



The Joys of Home Ownership

By Linda Parker Horowitz

The US government may encourage home ownership, but honestly, it's not all that great. Yes, I know I get a tax deduction thanks to our government's support of this monster investment, and I appreciate that, particularly since I live in California, and living *here* costs a fortune. The sun is free, but housing is exorbitant.

I live just east of Pasadena, home of the Rose Parade. Every year we suffer through what I refer to as the annual "Attack of the Recreational Vehicle" when the caravanning hoards descend upon my quiet town. During the week-long attack, going to the grocery requires strategic planning; the invasion of Normandy must have been easier than fighting mobs of "cheese heads" needing supplies. But I adore Arcadia and therefore, put up with hell week, and truthfully, the Rose Parade is spectacular, especially up close.

When I first experienced this annual event, I was renting an apartment in Pasadena (WITH assigned parking IN the building) only blocks from the parade route. Los Angeles freeway traffic is legendary — justifiably so, but beautiful "Rose City" became a massive parking lot and city streets gridlocked with Midwestern tourists here for the parade and Rose Bowl.



Until this year, the second coldest on record for the 126th parade, the weather starts out very chilly in early morning, and by the end, has warmed up to a very gorgeous and comfortable sunny 70 degrees. At first, I was terrified that all of those tourists would move here making the traffic and congestion worse. They, too, would fall in love with Pasadena, as I did when I moved here in 1989 for work. Then, the epiphany struck. "No they won't!" They will look for a home, see the price of a tiny 2-bedroom house on a postage stamp lot in a questionable neighborhood and flee as fast as their RV's will carry them

back to Wisconsin. "A quarter million dollars for THAT!" they'll say, grasping their chests in abject horror, their dreams of 70-degree January weather shattered. Yep. Happened to me, and why I didn't purchase my first home until I was in my mid-forties. I still live there and plan on being removed feet first with a sheet over my head.

Throughout the years of blissful home ownership, we have had several catastrophes requiring immediate attention and repair. I noted that our windows were oddly steaming-up mid-winter to find that the water heater had burst, flooding our California basement (not a REAL back East basement suitable for hanging-out with a big screen and beers but a tiny, below-ground compartment created for equipment). One unusually wet winter brought 54 inches of rain, and our protected Live Oak tree developed root rot. At 2:30 AM, it fell directly through our neighbor's roof into their kitchen. Ugly scene with the fire department, city and police warning

us **not** to go talk to our neighbor who was enraged and “a bit irrational.” We couldn’t talk to him anyway; he was Chinese and spoke almost no English. I have endured many plumbing disasters and even 5 days with no electricity after a bizarre wind storm brought 96 mph gusts through my neighborhood, toppling Deodar pines and knocking-out power.

Nothing, however, compares with rats. I have learned so much from the multiple extermination companies who came to give us estimates. Apparently, rats do not like to be disturbed. This was big news to me. I lived in New York City and have seen many, many rats roaming the subway tracks, just prior to trains coming into the station. That’s a huge disturbance. Those must have been of the genus, Rodent Urbanus and these of the species, Rodent Suburbanus, a more sensitive variety. When the house next to us was razed, pool filled in and a new home built, like Snaggle Puss, the rats exited... stage left, chewed through any small hole on the outside of my home and found a toasty, delightful crawl space to hang-out in. THEN they found their way to my still-under-warranty-one year old dishwasher, chewed the hoses, and broke it. The repairman told us what had happened and refused to return until the rats departed.

That night, I thought I was in a B horror movie. My house has a two-story volume above the kitchen, and everything echoes...I heard them chewing!!! They had gotten into the area where my trash can is. I was beyond grossed-out, and totally freaked-out. Unable to sleep with the reverberating, incessant crunching noise, I took a double dose of Melatonin to get to sleep.

On Sunday, Animal Control arrived, filled in all of the exterior holes and the place where they found their way into my trash under the sink. I doused it with straight Clorox bleach. The guy also set traps in the basement/crawl space. Now get this...my nerdy husband, Bruce, intends to go and check the traps! No kidding. This is the man that will not clean up any dog poop, never changed a diaper or cleaned-up barf from either of his sons or any animal – EVER! When I was pregnant with our second son (now age 17), our 3 year old projectile vomited on him. To his utter dismay, I was openly joyous – he was covered in barf AND I was gleeful. FINALLY, he was a target for bodily fluids! Of course I got barfed on, too, and worse, thrown into pre-term labor sending me to the ER. It was worth it to see the look on his face as he stood there stunned and covered in smelly slime.

When Animal Control departed, my former “killer” now elderly cat, Lucky, finally realized, too late for my broken dishwasher, that there were snacks moving under the floor. He had that Kliban-esque look, staring motionless, at my now sealed-off cabinets.

It will be interesting to see what actually happens with the traps, whether Bruce does man-up and clear them. Whoever clears them, I do not intend to watch or I may barf.

