

The History of 1963 Arrowhead Drive, Oakland



This home was built by Jim and Lois Hambric 1957-1958. Lois, an Alameda school teacher, Jim, an Oakland School District union carpenter, electrician and later–Western Electric Telephone technician (an original to-the-home wall phone hangs in the storage space), performed much of the work themselves. Red stain on the ceiling beams is original to the house, a color Lois picked and neighbors (we later learned) from 2015 Arrowhead Drive helped apply. Closet dressers were built by Jim as were teak wall cabinets in the living room. The house sits fully on foundation (something we wanted), under exterior stucco is a full layer of additional timber. The house was built to last and has.

In 1999, upon taking ownership, Jim Hambric had not moved out. When we showed up—he was still packing. Frustrating as this was, the delay proved to be serendipitous as we were able to learn more about the home’s history. Jim gave us the photo above.

1960s Arrowhead Drive was half as populated as today. Families held progressives, “hot tub” parties (true) and often entertained in the back yard at 1963. Lois and Jim were known to host a few “wild” parties (we later learned from longtime neighbors). Shepherd Canyon Road did not exist—Arrowhead Drive, home to a diverse group of young couples, ended at the south where the Sacramento Northern Railway tracks ran through the “Shepherd Tunnel” to Moraga and beyond. When we moved here in 1999 many of the original neighbors were still here and told stories at the annual Arrowhead Drive Holiday Party (a tradition that continues today).

This house is canyon living. Air, scents of pine and seasonal greens, birds (changing by season), stillness, quiet—all part of the life. Deer roam nearby, night reveals a dazzling collection of stars. Weather is mild, or fog and sun, breezes and wonderful rain. Neighbors are a mix of families and couples, many dogs and kids, walkers, bicycle enthusiasts and people who just like the hills. We enjoyed nearly three decades here and regret nothing. We loved preserving this house, creating and enjoying the back yard, keeping the systems operational, maintaining the original architecture and tending the landscape. Using the home office worked perfectly—because the space is partially subterranean, the quiet is wonderful and “leaving the office” really does separate the user from home life.

1963 has a mesmerizing cross-canyon view. By day nearly no homes are visible, at night lights twinkle as occasional headlights criss cross up the mountain. At times, living here can be completely cloistered and then, in 10 minutes, we had everything needed (market, coffee, farmer’s market, food). Our joke for years was “we don’t need a second home, we already live in the woods.” We hope the next owners of 1963 Arrowhead enjoy it as much.