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Antiquing Never Gets Old

By Brian Simon

The country's economic woes have not been easy on retailers, as consumers have noticeably curbed their spending over the last couple of years. Some categories of business have found it tougher than others. For instance, antique shops tend to follow the housing market. When home values are struggling, antique dealers especially feel the pain. Yet despite a difficult stretch, Laurence Martin is determined to ride out the storm.

The owner (along with wife Sally) of long-time Richmond Street fixture Studio Antiques has decided to close his second store on Arena Street just north of El Segundo Boulevard. The massive 9,000-square foot warehouse that opened just two-and-a-half years ago will be no more in a couple of weeks, thanks in part to the aforementioned real estate and recession scenarios as well as an irreconcilable lease-related issue. In order to reduce their considerable inventory, the Martins are currently offering items at 50-80 percent off for the next two weeks.

Despite the prospect of having to move thousands of pieces of furniture, accessories and other merchandise to an already-crowded Richmond Street store, Laurence Martin seems relieved. "We're consolidating the business given today's economy," he said. "It'll save us a ton of rent and allow us to continue to provide great values to our long-standing customers."

The concept of "value" has changed in antiquing in recent years, according to Martin. "People's possessions have probably dropped about two-thirds in value due to the economy," he said. "I have to buy with that in mind. It's always easy to buy stuff, but you have to sell it again later. I have to buy more wisely so I can pass the better price to the customer and have a quick turnaround. People will spend money as long as they get a good deal."

Though "antiques" generally refer to items over a century old, most people are happy enough to make do with 50-year-old merchandise, Martin explained. As a result, Studio Antiques carries quite a bit of mid-century Danish modern, "shabby chic" and '50s retro and Art Deco furnishings. "We've got everything across the board—art, mirrors, furniture, china, glass...everything you can think of from around the world," said Martin, who compiled much of his merchandise from multiple trips to locales such as England, France and Australia. During such excursions, he would fill giant containers with goods. "I still have stuff I bought 10 years ago and haven't unpacked it yet," he said. "I was going on these trips three times a year, but that's stopped for now since I have enough stuff for awhile. We're selling some things I don't really want to sell, but they're in demand."

Indeed, the economy has taken a toll, Martin admitted. "Truthfully, the market has never been the same since 9/11, and another big thing that affected antiquing was Martha Stewart going to jail," he said. "Women have dropped off a bit with their collecting, though jewelry is still doing okay. Guys are buying more items like collectible cameras. Also, people are bringing in more things than ever since they are getting out of their storage units and don't want to pay the rent."

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Pretty Patriots



Katie, Sammie and Lauren all Red White and Blue. All photos by Marcy Dugan see marcyduganphoto.com

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Farmers' Market Continues to Produce as it Celebrates 10-Year Anniversary

By Brian Simon

If you take a snapshot of any given community in 10-year increments, it's amazing how much can change. Take El Segundo circa July 1999 and compare it to today. Over that span virtually all City department heads have changed several times over, and only Kelly McDowell still serves on the Council. His colleagues back then were Mike Gordon, John Gaines, Sandy Jacobs and Nancy Wernick, the first two of whom are no longer with us. A decade ago the still-operating Allied Signal plant became Honeywell. Today at the same site, you'll find Plaza El Segundo. Just 120 months ago, you could buy a house in town for under \$300,000. And six months before the new millennium's arrival, El Segundo didn't have a dog or skate park, much less any state-of-the-art athletic fields. In fact, what is now Campus El Segundo was merely fallow Rockwell land in '99.

Ten years back, the going was tough for the still ficus tree-laden downtown El Segundo. Many long-time retailers had closed their shops, and City leaders discussed ideas to breathe new life into the struggling district. One of the first and most important moves in that direction was the opening of the El Segundo Certified Farmers' Market that July. Spearheaded by then-Mayor Gordon and managed by Tyler Thayer (and later Mary Lou Weiss), the market debuted on the 300 block of Main Street. It took place every Thursday afternoon, rain or shine, from 3 to 7 p.m., and featured a bevy of produce growers and food vendors showcasing their goods.

A little over three years later, the downtown vitalization project began, prompting the market to move temporarily to the parking lot adjacent to the Joslyn Center. The event returned to Main Street—this time the 400 block—in January 2004 and has remained there ever since. Five years ago, Val Patterson was hired by the City of El Segundo to

manage the market and continues to oversee the weekly operations. The report card after one full decade? "It has held its own and is doing well," reported El Segundo Recreation and Parks Director Bob Cummings. "It is a well-known and well-attended farmer's market, and the vendors we have are quality."

To celebrate the 10-year anniversary, a cake cutting is set for this afternoon at 5:30 p.m. Festivities will also include live music from the Tim Myers Band, performances by Jim Gamble Puppet Productions, face paintings and giveaways. A raffle will take place at 6 p.m., with tickets given out 10 minutes prior. City officials, including Mayor McDowell, will be on-hand to recognize the milestone.

"It's hard to believe that it has been an entire decade since our farmers' market first opened," said McDowell. "I want to thank all the vendors that have participated, the staff members who keep the market running, but most of all the loyal shoppers who have made it such a success."

Said shoppers are comprised of a core group of locals and out-of-towners from all over the Southland, while the produce vendors make the trek from as far away as the Stanislaus County and Fresno areas to provide fresh fruit and vegetables at reasonable prices. "We have 13 produce vendors, 16 food vendors, and two non-food vendors,"

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Stalker Strikes Again

On Monday, June 29, 2009 at approximately 7:55 pm, a suspect exposed himself to two female adolescents near California Street at Palm Avenue in the City of El Segundo. The juveniles were walking southbound on California Street approaching Palm Avenue when they saw a car partially blocking a driveway. The suspect exited the car and pulled down his shorts exposing himself before driving away eastbound on Palm Avenue.

The suspect is described as a male white in his mid to late 20's, 6'0" tall with blonde hair in a "buzz cut" style wearing a gray t-shirt and dark blue basketball style shorts. His car may be a 2006-2009 silver 4-door Honda Civic.

The man matches the description of a suspect involved with four other similar incidents in El Segundo that have occurred over the past several months:

November 6, 2008 at 7:45 am, in the

alley north of the 800 block of Grand Avenue. January 8, at 7:35 am, in the alley east of the 400 block of Standard Street. March 13, at 2:45 pm in the 300 block of West Mariposa Avenue. April 4, at 7:00 pm in the 300 block of West Pine Avenue.

During each incident, the suspect was wearing a long or short sleeved t-shirt, dark athletic type shorts and targeted adolescent females. On two occasions he was wearing a blue/white/green striped baseball type hat.

On November 6th, the suspect vehicle was described as a newer model, four-door car, dark blue in color. The vehicle used during the January incident was described as a full-sized four-door car, white in color.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Detective Goodreau at (310) 524-2216 or Detective Martinez at (310) 524-2263. •