

Neighbors in Bluff Heights Mean Everything

By Donna Sievers

My sweet neighbor, Mia, and I met when she was only a year old—how fortunate I am that she lived right next door to us. She recently moved to Washington State with her parents, but we will always be best friends.

Mia was a most welcome guest at our house, and we watched as she grew up. Lots of princess outfits, playing jewelry store with my costume jewelry, and watching her ride her bike in the street at our annual 4th of July Block Party.

During the early days of the pandemic, when Mia was about 5, her father, Greg, built a platform so she could see over the fence and we could chat. We were like Lucy and Ethel; when I said that, we had a long conversation about Lucy and Ethel.

We enjoyed chatting, watching for squirrels on the fence ("squirrel alert!"), watching the butterflies go back and forth between our yards, laughing over "knock knock" jokes, and just enjoying each other's company. Gems, shells, and moss became Mia's treasures. One day, she serenaded me with her favorite song at the time, "Take Me Home, Country Roads." What a delight!

Gradually, as the pandemic allowed, Mia was able to come over to play in our garden, make fairy houses, cut flowers for her mom, Talia, and just goof around. My husband and I watched her tumble, do cartwheels, and prowl around pretending to be a cat while building a tent out of yard pillows in the garage. (Mia loves cats and has



three of her own. She also loves to wear cat ears!)

Mia decorated our fence with ribbons and bows and brought her "stuffedies" to play with my "stuffedies." Perhaps the most fun was picking flowers and vegetables and then taking the produce around to our neighbors using Mia's wagon. One day, while picking thyme, Mia said, "I think we are going to run out of time picking thyme." We laughed and made time/thyme jokes for a long time, until finally Mia asked me to stop making time/thyme jokes.

One afternoon, my husband said, "Mia, look up in the sky. There's a contrail in the sky from that airplane." Mia said, "That looks just like a memory. You see it and then it disappears." Lee and I looked at each other and reminded ourselves that Mia was only 6 1/2 years old, but wise beyond her years.

Although Mia no longer lives next door, I think of her every day, and we share a lovely, deep friendship. We FaceTime often and write each other. While I miss her and her family, I am so glad we will always be friends and will always love each other. Making a friend is a gift that lasts a lifetime.

Donna Sievers is a Board Member of the Los Angeles Area Helicopter Noise Coalition (LAAHNC). She was raised in Long Beach and taught at Stanford Junior High, Bolsa Grande High, Pacifica High, and CSULB before leaving the classroom for administrator duties in Garden Grove USD. She and her husband live in Bluff Heights, where their retirement activities include volunteering for the Joyful Child Foundation in Memory of Samantha Runnion, gardening at the Bembridge House, bike riding, walking to the ocean, and maintaining a 107-year-old house and garden.