

Some Thoughts From Attending My Class of '69 Reunion at MIT

Forgive me for straying from my usual topic of real estate — I took some time off with Rita to attend my 50th reunion at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology last week, and I was super-inspired by the experience of returning to the Institute for what was more than just a party. It was an immersion into the continuing impact that MIT is having on the world of science and technology.

Reunions at MIT are probably unlike those at any other college or university. Yes, there is partying, but roughly half the events were educational in nature, updating alumni on current research regarding important topics of the day. This year the dominant topic was climate change — something I wrote about, quite coincidentally, in last week's column.

Not only was climate change the subject of Michael Bloomberg's commencement address (there's a link for it at <http://news.mit.edu>), but the 3-hour Technology Day symposium the following morning was all about climate change. The 1,200-seat auditorium was filled to capacity with alumni eager to be updated on MIT research about this important topic, and they were fully engaged for the full 3 hours.

When I attended MIT 50 years ago, undergraduate men vastly outnumbered the undergraduate women, who barely filled the one dormitory provided for them. Over the past 20 years, women have risen to comprise 46% of the undergraduate student body and 35% of the graduate student body, spanning every academic discipline. This gender equity was evident in Saturday's symposium, too. Four of the six presenters, including the moderator, were women.

In his commencement address, the former NYC mayor observed that the technology for successfully addressing climate change is largely in place (except for bringing it to scale), and challenged graduates to go out into the world not just to expand upon it, but to build the *political will* to deploy it. I was reminded of that statement the following day while attending a Class of '69 discussion about anti-Vietnam war activism at MIT during our time on campus. During the Q&A, a fellow '69 alum said he had interviewed several undergraduates about political activism, which is not currently evident on campus. The impression he got is that the students are all "heads down," concentrating on solving the world's problems — such as climate change — undistracted by the politics that excite and divide those of us beyond the walls of academia. Reflecting on that analysis, as someone who was very active politically as a 1960s undergrad and is still active now, I suspect it's because nowadays, unlike in the 1960s, the Institute and its students are on the same page about such issues, sharing the same commitment to addressing com-

monly accepted world problems.

(In the unlikely event that President Trump were to stage a campaign rally in the Boston area, I get the impression there would be a sudden upwelling of activism at all local universities, including MIT, but the MIT activists would be focusing on Trump's denial of climate change.)

Climate change, of course, is only one of the "world's great challenges" which MIT is committed in its mission statement to addressing through academic research. We learned in Saturday's symposium about ground breaking research on mass storage battery systems and alternatives to blast furnaces for creating steel. Those inventions likewise contribute in a big way to sustaining the livability of our planet.

It was hard not to come away from the reunion weekend without a more profound appreciation of what MIT and its graduates can and are accomplishing in addressing the planet's most important challenges. I consider myself very fortunate to be among those who were given the privilege of being immersed in that culture for four or

more years, albeit several decades ago.

A videographer asked members of my class what their biggest learning was from MIT. My answer to that question referenced the chemical process of osmosis, a secondary definition of which, according to Google, is "the process of gradual or unconscious assimilation of ideas, knowledge, etc." Simply being in that environment amidst MIT faculty, administration and fellow students was its own education through osmosis. This may be hard to understand, but my classmates would probably all nod in agreement.

I return from my reunion renewed in my appreciation of science and technology and of all that my alma mater contributes to their positive application to society's greatest challenges.

PS: I was honored when MIT chose to feature me in a pre-reunion "Slice of MIT" blog post, focusing on what I have done to transition Golden Real Estate's office to "net zero energy." There's a link for that blog post *and* for a video of that Technology Day symposium on our blog, www.GoldenREblog.com.

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH, Realtor®

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This well maintained 5-bedroom, 4-bathroom brick 2-story home is conveniently located near great shopping restaurants, walking trails and lots of open space. Legacy Ridge and Hyland Hills public golf courses, nearby, are top rated. The home is highly efficient with a newer furnace and A/C. The utility bills are low, thanks to its on-demand Rinnai hot water heater and solar panels. The large bright family room has a gas fireplace, vaulted ceilings and skylights. The large covered deck with mountain views is perfect for entertaining. The basement has a large game/TV room, a ¾ bath and a large storage area with built-in closets. The garage is oversized with natural light, a workbench and storage closets. Get more info and take a narrated video tour at www.WestminsterHome.info. Open Saturday, June 15th, 11a.m. to 3 p.m.

Great Western Slope Home Just Listed by Kim Taylor

This house at 740 N. Grand Mesa Dr. in the Western Slope town of Cedaredge combines the old with the new by using high-end upgrades but keeping the vintage look. When this 4-bed/4-bath home was remodeled in 2010, it got a new radiant heating system and central A/C plus updated electrical and plumbing. The 1.22-acre property has it all — the creek, the private orchard, the garden area plus garden starts room, detached 3-car garage, additional detached 2-car garage with 240V service attached to a large shop with natural light and door access to the garden/orchard area, cute playhouse or gardening shed with carport, RV pad, creek side deck and hot tub! All this within walking distance to the quaint downtown area of Cedaredge. The surrounding 7.75-acre property and water rights are available for sale to the buyer of this fantastic home. Take a closer look at www.CedaredgeHome.info or call Kim at (303) 304-6678 for a private showing. Kim will be holding it open on Saturday, June 22nd, 11am - 2pm.



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