

Lorretta Sinclair

Getting the Priorities Right

Archery and Real Estate

Special Feature

Having recently moved from Utah to California, we found ourselves back in the house hunting business. This is not something we looked forward to and have not had to deal with for a number of years. Finding a house is hard enough. Finding a house when you are deeply involved in archery is a whole different matter. Now, before you wonder why I would write an article on real estate for an archery magazine; let me explain.

I'm an Archery Mom and I have priorities!

In Utah, we had access to one of the nicest indoor 18m ranges I've ever seen. With 20 marked lanes, 15-foot high foam mats stacked and rotated on a regular basis, and lighting that could be adjusted for various considerations, we always had a great place to shoot in inclement weather. To top it off, we could shoot for free if we volunteered some time at the range. Since we practice five or six days a week, volunteering saved us considerable money as well as let us 'give back' to our sport. We also owned six acres of what used to be farmland. Being archers, not farmers, we had converted it to a full FITA range. After our first year in archery, we bought a bunch of used Whitetail target mats from Idaho. We marked off the distances with stakes, had tar-

gets for every Cub, Cadet, and Junior distance and even held outdoor tournaments at our house. My sons were able to practice distance shooting, go in to cool off (or warm up depending on the season), eat lunch, go back out and finish practice whenever they wanted. It was ideal.

But then, we moved to a hot, dry, and very windy area of southern California. There are no indoor ranges within 100 miles of us and we do not have a piece of property for a FITA range (. . . yet). Having been seriously spoiled with a great indoor range and now having nothing, meant we needed first to find somewhere to shoot, especially in inclement weather. This priority, of course, came before worrying about how many bedrooms or bathrooms a house would have. This priority came before caring whether there was a patio or not. This priority came before worrying about almost everything 'most' people needing real estate would think about. But then, we already know . . . I'm not normal. I am an archery mom. Have nocks, will travel . . . but need a place to shoot!

We also needed to be able to set up a place to 'distance shoot' on a permanent basis. Out here in the hot, dry desert the only grass you

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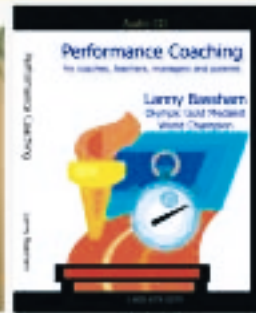
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see is where someone has a small postage-stamp size yard. We will have to shoot among the mesquite and the sagebrush, standing in the searing heat and dirt. The sands blow with the slightest breeze, and breeze is not a word used for the air currents here. The word 'wind' doesn't do them justice either as they often blow at up to 80mph. A 'normal' wind seems to be in the 30-40mph range. Talk about wind shooting! When the wind and the sand blow, . . . well, it's not a pretty picture. Add the summertime heat of 120° by noon and you really have a good picture of our miserable weather conditions or, rather, you have a good idea of our extreme training conditions.

When we first relocated, we decided to rent while trying to find a house on property. We quickly discovered that the realtors don't understand us. They found themselves unable to find us a suitable house for renting, never mind suitable for buying. You see, our priorities are different from anyone else these realtors have worked with. We need a FITA range. We need to be able to shoot inside in inclement weather. We need an appropriate house!

When we first got here and started looking for

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rentals, we went from house to house finding nothing acceptable and unable to explain the dilemma. We never explained our intentions, because obviously, we were going to rent, and we decided it would be prudent to be quiet about our favorite sport . . . and our need to practice indoors. We knew they wouldn't understand. They would have visions of whackos running loose with bows and arrows. They would envision holes in the walls. Frankly, they would think we were crazy. (Shhh, no one needs to know the truth.) From house to house we went with the rental list, sometimes knowing as soon as we drive up that the house won't work because the lot is too small, or the layout of the house doesn't provide a long inside distance. I would go through the kitchen to see if I liked it, and then basically distract the realtor while Bob paced the hallway off, paced off the garage, or paced off the yards.

One day while looking through several rental properties, the realtor commented to me that she didn't quite understand what we were looking for. She had shown us some very nice homes and we hadn't wanted any of them. She wondered out loud, in a nice way, “What was wrong with us?” On that particular day, we were standing inside a lovely home with a wonderful, fully landscaped back yard. It was so full of trees and shrubs and flowers that you could measure off the grass and patio area in 5 steps. “Yes, it is lovely, but, it won't work,” I said, the yard was just 'not adequate.' She is baffled. The yard is actually paradise, especially in this desert.

We wandered inside the house and the garage is enormous. Bob and I get excited as he nods to me, which means 'keep the lady busy' while I pace this off. Then I see him pacing between the master bedroom,

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down the hall, through the garage door and into the garage. He comes and asks me what I think about the kitchen. This I know means it's a good measurement.

"The kitchen? Oh, it's great!" We now have the potential of an 'indoor range'. I tell him the backyard is quite small and ask

him if he could perhaps see about the side yard. He goes outside as I chat with the realtor and continue to distract her from my husband and his weird habit that she has noticed of him walking hallways, walking through rooms, not seeming to care at all about anything other than how long things are. He comes in and quietly tells me that it would be a stretch, but from the front yard, through the gate into the backyard is 30 meters. We would still need to find somewhere for distance shooting but this is a good start. I try to keep my excitement down as I tell the woman that we are very interested in a long term lease of this house. She wonders out loud if I want to go through the rest of it, and I tell her "No, if Bob says it's okay, then it's okay." The kitchen is nice and I really care about that. We make arrangements to return to the realty office to complete rental agreements.

As Bob and I get in the car, we are both excited as he tells me that there is an easy 18 meters plus standing room inside the house and though the boys will have to be careful outside, they are good enough to master the narrow gate that they must shoot through between the front and back yards in order to get 30 meters. We are ecstatic! I have NO idea what the bathrooms and bedrooms even look like and I don't even care! All I needed was to secure a place to shoot when the summer temperatures hit 120°+ and the winds that come up every afternoon nearly every day will not interfere with our archery!

We signed a nine month lease and told the realtor that we are very interested in purchasing a home, but it has to be on acreage and the lot must run from south to north. She doesn't ask why, and I am relieved because I hadn't quite thought up a reason yet since I didn't want to let on that we would have two boys shooting up to 400 arrows a day in the house she was about to rent us. She asks how many bedrooms and baths and I tell her "three and two would be nice, but



we are willing to consider alternates but it would be really nice to find a long ranch house." She nods and I know she was thinking we are the most difficult clients around. I happily sign the lease papers knowing part one of this new journey is taken care of.

We are still several months away from finding our dream home. Out here in the hot dry desert, 'dream home' may be a misnomer. I miss the green (though not the snow) of Utah. I miss the indoor archery range and my JOAD program. I miss the weekend tournaments at Salt Lake Archery (though not the three hour round-trip drive). I know our realtor thinks we're crazy, but I don't care. I know my priorities are right. I know I need a big ugly piece of desert property to build a new FITA range and a long ranch house for shooting down the hallway into the garage during inclement weather. What else would an Archery Mom think of when looking for California real estate?

Lorretta Sinclair is the mother of Dakota, Clarke, and Barrett Sinclair. President of Clarke Sinclair Memorial Archery Scholarship (www.clarkesinclair.org) and collegiate division publicist (www.collegiatearchery.org).

