

The Joys of Living at 3705 Avenue O In Galveston

- 1) The easy amble to the beach. There are so many things to enjoy along the way, I slow down as I go. For instance,
 - a) The lovely landscapes of front yards you can't help but want to take a slight side trip to see them close up and then imagine how wonderful our house would look with these flowers on the fence, those vines scrolling over the entry gate, perhaps a brick walkway through some shrubs...
 - b) And the sounds; many front yards call to you with the sounds of wind chimes and then, as you come closer, the delightfully soft sound of water bubbling up and falling into water features (some classical, some unexpected).
 - c) And, where there is water, there are birds; where there are flowers, there are irresistible scents to stop and smell.
- 2) While smelling flowers, or just on a walk, you're likely to meet wonderful interesting people in our neighborhood. A few of the people I've met are people carrying their surfboards on their way to the beach, a fellow who writes a weather blog (whom I met while walking to cast my vote), and people walking to class at Galveston College or the elementary or high school. And you can catch a shuttle on Seawall and ride it to get to the other side of Broadway to great places like the bookshop without getting in your car or having to find a place to park.
- 3) Flooding: one thing we love about our home is the great job Galveston has done improving drainage on (at least in our block of) Avenue O. The work they've done in the last two years has yielded great results; when someone who lives in Jamaica Beach came to see me during the rain last week, she was distraught about the flooding she had to drive through, but there was no more than an inch of water on the street in front of our house.
- 4) Sea Star Base: One morning, a couple of years ago, I woke up and thought "Hmmm, I'm 68, time to learn to sail!". My next door neighbor volunteers at SSB and he told me, "Go see Mike Janota; he'll teach you how to sail." I did and it has been one of the most amazing experiences of my life! I recommend it to everyone!
- 5) The back yard and the attic: Dreams, dreams, dreams; this home fires my imagination because of its potential.
 - a) The cozy back yard with the huge oak tree and brick wall

- b) The 19th century construction method that gives you an attic free from crossbeams and other interfering structure (the structure is in the roof, a hipped roof, which may be one key to how it survived the hurricane of 1900). My contractor says you almost have as much usable space in the attic as downstairs.
- 6) Closer to home, many of the joys of being here are already here.
- a) Having the front porch on the first floor close to the action brings the fun to you. A number of parades, including Ball High's Homecoming parade, some associated with Mardi Gras, a parade of bicycles some Sundays, and sometimes a parade you don't know what it's for, always make me smile! I remember at least one time, when people in the parade were throwing beads and candy to us, a couple of the neighbor kids (may be seven or eight years old) noticed that none of these goodies had made it to my porch, the children turned around and tossed some of their treasures to me. And they continued to do that for as long as I was on the porch.
- b) When feeling like a more private experience, there is the wonderful, small back yard with the ancient oak tree and expansive deck. It's nice to spend time there, having breakfast, watching the moon, and having friends over.
- 7) Great food! I almost forgot, in my eagerness to get to the house itself, to mention the local eateries, the famous and the ones we keep secret! If you're walking to the beach, you have to pass the traditional, famous Gaido's and (just East of there) my favorite gumbo place, Gumbo Diner. But you don't have to walk that far; just around the corner, on 37th, is Pennie's, awesome barbecue and tamale place featured in the TV show, the "Bucket List" and, also less than a block (Avenue O and 39th) is Shrimp'N Stuff (yes) and our secret, an exceptionally delicious Honduran place at 39th and Avenue M.
- 8) Home. In an era of open concept living, this house brings back the joys of cottages. I love the place; the high ceilings, that one can feel the quality of its original construction, which gives you the sense that it's protecting you, is something I do not think that I can put into words. I'll try. Here there are many places to be.
- a) The front room has both a reading corner and a living room, including a pretty cool vintage futon couch for guests to sleep on. Next you walk through to the bedroom on your left, closet on your right, but there are almost no walls. We hung a curtain wall at the base of the bed with the curtains pulled aside during the day. On the right, you're looking into the outer closet with a window. You'll see when you visit the house, how well this lets light into the whole space.
- b) On we go into the dining room on the left, with the utility room on the right. Built in all the way across the wall under the window in the dining room is a window seat. What a delight! It's really long. You can stretch out on either end and read or take a nap with your dog or your cat. This is where I sleep when we have visitors. Is this my favorite place in the house? I count five favorite places inside the house!

- c) One more spot, although there is more to appreciate about this cottage than I know how to describe. I am eager to tell you about another place to be- that is in the kitchen. Suppose it is a cold and rainy day. Don't you wish you had a chair with a pillow by a window in the kitchen where you could look out on the back garden at the sky and the oak tree while you have your cup of coffee? It's there and it's right by the dog door, so, when your pet decides to come back in on that rainy day you and the towel are ready for him when he enters, just before the shaking starts! That nifty nook is somewhat hidden; you won't notice it until you're in the kitchen.

For me, having these special places to be adds to the sense of wonderful in this home.

- 9) We've talked about some of the things to love about the home that are interrelated to where it is on the island, what the island offers, and just some of the potential in the house. There has also been a lot of happiness in bringing this house out of the dark, back into the light.

- a) When we first saw it, all the walls and ceilings were black with a tinge of yellow and the bathroom was basically a hole with an old bathtub in it. The floors inside were not handsome and the back deck along with the flooring of the little back porch needed replacing. I looked at my good friend (and contractor) and said, "I don't think we can do this...." and he, with an enthusiastic wave of his arm, said, "It'll be fun!" So, we wrote a cash contract before anyone else had a chance to see it.

- b) First, all the walls and ceilings were painted white. I understand this was a herculean effort! The kitchen and bathroom have tile floors (I believe, porcelain). The outer and inner closets and the utility room also have tile floors. The rest of the floors are manufactured wood. Decking in the little back porch and the back deck has been replaced. The tile surrounding the bathtub and bathroom window is custom, designed and installed by my contractor (he also did the window seat). We've done major work on the plumbing (the main sewer line had to be rerouted, for one thing) and the electrical system (including what was needed for installing what are called "European splits" for AC and heating).

- c) It has been very satisfying to rescue the house from deterioration and bring it back to a place where friends and family who come over to visit enjoy being here.

- 10. One more thing. I mentioned earlier when talking about spaces in the house, that, when you visit the house, you'll recognize or see that... And I think it's true; some things cannot be communicated by words. So, I'll say this,

There is an ineffable goodness about this house. You can feel it.