



...September / October 2013...

Thinking about the Montage . . . Our Home

We live in a gated housing development. It is incorporated as the Montage at Mission Hills and we have a legally formed homeowners association. With that comes standard guidelines and rules (often set forth by legislative statute) and developed in the interest for the general welfare and property maintenance of the homes / yards and common areas that constitute the development. Beyond that . . . What makes it a community are its residents and the level of interaction, consideration and cooperation within the gates.

I grew up in an immigrant farming community in which few were not related in some way to me. Our nearest neighbor was about half a mile away, but we knew their comings and goings and the activity of just about everyone else in the area. Doors were never locked and we all knew we all had each others' backs. We didn't always like everyone, but we respected everyone and would come to their aid should anything happen to them, or a need become apparent.

I guess a part of me wants that same sense of community within the Montage. I have no illusions as to it fully becoming what I experienced while growing up, but . . . With an active Neighborhood Watch, a Welcome Committee and an Emergency Preparedness commitment,

we can reclaim some of the virtues and advantages this 'community' can provide.

On the surface . . . The Neighborhood Watch seems somewhat overwhelming. With our 128 homes the information necessary to fully implement the listings of all who live here, and the relevant and secondary information to fully provide for our mutual enhanced security, we have to have a solid organization. We presently have about 15 pods (groups) of homes with designated leaders (volunteers). These leaders, ideally, will be the emergency contact for their 8 – 10 homes, as well as keep the contact information, etc. up to date. They will let the chairperson know of changes in their watch area as well as problems should something take place. At present we need a recommitment of those that had/have that responsibility, as well as a renewed effort in confirming the information currently on file. (Contact information is at the end of the newsletter.)

Seeing as our development is about 10-years old, we will see a need for repainting of our homes and/or walls, and garage doors. Landscapes may also need some updating and upgrading. Desert landscapes may need some additional DG in areas. We have seen this kind of upgrading work being done to the common areas and will soon see our streets repaired and resurfaced soon.

All of this takes cooperation and involvement. I am not asking a major

commitment, but rather a willingness to take part in these minor tasks and for understanding should inconvenience be a part of getting the work accomplished for the good of the Montage.

Good Reason for Better Home Security . . .

JoAnn Horwitz, Neighbor Hood Watch Chair, and I attended a Panel Discussion on CA AB109. This is the California law that addresses prison overcrowding in the state. The panelists of law professionals and security experts were clearly not trying to alarm those of us in attendance, but rather working to inform us of the reality that our state and desert communities are facing. There will be from 7000 to 10,000 non-violent offenders released in the upcoming months. Even if time served was only a few weeks of a multi year sentence . . . They will be released with time served satisfying the full penalty.

Per the experts, the majority of these felons are from Riverside County. It was further impressed upon us that many of those released in Orange County . . . Come to the desert to do their criminal activity and then go back to Orange County. As a new prison facility is completed in the area, we will see some relief from this revolving door, but in the meantime heightened security practices are advised for all homeowners.

Locks on all gates and exterior doors (even inside the garage), and garage door openers unplugged when home vacant for extended periods. Alarm systems activated and a key contact neighbor or pod leader with codes/keys should they become necessary. Newspapers and mail or packages

delivered and not removed from view can signal others that the house is unoccupied if even for a day.

We were reminded that whenever we mention times we will not be at home to individuals scheduling repair visits, service calls and even newspapers, etc, they often have a wide circle of acquaintances, friends and/or family whom they may pass the information on to as an opportunity to target your property. This has been shown to be a more executed system than in the past. It isn't difficult for individuals to follow a car in the gates, and to drive around looking for signs of absentee homeowners or patterns of non-occupancy to select target properties. Even regular vehicle parking outside of the garage or overnight on a regular basis can encourage heightened attention to the vehicle should anything be left in the car.

As we have seen here in the Montage . . . Even a quick walk to the mailbox or with a pet has been enough time for someone to enter and case a property. This is not to alarm anyone . . . But it is a wake up call for all of us to pay more attention to the reality of our times.

Got Tenants? Law Requirements . . .

Nick Nickerson, Rules Committee Chair

Under California Civil Code Section 1360.2(d), new in 2012, before an owner rents a residence, the Association must be provided the following information.

- The date the owner acquired the residence;
- The name of the prospective tenant;
- The contact information of the prospective tenant.

This is a newer law, so most members are probably unaware of it. If the owner refuses to comply, the Association may impose disciplinary proceedings. It has always been a good idea for the Association to have record of who has the right to occupy a residence, but now it is the law. Please report tenant contact information to Jennifer Zeivel at PPM (760-325-9500 . . . jzeivel@ppmInternet.com).

In addition, as the owner of your home, you are still responsible for the payment of your monthly assessments, and to provide tenants with the newsletters for important rule reminders.

IMPORTANT: If you decide to rent your unit, please make sure your tenants receive a copy of the Association's recorded CC&Rs and Rules & Regulations just like you did when you purchased your home. Violation notices will be sent to both the owner of record and your tenant for any noise disturbances, parking violations, unsightly property, pet nuisances, etc. Just like owners . . . Tenants are required to follow all Rules & Regulations outlined in the CC&Rs. Please ensure that whomever you select to occupy your home, they will be a cooperative and considerate neighbor.

Thank you.

Next Stage of Street Work Upcoming . . .

Mr. Nick Nickerson, Vice President of our HOA Board and a civil engineer, has been and is coordinating the street repair in the Montage. We have seen the raveling of the street edges addressed in mid-August. There is no way that this next stage of the work can be accomplished without some inconvenience to virtually

all of us as well as a need for our cooperation to limit watering so quality seals can be affected on the surfaces being worked.

The next stage will be the Slurry Seal of all of our streets. Advance notice will be given and a total restriction of vehicles for about half a day will be necessary.

Ideally . . . Sprinkler systems will be turned off for the whole 24 hours. The existing surface will be cleaned and prepared and a fresh layer of asphalt slurry will be applied. We will be able to drive on it again the same day with care.

This is going to be something to make sure your neighbors know about and for those of us with absentee homeowners close by . . . We will need to be able to turn off lawn sprinklers to keep all the street work surfaces dry for the day and free of run off.

A separate news blast will be emailed prior to the work with instructions and information on dates and times. We will need all homeowners to do their part.

Montage Meet and Greet at the Mission Hills Country Club . . . Save the date!!!!!!

Last December the Mission Hills Country Club (our country club) hosted a party for the residents of the Montage. Over 80 people attended and met neighbors and friends as well as putting names and faces together. If you were there . . . You know. If you weren't, we hope you will be able to join us. It will be on December 7th, from 4 – 6 p.m., timing which will allow everyone to go on to pre-arranged holiday parties, or have an evening to

enjoy after this brief celebration. The Welcome Committee will be in charge.

Report from Architectural & Landscaping Committee

Robert Fouyer, Chair

We are past the mid-point of our long hot summer and the end is finally in sight. As usual this time of year it's pretty quiet with many of our homeowners either on vacation, or snowbirds who are rarely here this time of year.

We have just finished re-painting our entrance and pedestrian gates. After much deliberation, it was decided at our last Board meeting to paint them the same colors as they were before. Considering the color of our entrance pavement it seemed this would be the most attractive way to go. We also re-painted the planters at the Gerald Ford entrance that were badly water stained from sprinkler over-spray, and the short wall behind the electric transformers on the west side of the entrance, which were badly peeling from water seepage. To prevent the water staining from happening again, we replaced the emitters with a drip system in the planters. A few dead plants here and there are also being replaced to keep our perimeter landscaping looking fresh and nice.

In case you haven't noticed, we are continuing to have a problem with red ants around our perimeter. Our pest service has been out a number of times the past two months and it appears they are finally making some headway.

The five members of your A & L Committee do a walk-around and

inspect the perimeter once every month with ConservLand, our Montage landscape contractor. We identify any problems with water usage, dead or diseased plant, trimming needs, etc. Randy Mitchell is our account manager and does a fine job in taking care of our landscaping. Recently he advised us of a mealy bug problem on a number of our bushes on DaVall that required immediate attention, otherwise we would have lost them. This is the company that did such a beautiful job on our landscape project throughout the perimeter and detention basin last year. They continue to do a great job maintaining our landscaping, and we appreciate the service they provide to Montage. Randy tells us that they are having a lot of problems with mealy bugs this year throughout the desert. So watch your plants for this varmint.

By time you read this we will have completed our road raveling repairs. Soon we will be doing the asphalt slurry coating that is essential to preserving our roads. We owe a great deal of thanks and appreciation to Mr. Nick Nickerson for his time and efforts on this project. He is an engineer by trade and his expertise and experience in this process makes him a valuable member of our Board for his guidance. Montage is a beautiful community and keeping it beautiful not only requires your volunteers and your Board members efforts, but our homeowners as well. Montage has a great reputation as a place to live and 95% or more of the homes are well taken care of, but there are always a few that need more attention and are not complying with the rules

As most of you know, every 6 months the Committee walks throughout the community and identifies these homes—our next inspection is in October. These problems usually consist of homes that need painting, either partial (garages, gates, etc.) or total. In addition, there are always problems with some overgrown trees that hang over the street preventing the street cleaners and garbage trucks from doing their job. The trees also make it more difficult to keep our streets and gutters clean. We have lost a lot of trees in Montage over the years I have lived here from the wind—almost all because of not being kept trimmed and getting top-heavy. Under our Rules and Regulations, if a tree is removed it needs to be replaced with another, or a variance request has to be submitted to Management on most any front landscaping change.

There have been instances where a homeowner has lost a tree and replaced with another type tree, but in a different area-- without removing the roots of the old tree. This leaves an unsightly mound in the front yard as well as a landscape light shining up on a tree that no longer exists. Another violation observed is ground cover that has over the years been eroded away--leaving uncovered dirt in its place. This is mostly what they call decomposed granite (DG), which is found on a lot of desert landscaping throughout the community—including our perimeter landscaping.

It is a violation to install a **satellite dish** without a variance approval. These are usually not a problem, except when they are installed close to the front of the house making it an eyesore from the street. The satellite companies sometimes

like to install these where it is the easiest and cheapest for them to install, and not always where it is the most esthetically pleasing. If there is a tree in front that partially covers it that would be preferable. At the very least, they do not add to the appearance of your property.

We do a night-time walk-thru periodically for garage lights being out, and occasionally, landscape lights. (Montage pays for landscape lights maintenance on lights originally installed by developer.) It is important these lights be kept turned on, because without them we would have a very dark community seeing as we have no street lights, and it would make our home more susceptible to break-ins. Most homeowners have a switch-lock that fastens to the switch plate that prevents the light from accidentally being turned off. Realtors are famous for accidentally doing this when they show a house that's been listed. These clips are available and installed in seconds. The light switch is usually the one on the left of your triple light switch on the wall next to your front door. These plastic clips are available by e-mailing me at (ChateauF@aol.com). I will even install at no charge.

Have a happy remainder of the summer.

Welcome Committee . . . Neighborhood Watch Committee . . . Emergency Preparedness Committee
Jo Ann Horwitz, Chairperson

Our next committee meeting will be on Wednesday, September 11th at 7:00 PM at my house. If this date is a problem for anyone please call me, ([760-992-5199](tel:760-992-5199))
We have several things to discuss.

On Tuesday, November 5th, Mission Hills CC will have a Emergency Preparedness Class from 1:30 to 3PM upstairs in the club house. They plan on having speakers from the American Red Cross, Cal-Fire and Southern California Gas Company. Unfortunately I will be coming home from China on the 5th, and will not be able to make this important meeting. I do hope you all can attend and let me know what we can do to help our neighbors in case of a major disaster in our area.

Our Montage Christmas Party will be at Mission Hills on Saturday, December 7th, from 4 to 6PM. I hope we will have a big turn out this year, last year we had 80 plus homeowners attending. Should be a great party.

Looking forward to seeing all my neighbors!!!!

A personal note from the president of the HOA Board . . .

When we bought a home in the Montage . . . We also bought a portion of the streets, landscaping, common areas and even the mailboxes. Therefore . . . Our responsibility goes beyond our immediate property to the whole development. Damage done, litter scattered and debris untended affects us all aesthetically and economically as how our development looks has a direct bearing on the perceived value of our properties.

A couple of weeks back while out in front of our home at dusk, we were inspecting new exterior lighting with our landscape architect, when we saw a car stop by our local mail boxes. That was nothing special and we did not think much of it. After a short period of time we saw the lights go

out on the car and it continued to sit there with its occupant seemingly doing something inside the car and then getting out and opening other doors. Shortly thereafter it drove off. We could see something on the street reflecting light and so thought maybe something dropped and needed to be saved for the owner. It was a bit disconcerting to find that the ashtrays in the car had been dumped in the middle of the street. I was frustrated and angry but there was little to do but to pick up the pile of cigarette butts.

Today, Sunday, I left the house for our morning constitutional with our dogs. Again, we found a pile of trash. Half eaten hot dogs, wrappers for other snacks, a Walgreen pharmacy bag (no identification on it) and other odds and ends as well as a larger plastic bag. Again we picked it up but couldn't help remember the ashtray dump a couple weeks ago.

We see various trash that has settled on the exterior perimeter areas and often times pick it up as we walk our morning route. We see other walkers doing the same and are gratified. We echo their comments on the cigarette butts at the entry areas to the complex and then talk of how the complex looks in general. These walks give us ample time to really see the properties within our community and where careful attention and pride ownership is evident in the look and maintenance on view. It also shows where those who are not quite as concerned as others in their overall appearance of things. I would invite everyone to walk our complex from time to time and observe.

As president of the HOA Board . . . I am committed to the Montage and its residents to look to the appearance and safety of our community. We all have a stake in those efforts and I ask your continuing help. We are all the beneficiaries of these efforts.

Unwanted guests and visitors . . .

As was mentioned in the last newsletter . . . Rats are a problem throughout the valley. We have had more reports from homeowners of problems with these pests. Professional pest control contractors many of us use have seen a rise in rodent populations and are urging the pet safe bait boxes being used. It helps to have all fallen citrus picked up as soon as possible but these rats can also get into the trees. Bushes and shrubs should be trimmed so that a space of 3" – 6" is clear beneath them and the ground as this eliminates the hidden areas in which these critters move. Any opening (garage doors, vents and etc.) provide access to the interiors and attics of our homes.

Other visitors include the coyotes. You may not have seen them but they are here and routinely travel our streets as they move from one area to another. We have seen them as have other homeowners and patrolling security personnel. They are excellent hunters and much more crafty than one expects. We all need to keep close watch on our pets when not with us in our homes. Courtyards and backyards can be hunting grounds for these unexpected hunters.

NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be Thursday, Nov. 14, 2013 at 3:00 PM at the Offices of Personalized Property Management 69850 Adelina Road, Cathedral City.

Check the community message board on the wall at the DaVinci/VanGogh corner or the web site for the agenda. It will be posted at least 4 days before the meeting.

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