

REAL ESTATE

The Cheney Cottage Open House: a community celebration

On Sunday, January 27 scores of citizens gathered on the 1600 block of 62nd Street in South Berkeley for an usual Open House celebration – unusual because the home being celebrated was The Cheney Cottage, a structure constructed in 1902 on the Cal campus.

The story of its relocation across town is quite a saga, that property owners Dmitri Belser and Tom White chronicled very carefully in a blog titled 62nd Street Blog (62ndstreet.blogspot.com/), which features the humorous tagline: How a gay blind Jew and his lover of 30 years managed to move two 100-year old houses and restore them, and lived to tell the tale.

The challenge for these experienced do-it-yourselfers was figuring out how to cut through bureaucratic red tape without being a corporation. There were many obstacles, but they ultimately prevailed. The cottage was cut into two, moved in two pieces...twice (the first time, to a University owned lot in Albany; the second time, once they had gained a permit from the City of Berkeley, to their property on 62nd Street). To make room for Cheney Cottage, Belser and White moved an existing home called the Delaney House, an Italianate Victorian built in the 1870s, towards the rear of the lot.

It's all very complicated, and there remains much work to be done. Even so, Belser and White's sons, Elliott and Sabastian, are now moving into the homes, hence the reason to host the Open House.

Many neighbors and friends attended the Sunday celebration, and so did many of the people involved the project, including: Kevin Hufferd, UC Berkeley Real Estate Services; Malcolm Askew, the realtor who represented them in the purchase of the property on 62nd Street; Eric Angress, the contractor who cut the cottage into two pieces and then stitched back together, and put both houses on their foundations; Andrus Brandt, the architect who helped design the layout and get the plans through the City of Berkeley; Tom Pedemonte, woodworker extraordinaire, who rebuilt the benches and shellacked all the woodwork (all redwood, of course); and Anthony Bruce from the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association (BAHA).

Many at Sunday's Open House remembered the structure moving down University Avenue in two pieces. For that reason, many had something to say once they stepped inside the home that had been restored to its former glory.

"Their hearts were in the right place, and we wanted our hearts in



Dmitri Belser, on the porch of The Cheney Cottage. • 2. CforAT colleague Eric Smith, with his family, Evelyn and Nora, on the cottage real Estate Services, standing on the steps of the structure that once stood on the Cal campus. • 4. Anthony Bruce (left) with his sister Lisa



1



2



4



5

Photo captions: 1 Tom White (left) and

the right place,” reflected Kevin Hufferd about the University’s perspective on the project. “But it only got done because of the sheer determination of Dmitri and Tom,” he said.

Contractor Eric Angress explained how he stabilized the existing structure, before cutting the home into two pieces, moving both, and then reassembled the structure at the new location.

“The house spoke to us,” remembered White about seeing the Cheney Cottage for the first time. “No matter the obstacle, we knew we had to see the project through.”

Sunday’s Open House also attracted friends of Dmitri and Tom from all over the country – perhaps because the celebration coincided with Dmitri Belser’s 55th birthday.

Town Hall Meeting set for Pres

Local seniors and activists are gearing up to send a clear message to Congress: no cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Norman Solomon, author, activist, and co-founder of RootsAction.org will headline a Town Hall Meeting on Monday, February 18 from 1 – 4 p.m. at the Humanist Hall, located at 390 27th Street in Oakland.

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) is hosting this Town Hall meeting to forestall such cuts and provide alternatives. Other speakers will include a representative from the California Nurs-

es Association; Jodi Reid, Director of CARA-Northern California; and Rebecca Griffin of the Peace Action West. Also, the activist singing group Occupella will provide rousing entertainment.

Despite President Obama’s inaugural call to protect these programs, proposals to make various cuts in them continue to circulate widely in the lead-up to the congressional battle over our national budget.

“The next few months may be the most dangerous political period for Social Security, Medicare



SEEDS and Adult

SEEDS Community Resolution Center announced recently a new partnership with the Berkeley Adult School (BAS) to bring conflict resolution services and mediation training to more residents in Berkeley.

SEEDS joins an impressive list of current BAS education partners, including Berkeley City College, Boston Reed College, Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS), California Department of Rehabilitation, Center for Independent Living (CIL), and East Bay Community Law Center, among others.

“We’re proud to join the BAS





9



10

Photo captions: 8. Inside the Cheney Cottage, redwood trim was used throughout. • 9. Upstairs, there are three bedrooms in the cottage. Each was recently carefully re-plastered to maintain the corner bead rails. • 10. The out-of-towners (from left): Alice Harrigan (from Boston), Rick Rubin (Brooklyn), Patricia Yachinski (Cape Cod), party host Dmitri Belser, Hannah Yaffe (Berkeley via Boston), and Joan Wattman (Plainfield, Mass.).