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The official publication of the Asian Real Estate Association of America



Recounting harrowing journeys to the United States to reunite families and seek new life opportunities

LA's Sawtelle Neighborhood: shaped by Asian immigrants of yesterday and today

AAPI Advocacy: Speaking up for home owners on Capitol Hill

Market Showcase: Austin, Texas is hot thanks to education and technology



Left: The said-to-be haunted Croke-Patterson mansion in Denver's Capitol Hill district.

► View a trailer of "The Castle Project" documentary: <http://j.mp/castle-project>

THE STRANGEST DAYS IN REAL ESTATE

Naked people jumping out of windows, squatters making love in a sleeping bag, a truly haunted mansion, gun threats, gentlemen's clubs, loose dogs and a person hiding in a closet. Think you had a challenging day?

AREAA members are some of the very best in the real estate industry. With a deep knowledge of their local markets, an innate ability to understand cultural differences and an ability to network far beyond their neighborhood, many AREAA members are real estate superstars in their own market. But even the best of them can have a challenging day. How did your day stack up to these?

EVER HAD TO SELL A 13,600-SQUARE-FOOT HAUNTED MANSION?

Mr. James Browning, a commercial and residential real estate broker, educator and AREAA member, has quite the story. He was asked by a bank to sell arguably one of the most haunted mansions in the United States, the 13,600-square-foot, four-story Croke-Patterson mansion, which includes a 2,345-square-foot basement complete with dungeons and a supposed tomb.

It was built in 1891 in the Capitol Hill area of Denver, which at the time was the

most extravagant and upscale neighborhood in the city. The red sandstone mansion was named for its original owners, Thomas Croke, who commissioned the home, and Thomas Patterson, a newspaper publisher and attorney who purchased the home from Croke.

Almost immediately, the home was considered unbearable to live in. Reports of spirits, ghosts, a body entombed in the basement (no remains have been found) and ghastly stories of Dobermans jumping to their death have been reported.

The mansion has been featured in

many ghost story books, television shows, magazine articles and newspaper features.

Originally listed for \$1.5 million, the mansion was eventually sold after three years to an investor group for \$572,000.

"We had showings from five of the seven continents," Mr. Browning explains. "We received between 6,000 and 7,000 phone calls and had an open house every Friday for over a year and a half."

"It was, without a doubt, the strangest and most spirited property I've ever sold. We found rooms we didn't know existed, and sitting in the turrets on the second

floor of the carriage house was especially strange. My son and some of his friends came into the house and all the way up to the fourth floor one evening. They vowed never to step foot in the mansion again. I walked down into the sub-basement to take pictures and never went back again. It really was that spooky."

After the investor group bought it, it was sold to Mr. Brian Higgins, an architect who did massive renovations, and it now operates as the Patterson Inn, an upscale boutique bed and breakfast hotel.

Mr. Higgins stated that there were things that happened during the renovation that defied explanation, including a ghostly aberration of a child running by a worker in the basement and a fire that delayed the opening of the bed and breakfast from June until October of 2012.

In fact, Mr. Higgins recently filmed a documentary that covered the recent history of the property from contract through completion with the working title of "The Castle Project". It was accepted to the documentary corner at the Cannes Film Festival in May of 2013, although it has not yet been publicly screened in the U.S.

The bed and breakfast is off to a great start, not targeting its ghostly past but rather attracting the upscale business traveler and a lot of European guests who appreciate the bed and breakfast experience in a historic part of Denver.

But if you want to stay and maybe experience a little history of your own, you might want to ask for a third-floor room. There have been multiple reports over the years of babies crying when there are no babies in the building. Boo hoo.



OOPS, WRONG HOUSE. PLEASE DON'T SHOOT ME.

As told by **Mr. Michael Marr**, owner of Boardwalk Realty in Atlanta, Georgia.

Mr. Marr has been in the real estate industry for more than nine years and is an active AREAA member. Recently, he shared a day he'll never forget.

One fine Georgia morning, Mr. Marr was following a client who wanted to try out his new GPS system while looking at homes for sale in the Alpharetta area.

Things were going normally as Mr. Marr walked toward the house in deep conversation, grabbing the key from the lock box and entering the foyer.

"We opened the door and were immediately confronted by a very angry man who ran in from the kitchen in a white wife-beater T-shirt, and started yelling and screaming while threatening to shoot me with his gun. My client scuttled back quickly to his car, while I tried to explain the situation. Luckily, I had a printout of the property for sale, and I suppose I looked more like a well-dressed Realtor than a burglar. But ranting and raving, the guy wanted no part of it, even though he eventually calmed down enough to let me leave the house."

But how's this for irony? The guy in the house was actually a Broker who also had his home for sale. It turns out that there were two identical homes, right next to each other. They just happened to walk into the wrong house.

Needless to say, they immediately left the scene, and never returned. It might be something about the neighbors!



REX THE GREAT DANE

This story comes from AREAA founder **Mr. Allen Okamoto**.

In Mr. Okamoto's earlier days in real estate, he was previewing a home and naturally rang the doorbell. Since there was no answer, he used the key from the lock box and opened up the front door.

As soon as the door was opened, the biggest Great Dane he had ever seen came rushing at him. As Mr. Okamoto stepped aside to avoid being trampled, the Great Dane bounded out the door and ran like a dog possessed down the street.

He chased the dog frantically for nearly 20 minutes, with a combination of pure panic and humor, running through backyards and strange streets. It seemed as though the dog was having all too much fun, playing this game of cat and mouse.

Finally, he came across some kids playing in

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the street, and dripping with perspiration and complete exhaustion, asked the children if they could help him catch a dog.

They replied, “You mean Rex?”

So he immediately called the dog’s name, and Rex came running right up to him. He was able to fit the dog in his car and return him to his rightful home. Game over.

“I was terrified I had lost the dog, but at the same time it was so surreal, it was actually funny. I’m just so glad I got Rex back home,” Mr. Okamoto concluded.

NAKED PEOPLE JUMPING OUT THE WINDOW

Story compliments of **Mr. Michael Seeto**, broker-owner of Seeto Realty.

Mr. Seeto, who is a top producer in Plano, Texas, works with a lot with HUD and REO properties in the Dallas-Fort Worth metro area.

In May of 2013, he had a sign of his in front of a vacant HUD property, and he had a prospect walk up to the door to take a peek and maybe look around.

Instead, much to his prospect’s surprise, his presence caused a young couple, estimated to be in their 20s, to hastily jump out of the house from a first-floor window stark naked, holding their crumpled clothes as they quickly ran away.

After contacting both Mr. Seeto and the local police, the authorities discovered water bottles and “adult novelties” inside.

It was at least the second time that someone had been in the house; they had to remove some squatters two months earlier.

Fortunately, this story does have a happy ending. The home has recently gone under contract, albeit at a bare minimum price.

MAKING LOVE IN A SLEEPING BAG AND COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET

From AREAA member **Mr. John Kim** of Sacramento, California.

Mr. Kim started in the real estate business with **Mr. David Tran** and, while getting to know the ropes of the industry, used to do a lot of property inspections. Their team has done a great job of working with lenders on bank-owned properties, which are often vacant and not in the best of shape.

One day, he was sent to do a walk-through property inspection on a unit they had listed just to check on its current condition.

So he approached the property, got the key from the lock box and entered the property.

As he started walking through the rooms, he entered the bedroom, only to find two probably homeless people in the middle of making wild, passionate love in a sleeping bag on the floor.

“I calmly gave them five minutes to leave the premises, and they eventually did, taking along their bikes and personal things. And on the way out, the woman actually started giving me some attitude. I guess she just didn’t like to be interrupted like that.”

“Another time, I was doing an inspection, and I opened a closet in one of the rooms. And there was a guy in the closet, trying to hide from me. I can’t even begin to tell you how startled I was, and I think the guy in there was just as freaked out as I was.”

Mr. Kim estimates that 10 to 15 percent of all REOs have squatter issues at some point or another, especially when the weather turns cold and rainy.

But now, after doing many of the home inspections alone, he usually likes to take someone along with him. Gee, I wonder why.



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SIGNING FINAL PAPERS IN A GENTLEMEN’S CLUB

With **Ms. Tina Mak**, president of the AREAA Vancouver Chapter.

If any of you have heard of Ms. Tina Mak, you probably know what a driven real estate professional she is, both as a top producer in the Vancouver area and host of her own radio show. Ms. Mak recently shared her own story about working with Chinese buyers at the Global Summit in Honolulu this past spring.

A couple of years ago, Ms. Mak inadvertently had the strangest location for a signing in her real estate career.

After working with buyers for most of the day, she had to have some papers revised by the listing agent and made arrangements with her out-of-town buyers to sign the papers later that night, since they were leaving first thing in the morning.

Well, the papers took a little longer to revise than planned, but with documents in hand, she called her buyers, who asked her to meet them in a pub for the final signings.

So she hopped in her car and went out on a rainy, Vancouver night to find the address, and once she did, she called her clients on their cell phone.

They asked her if she wanted them to step out of the “club” for the signing, but being the accommodating type, she told them no problem, she’d be inside shortly.

As soon as she opened the door, she knew she was in for an experience. Looking around, there was a cashier at the entrance of the “club” and it was dark. Within seconds, her buyers came out front, paid an admission charge, and took her to their table.

It was a gentlemen’s club!

Ever being the professional, she dodged the stage, poles and scantily clothed women, and had her clients sign the documents quickly and without issue. Then as soon as you can say poof, she disappeared back into the rainy Vancouver evening with a deal in her hand. **a r e**

HAVE A STORY

YOU’D LIKE TO

SHARE? SEND US

AN EMAIL AT:

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