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PUBLISHER'S LETTER BY PICKET FENCE MEDIA FOUNDER NORB GARRETT

Thanks, Fred

Paddle-Out Scheduled for Sunday

As you all know by now, our dear friend and fellow journalist Fred Swegles passed away last week after battling a debilitating brain tumor.

For the past 50 years or so, this one-of-a-kind storyteller has memorialized our community's most important moments for all of us and future generations through his writings and photographs.

For that, we are eternally grateful and fortunate.

Personally, I feel blessed to have been able to work with Fred and call him my friend. Guys like Fred are a rare breed—and we were thrilled to have him grace the pages of the *San Clemente Times* for the past four years as columnist of Coastlines.

Over the past several months, my wife Alyssa and I regularly visited Fred and sat with him, reading all of your cards and letters. He was truly moved by them, and he would light up when

we read a name he recognized.

Try as he might to comment, the aphasia (a symptom of his tumor) made it impossible for him to speak effectively. But he loved knowing that all of us cared and were thinking of him; his sisters strung all of the postcards and letters up around his room—it was beautiful.

This prideful guy, who shunned praise, tearfully appreciated your kind words, thoughts and prayers. He always said “thank you” as we left—but it was us who were most thankful for those moments with Fred.

As per Fred's wishes, according to his family, there will be no formal memorial services. However, with their permission, some of us have rallied to organize a memorial paddle-out to remember Fred for Sunday, Nov. 6, at 3 p.m. on the north side of the San Clemente Pier.

Please come down and join us as we come together to share stories, paddle out, cry, laugh and say thanks to a man whom we will never forget.

If you'd like to send his family a card, please do so by mailing them to: Chamberlin Family, P.O. Box 631, San Clemente, CA, 92674.

Thanks for everything, Fred. You'll be missed, but never forgotten! **DP**

GUEST OPINION | The Real Estate Guru® by Phil Immel

THE BENEFITS OF HOME INSPECTIONS

Question: Do you recommend getting a home inspection during escrow?

Answer: Absolutely. Even if you are buying a new home from a builder.

Depending on the size of the home or condo, inspections cost about \$450-\$700 for a typical home. The more square footage, the higher the price, because it takes longer to do. If the home you are buying has a pool or spa, casita or ADU, there is an additional cost.

It is a wise investment for generally under \$1,000. Think of it like buying a used car. There are many components that make up a car or a house. “Caveat Emptor” is a legal term that means “Buyer Beware.”

In the multi-page residential purchase agreement, you will sign a form that strongly urges you to do an inspection and of the importance of this for the buyer. This is to protect you because even new homes have flaws.

Inspectors are licensed specialists and understand how to build a house and properly maintain it. Just like with any contractor, there are good and not-so-

good ones. Typically, your real estate agent works with one or two per month and knows which ones are competent.

It's a specialty. That's all they do. Usually, it takes 2-3 hours depending on the size of the home and amenities. The Guru recommends that you attend the last 30 minutes for the professional inspector summary.

Don't follow the inspector along the entire time if you show up at the beginning. Let him or her focus without any distractions. Upon completion of the inspection (usually within 24 hours), you will receive approximately a 30-page detailed report that includes photos of all the inspector's findings.

Next, you and your agent will review the items so that you can decide what you would like the seller to correct or to request a credit at close of escrow in lieu of repairs. If a credit is agreed, after the close of escrow, you can engage contractors to repair the important items you found in the report.

Quite often, a qualified handyman can correct many items without you having to hire a licensed contractor. Ideally, you should use licensed specialists for all electrical, plumbing, roofing, HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning), etc.

Once you receive the report, you should schedule one hour of time to review it with your agent, ideally in person or at least by phone. I categorize noted items into A, B and C priority. “A” priorities are the health and safety items.

For example, nonfunctioning electrical plugs, missing GFCIs, a water heater that is improperly strapped (per CA earthquake codes) or not up to code, inoperable or old smoke/carbon monoxide detectors.

Any detector that is more than 10 years

old must be replaced to the new 10-year life “non-removable battery” type.

“B” priorities are items such as leaky faucets, cracked windows or cooktop burners that don't work. “C” priorities are generally cosmetic “fixes” but do not impair the operation of the home. An example is chipped countertop tiles or fogged windows.

Always ask the seller to repair “A” priority items and most “B” items. Don't ask for “C” priorities, or you may be expecting too much and jeopardize the sale.

The only items a seller must do as per CA state laws are proper water-heater strapping and having operating smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Check your local city guidelines but usually that means one smoke detector in each bedroom, hallways on each level of the home, and carbon monoxide detectors on each level.

Beyond that, it's a buyer/seller negotiation. A buyer submits a reasonable proposal to the seller and the seller can: 1. Refuse to do anything; 2. Accept all requests for repair; 3. Negotiate a shorter list of repairs; or 4. Offer a credit in lieu of repairs that the buyer will receive upon close of escrow. In shorter escrows, a cash credit is often the norm.

*Have a real estate question? Email Phil Immel at phil@realestateguru.com. Visit realestateguru.com. The Guru has more than four decades of experience listing and selling homes in South Orange County. As a licensed real estate broker, Phil majored in Real Estate at San Diego State University and is also an expert in mortgage, title, escrow, appraisal and negotiations. **DP***

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