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## Inland News

### Back home again

Some attracted by memories; 'good parent mortgage' helps

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By ERIN AUERBACH / The Press-Enterprise

Terri Junius used to drive past the Riverside home she grew up in on Rancho Drive and hope that the people who lived there would move.

At the time, she was renting an apartment 100 miles away, but she always wanted to return on one condition: that she could buy her childhood home. So, in 1998, she did.

People can go home again.

Some Inland residents purchase or inherit their homes from family members, reaping the benefits of a great financial deal from relatives. Others are looking for the comfort and memories of their youth, even passing on their old bedrooms to their children.

But people who seek to buy back their childhood home once it's out of the family are rare. And once they return home, these buyers have even found possessions left behind years earlier, from family mementos to antique appliances.

For Junius, 49, her parents' former Riverside home was the only place she wanted.

Her parents initially sold it to another family in 1974, and it had changed hands at least one more time.

A foreclosure gave her the chance she wanted. The house was being auctioned and Junius eventually won, bidding \$125,000 for a 1,700-square-foot, 1 1/2-bathroom home she considers priceless.

"Nothing had changed since my parents sold it in 1974," she said. "I found an old sheet with a recipe for peach cobbler on one side and pound cake on the other."

#### 'I Just Lost It'

She recognized her father's handwriting immediately.

"I just lost it when I saw that because he had passed away years before," she said. "And here was a piece of him, in my parents' first home."

She also found some of her dad's military decorations and patterns her mother used to make dresses for her and her sister in the 1960s.

"You should see Thanksgiving at my house. The entire family comes here," she said, as she pointed out the kitchen she's finally remodeling, adding granite countertops, extra space and new appliances.

"I designed the new kitchen especially for that day."

Her 14-year-old daughter, Rikki now sleeps in the same room her mom slept in more than 30 years ago and goes to Poly High, just like her mom did.

"Our past possessions and mementos help remind us who we are and who we were," said Laura Kamptner, a human development professor at Cal State San Bernardino. "They serve to reinforce and keep intact one's sense of self."

Los Angeles psychologist Robert Butterworth said the attraction lies in returning to what's familiar.

"It's one of the only times we can go back and think of a carefree time in our lives," he said.

But he cautions that those looking to recreate their childhood or bring back those same experiences to their own children will find that things won't be the same.

"My recommendation is that people who think about moving back to where their childhood memories are is to take a long vacation back there and see if the reality matches the fantasy that they have," he said.



For Bob Haine, a French teacher at Ontario's Chaffey High School, it did. He jumped at the chance to buy back the home in Idyllwild where he spent his teen years.

His parents bought it in 1965, when Haine was just 16. They paid \$18,000 for the 1,200-square-foot home. In 1988 they sold it to a young family and moved to Pasadena.

"My brother and I were sad about not having the place," said Haine, an avid hiker. "My wife and I continued to go (to Idyllwild and) stayed at just about every lodging on the hill at one time or another."

In the summer of 2000 they saw a "For Sale" sign on the home. When they went to see it with a real-estate agent, they found his family's names etched into the patio behind the house.

The old O'Keefe & Merritt stove that his parents brought from their previous home was still there, as was his dad's World War II footlocker.

"The kitchen and living-room area still have the beautiful knotty pine paneling," he said.

Haine and his wife, Kathi, bought it for \$121,000. They live in Rancho Cucamonga during the week and spend weekends and free time in Idyllwild.

"To seek it out like that says that they have an emotional tie to the property and had wonderful family experiences growing up," said Walt McDonald, a real-estate agent in Riverside for 40 years.



William Wilson Lewis III / The Press-Enterprise

Terri Junius, 49, grew up in this home in Riverside. Junius bought the home and is renovating it. "Nothing had changed since my parents sold it in 1974," she says. "I found an old sheet with a recipe for peach cobbler on one side and pound cake on the other."

McDonald can't recall having a client who sought to buy back his childhood home.

Celebrities do it, too. NASCAR driver Tony Stewart said in an interview that he purchased his childhood home in Columbus, Ind., just last year for "a place to get away instead of dealing with stock-car racing seven days a week."

It's pretty typical for people to want to stay close to their former home, said Michael Dwight, a home-building executive and real estate expert who works at K. Hovnanian Companies in Ontario.

#### 'It's Nostalgia'

"It's nostalgia and it's home," he said. "People who buy childhood homes tend to do so in an area that hasn't changed much," something Junius and Haine pointed out about their homes. "The imprint of the area may still have things like the corner store, especially since Wal-Mart has pretty much eaten the corner store in most places."

Dwight speaks from personal experience. He bought his childhood home in Laguna Beach from his grandfather.

"I got a GPM – a good parent mortgage," he said, explaining that he sold it years later.

Proximity to family is harder to achieve in Southern California than in other parts of the country, he said, because entry-level job opportunities and affordable housing push many residents further inland.

"Because of the homogenization of architecture in society, there isn't a lot to choose from in the 130 cities that make up Southern California," he said.

As a homebuilder, he says the size and styles of today's homes may have changed, but many elements of the layout, such as the living room that no one ever uses, have remained the same.

"Emotionally, people tend to gravitate toward the more familiar comforts, from the way they've lived all their lives," he said.

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