now he’s retired. At the time, we had four grandparents, and aunts, uncles and cousins in Berkeley. Now we’ve all flown the coop, the last of the elder generation has passed on, and we must actually leave the house.

Mariposa Avenue is special. It’s secluded, but close to everything. The house itself and the neighborhood and shops are accessible - via walking, driving, or motorized wheelchair. It’s beautiful - two rows of stately houses on a quiet tree-lined street, just at the breaking point between the Berkeley flats and the Berkeley hills. Berkeley is strewn with walks and paths, and our own path, halfway down the street, officially called “Terrace Walk” (though the previous generation knows its real name is “The Daisy Path”) takes us either up to Shattuck/Walnut Streets or down to Sutter/Hopkins and the Tunnel. We used to take the F train into San Francisco; now it’s the F bus. A little further down the hill is the North Berkeley BART stop.

We’re kind of at a crossroads between Solano and Shattuck. Berkeley is replete with shops and restaurants; plenty of chains but plenty of one-offs. Gourmet Ghetto came along when we weren’t looking. Hello Peets! Hello Chez Panisse! Good-bye to favored establishments (Oscar’s) usually means hello to the next wonderful enterprise (Sweetgreen). Historic Spenger’s is gone but historic Rivoli’s is still going strong. Supermarkets, drug stores, clothes, books, stationery, hair, antiques, wine & cheese, you-name-it - all within striking distance. And of course, the university - easier just to walk to the football games (or classes or concerts), rather than try to drive and park.

We’re a very friendly street. Thanks to a loosely-defined neighborhood association, we have succeeded in burying the power lines, assisted in restoring the fountain at The Circle, and host an annual Halloween celebration. From the house we have a bit of a bay view, and enjoy the sunsets. A couple of blocks away is the magical Live Oak Park. As kids we had summer programs there, and it was good for endless exploring for little feet. A little further up is Tilden Park, also with summer nature programs, and good for serious hikes and family picnics. Just walking the streets in the neighborhood takes us to other homes, other worlds.

Our home is a classic Dutch colonial - white with green shutters. It’s a basic easy floor-plan, with large rooms, hallways, natural light, and lots of storage. When we moved in, my parents always intended to build an addition out back; finally after us kids moved out, they did it. The result is a large any-purpose room. It comes complete with a separate entrance and a 3-room bathroom, and can be an office, a TV room, an in-law suite, simply a 4th bedroom, or a man-cave/femme den. The double back yard is phenomenal - space for large gatherings or solo meanderings in nature. Over the years it has undergone several major transformations - the 40-foot cork oak in the back corner was given to my parents from my uncle as a 1-foot tree seedling.

After Dad died, my mother remained and, one by one, was joined by her brother and two sisters. Thus the house brought her family together again. Too, my sister and brother and I often stayed, one of our cousins moved in, and we had various members of a helping family also living there. It was Family-Central and love flourished.

We have loved this house very much. As kids, you don’t realize its significance, but as you grow older, you discover more elements of the house and its surroundings and history. I wish my dad were still around so I could tell him how much we appreciate his efforts to secure this house for our family. We welcome the next family and trust you will establish your own history and memories here.

For the Lane-Turner Family,

Barbara R.T. McOwen

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