

Casa Grande Real Estate Reality



-Debbie Yost

The holiday season is here! The older I get the more I realize that time seems to move faster and faster. Or is it that I am slowing down? As I contemplated all the possible topics for this month, I realized that I am very lucky. I work in an industry that provides one of the most basic human needs. That need is shelter. In this country we have many shelter choices. We have the opportunity to choose to live in a very modest structure that meets that basic need to very luxurious residences with an enormous amount of amenities.

Last month, Joe and I attended the international convention of the National Association of Realtors with 26,000 other Realtors from across the country and world. In addition to attending classes and meetings relating to our industry we also chose to attend a presentation by the 2005 President, Al Mansell. He recalled his personal experiences in touring Southeast Asia after the December 26th tsunami and helping to build the first of the 1,000 homes the National Association of Realtors \$1.7 million in contributions will construct there by June of 2006. Watching video of vast stretches of land where homes once stood was heart wrenching, especially when we listened to former residents describe where their homes once stood.

Next we were shown devastating videos of the destruction along the Gulf Coast as a result of Katrina. We watched as business owners walked through what was a gorgeous office building, finished just a few weeks before the storm. There was nothing left but the concrete floor, a few walls and remains of a roof. We watched video clips of folks showing where their homes formerly stood and that they had no material possessions left at all. No clothing, no pictures, no vehicles, nothing but the clothes on their backs and they felt lucky to be alive. If you remove all the arguments of whose responsibility it was to keep levies properly repaired, flood insurance in place, and relief effort plans up to date, there remains the fact that physical structures protect our families, our lives and our possessions. We felt proud to be part of the National Association of Realtors' effort in collecting \$5.9 million dollars in cash donations to assist in rebuilding homes and lives along the Gulf.

As the hustle and bustle of the season begins and we get caught up in all the "have to's and should's" of gift buying, house decorating, baking and entertaining, I keep remembering that the folks in the Gulf and Southeast Asia talked about the hard slap in the face they received when their world was turned upside down. Their words keep bringing back into focus what is most important in life and how their homes provided the shelter for their loved ones and precious memories. As we began our holiday season Joe and I asked our team members to share some of their fondest holiday memories. With their permission I am sharing a few of them with you:

"The Christmas I got my first bicycle was special. We didn't have a lot of money and my older brother traded in his bicycle so I could have a new one. It was truly the spirit of giving."

~ **Neal Buckner**

"I remember years ago when Florence Street was actually our "main street" and all the stores were decorated for the holidays with lights and animated displays. At night it would truly put you in the holiday spirit." ~ **Darlene Milligan**

"My fondest memories are the times when my children and grandchildren spend Christmas Eve night with my husband and me. On Christmas Day, the grandkids get us up early to open their presents. There's so much fun commotion going on that it brings home what Christmastime really is." ~ **Marsha McIntyre**

"The excitement of Christmas Eve when the home is decorated so beautifully. Driving around after going to Christmas Eve church services to see all the gaily decorated homes, hot chocolate by the fireplace, and then Christmas Day when extended family all come to our home for dinner." ~ **Velma Linley**

"We had a huge family that would gather at my grandparents house. I can remember all the wonderful aromas from the food mixing with the laughter of all the people celebrating. If I think about it, I can still feel the energy of that time at my grandparents home." ~ **Joe Yost**

These are just a few of the memories shared by the folks who work in our office. What is clear is that we all cherish memories of laughter and warmth with our extended families and friends in our homes. We each have the choice of how we will spend the next few weeks. We can be harassed and hurried, cranky with all the "stuff" we have to do. Or we can choose to cherish our family and friends and create some wonderful memories for our children to talk about years from now. And we can remember how fortunate we are and show gratitude for our many blessings.

Happy Holidays!

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