

Suit makes backyard court costly

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By Bob Walter

--Court wins in court: The legal world was not exactly on tenterhooks about this case, but it turns out -- even in swanky Serrano El Dorado -- that a backyard sport court is not a nuisance to its neighbors.

At least the court owned by Mohan and Beeba Passi of Serrano is not a nuisance, said one of the Passis' lawyers, David **Trapani** of El Dorado Hills.

It took about seven months of litigation and three days of trial for the Passis to prevail over their neighbors, who sued the family and Serrano over the backyard court. The neighbors claimed it was improperly approved and lowered the value of their own home.

On Friday, before the defense even completed its case, the judge ruled in favor of the Passis. David called it a "complete and total victory" for both Serrano and the Passi family.

Next up likely will be a skirmish over legal fees and costs that have added about \$100,000 to the \$30,000 backyard play area....

Whole truth: Rumors started flying about the fate of several doomed local Ralphs Supermarkets even before they sold the last few bottles of not-very-discounted wine and cans of soup.

In almost every case -- regarding the stores in Ranch Cordova, Folsom and El Dorado Hills, anyway -
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the juiciest talk surrounded Whole Foods Market, the wildly popular combination grocer and destination resort for foodies.

Typical was an e-mail from Folsom reader and Whole Foods devotee Aimee Gillum.

"I've been hearing lots of rumors, from multiple sources, saying that Whole Foods might move into the spot vacated by Ralphs in Folsom," Aimee wrote. "Do you know if there is any truth to this rumor?"

Sorry, Aimee. A Whole Foods real estate source told me the company is not taking any of the shuttered Ralphs stores in the Sacramento region. But it sounds like Folsom is on the radar screen for a new store in the future.

Meanwhile, I am told there could be some news soon about the second-most-popular Ralphs rumor -- the much-coveted Nugget Markets of Woodland. Stay tuned. ...

Court, Part II: If the name **Trapani** sounds familiar, you might be recalling El Dorado Hills' celebrated, if less-than-landmark, "yellow house" case.

Lawyer David was part of the defense team that prevailed over the EDH Community Services District back in 2002 in a dispute over a house that was painted, gasp, yellow.

The district's design review committee tried, eventually in vain, to force the homeowners to repaint.

The case drew attention from the New York Times, NBC's "Today" show and, appropriately, Comedy Central.

David confirmed Monday that the house still is yellow after these few years. And still looks good.

David, by the way, has sworn off suing the town's Community Services District. In 2004, he was elected to the CSD board of directors. ...

Court, Part III: Speaking of civil trials and constitutional rights and such, I can testify that bewildering legal action is not limited to El Dorado County.

This column took an unscheduled break last weekend because, coincidentally, I spent three days on jury duty in Sacramento. It was my first experience on a jury, because most lawyers don't like newspaper guys to sit in judgment of them. Heck, I hadn't even been called for 11 years.

I drew a civil case that revolved around a traffic accident that caused less damage than our minivan incurred a while back when my wife rolled it into the freezer in our garage. And about the same amount of bodily injury.

But I did my duty and stayed awake virtually the entire time. If you are wondering about the local angle, the winning lawyer's office is in Rancho.

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