

Derr

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it known he was earning far more than Brown could ever expect to make in the classroom. That financial realization made an impact---so much so that Brown took an extended leave from his teaching to train in the Torrance realty offices of Cliff Warren. The understanding was that if he didn't like the property business, he would head back to school and pick up his chalk and eraser where he had left off.

Brown, the father, ended up liking real estate, a lot. And, even though the promise of bigger paychecks was what first enticed him to the industry, he's clear it wasn't his ultimate reason for staying. "I could have been the happiest teacher ever," Brown said, but, "I'm a people person...and I believe strongly in home ownership."

Brown's interest in helping others through one of the biggest purchases of their lives was apparently infectious, because it bit his son hard. Of course, the younger Brown had seen his dad work through real estate deals since his earliest years. "When I was in high school, I sat in on open houses," he said.

Kirk, the son, began his formal introduction to the biz began while he attended college, though he didn't immediately put out his shingle after graduation. For a while, at least, he followed the lead of his older sister Carianne, who works in entertainment. The younger Brown snagged a job with Miramax, where, he says, he gained a greater perspective of the quirky side of corporate life. Eventually, "the joy I grew up seeing" began pulling him back to the lots of El Segundo.

Some point along the way, Kirk, the son, decided he liked real estate as much as Kirk, the father. The energy he gets out of selling homes, the younger said, is "just something you have to feel. It comes with experience."

Any time a family moves into a new home, either one just purchased or a rental, said Kirk, the son, "it's an emotional experience. It's very satisfying." The proud father has seen his son mature into a truly considerate man, and the son, buoyed by his father's support, has grown more confident in his own abilities. Their relationship, the two Kirk Browns say, has evolved into an equal partnership.

TWO HEADS ARE BETTER

Lori O'Connor asserts that it's nice having a jokester in her office. "When he was younger, Dan was crazy, wild, very energetic, so funny," she said. "We were trying to convince him to get into comedy."

Of course, she added, "he's much more educated." Which no doubt was why Dan chose building a business with the mother he obviously adores in an industry he's always known instead of striking it out on his own as a comic. Actually, it's pretty funny when the O'Connors are simply sitting around the office, bouncing comments off of one another. "You were thinner then," Lori said, glancing to her son. Then she redirected. "I'm loud and emotional and very Italian," Lori said with gleeful eyes. "Oh, she's a tiger! She's tough," added Dan. "We're no slouches," agreed Lori, who explained that her father Lorenzo, an immigrant from Italy who sailed through Ellis Island in the 1930s, taught his

four children the importance of honest work.

"As far as work," Dan said of his mother, "she's not always 'on,' but she can always turn it 'on.' As far her clients, she's always been available, always been a problem-solver."

Back in the throes of new parenthood, Lori took up real estate because she assumed she could divide her time between selling and caring for her family. "I thought it was dabbly sort of work," she said. "I didn't know it was a friggin' 24/7 job." But now, she laughed, "it's something I can't seem to get out of my system." Even though she found her niche in real estate, Lori wasn't at all sure she wanted to see Dan doing the same thing. "I never prompted him to follow me," she said. "I was concerned about him getting into real estate because it's a very, very tough business." For the first three years of their eventual partnership, Dan served as Lori's assistant---learning the ropes on hourly wages.

Yes, he knew the success wouldn't necessarily be automatic, and he'd have to crawl, as it were, before he could run. But Dan had already learned to cherish the life stories behind the deals. "I like how every single piece of real estate is different," he said, adding that "it's a big responsibility" when he's the one taking someone through buying or selling property. "Yes, it's an asset," said Dan, but in many instances "it's also their home."

The O'Connors proudly note that their production has remained relatively constant, even through the economic slump of the last few years. That's because the two have built their reputations and maintained their business with a personal, "hands-on" approach that focuses on leaving clients feeling welcome and appreciated, Dan said. The result is that an estimated 90 percent of the O'Connors' business comes from referrals. Between themselves, the team has twice the chance of making productive, new connections. "We have clients who like me, only me, or like him, only him," Lori said. Whoever calls on them and whatever deals may come their way, Lori knows her son will be able to handle it all.

Just like the two Kirk Browns, when the O'Connors formalized their business partnership, their personal relationship became more equal and turned away from the parent/child dynamic. Since that transition, Dan said, Lori has learned to respect his opinion more---a challenge, she says, for any well-meaning Italian mother. "It hasn't always been this easy," admitted Dan, but now, at least, his mom "doesn't hit you over the head" with parental advice.

Perhaps the lesson in Dan O'Connor's and Kirk Brown, Jr.'s homeward gazes lies in what they see whenever they look back. "He's the best thing that's ever happened to my real estate career," Lori said of her son.

After working solo for so many years, Kirk Brown, the father, says he welcomed the change of atmosphere. "It's nice having a bright guy in the office," he said. "I know I'm sounding really cornball, but I really like my son." •

Stagers

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Brad Erwood Painting and Beach Drapery, as well as the following staging companies: Identity Home and Staging Design, Stage to Sell, Coast Home Staging, First Impression Design, Daly and Patricia Home Staging, Signature Home Staging, Turnkey Home Staging, and Parish Stage Right.

"In all, about \$15,000 was donated in goods and labor," said IAHS President,

Dan Keating. .

From what I hear, the girls were extremely pleased and appreciative. Their comments ranged from "So beautiful..." and "Like walking into an episode of *Extreme Makeover Home Edition*..." to the most significant of all: "I've never lived in a place this nice."

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Warner

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And you all remember that I picked the Bruins to go down in flames this Saturday, against the Cardinal, right?

Another *Cialis* commercial just interrupted my column writing. Dang. Okay, back to reality. Turns out the *Great One* hasn't been that great of a hockey coach. Wayne Gretzky quit last week, turning over the pathetic Phoenix Coyotes to the very lucky Dave Tippett. Tippett is an ex-LA King assistant, who spent the last few years as the head guy in Dallas with the Stars. Before he was canned. Tough times out there, man.

Apparently, two guys were fighting to take control of the bankrupt Yotes. And neither one of them wanted to keep good old 99 around. Said Gretzky: "Since both remaining bidders have made it clear that I don't fit into their plans, I approached general manager Don Maloney and suggested he begin looking for someone to replace me as coach." So the guy fired himself. Balls up, Wayne. Go home, hang with Janet, and consider your next move. Jerry West wasn't much of a coach either. And Magic Johnson couldn't spell "coach." Sometimes the great ones don't make great coaches.

Believe that my LA Kings open up on Saturday against the Coyotes?

Back to the football, pro-style. My Rams triumphantly turtled to 0-3 on their way to

a beautiful 0-16 season. Lost to the Packers last Sunday, and I guarantee that they will lose to whomever they play this week. Which happens to be my new favorite team, the 49ers. Who will be pretty focused after suffering a heartbreaking loss to the Vikes last week.

How do I say that the good news is that QB Marc "Tinman" Bulger was knocked out of the game in the first half, and that the Ram offense picked up some steam once the retread Kyle Boller took over? Course I looked at one of the Ram fan websites, and saw this cheery post: "First, I am glad that Bulger got 'hurt,' so that we could finally get some points on the board...we still have Jackson who dances more than he plays, cornerbacks that can't see the ball, and a quarterback who gets hurt 75 percent of the time." Other than that, all is well in Ramfanland.

And the beat goes on in St. Louis. Baseball stuff next week, maybe. Unless I write about me and my friends. Dodgers are clear and in, congrats to fan *Dodger Girl*. Angels are driving me crazy, what with a crappy loss last Saturday evening, but if the Halos haven't clinched by the time you read this, the beverages are on me. Friday night. And some of you may know where to find me, don'tcha? •

Sand Dunes

from front page

to do something."

Many of the Sand Dune neighbors who spoke to the Commission expressed a desire to see the dune closed. "Although I think closing the park is the ultimate solution, I think these measures are a good start," said Michael Henry, who lives in the 300 block of Bell Avenue.

Brad Porter, who lives in the 500 block of 35th Street, thought the permits and meters wouldn't work and that the ultimate solution would be to close the dune. "I stand here tonight obviously as a resident that's frustrated," Porter said. "Obviously no one wants to pull the plug on the sand dune... but there's no denying that it's been the root of the problem."

Commissioner Paul Gross told the audience that although the Commission sympathized with the residents, the job of the PPIC was to review the parking permit and meter concepts. "Closing the park is not on this agenda," Gross said. "The idea that the Council gave us is to make the parking difficult enough that after a few times, people won't return."

Gross said the Council spent a long time going through other potential alternatives, including closing the dune, before settling on the parking restrictions. "They thoroughly discussed the alternatives," Gross said. "The public wants this closed and we have been given the task by the Council to do our best to make this work."

David Kramer, who lives in the 1600 block of Gates Avenue, told the Commission he didn't live in the neighborhood but enjoyed working out at the dune. "I think that the parking meters are a really good idea," he said. Kramer went on to say that people should have thought about the dune before moving into the neighborhoods, prompting angry groans from Sand Dune Park neigh-

bors in the audience. "They should not be complaining because they knew there was going to be a park there," Kramer added. Gross told the audience to let the young resident speak. "This is a Manhattan Beach issue, so let everyone here be heard," he said.

Kathleen Spillane, who lives in the 500 block of 35th Street, said she didn't think the permits and meters would work, but sympathized with people like Kramer who exercise at the dune. "I love those kids and I'm sorry if you don't have a place to work out if this closes," Spillane said. "I'm sorry that I'm angry, but I've had 20 years of this...it's just not a manageable situation."

Zandvliet said the park's maintenance would be finished in several weeks, but did not give a date for reopening the dune. He said the park ranger and a community services officer will be on duty at the park during peak periods and that there would also be an increased police presence. There will be a second park attendant stationed on duty as well and all will receive additional training by the park ranger.

Steven Vargas, who lives directly at the top of the dune on 32nd Street, said he enjoys the quiet neighborhood atmosphere that has returned since the dune's closure. He noted that there is a great deal of traffic turning at the end of his street, along with plenty of athletes who rest at the top after their climb. "You can say my kids have exceptional linguistic skills from what they hear from people on the dune," Vargas said.

Vargas also talked about going to the dune as a child, remembering the times when he and his friends would bury each other in the sand. "That isn't going to happen today with my kids," Vargas said. "My kids can't go down there and bury themselves with sand because someone could walk all over them." •

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