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How Quirky is Berkeley? Dick and Beany Wezelman's love for Africa

December 30, 2015 7:00 am by [Tom Dalzell](#)



African mud hut at 1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey

On the residential leg of Shattuck Avenue, in the block just south of Los Angeles Avenue, tucked among the stately homes is a stucco house with African-themed designs. And an African mud hut in the backyard.



1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey

Mark Bulwinkle steel work is installed beneath the railing leading up the stairs to the front door.



1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey



1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey

Inside are Dick and Beany Wezelman. And a brilliant collection of African art, artifacts, and household furnishings.



Dick and Beany Wezelman. Photo: John Storey

Dick and Beany Wezelman are natives of Chicago. Beany got her MA at Cal in 1964, majoring in Political Science with an African specialty. She joined the Peace Corps in 1964 and was sent to Ethiopia. Dick came to see her. They married in Dar Es Salaam in 1966. Africa was in their blood.



Photo courtesy of Dick and Beany Wezelman

They hitchhiked across the Sahara Desert in 1973. In this photograph, Beany stands with a Tuareg in the Sahara Desert of Niger. The Tuareg are Berber people, nomads in the Saharan interior of North Africa.

Dick and Beany moved back to Berkeley in 1971 and started making annual trips to Africa. They have been collecting and selling African art since then. Until 9/11, they traveled to Pakistan, especially Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. After 9/11, security concerns precluded further travel there.

Their house is filled with African colors and textiles and design. Much of it is for sale. The Wezelmans open

their house up to the public a few times a year for large sales that attract hundreds of people.



1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey



1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey



1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey



Beany Wezelman. Photo: John Storey



1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey



1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey



1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey



1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey

Not *everything* is African. The kitchen chandelier is a teacup and teapot creation by Jana Olson



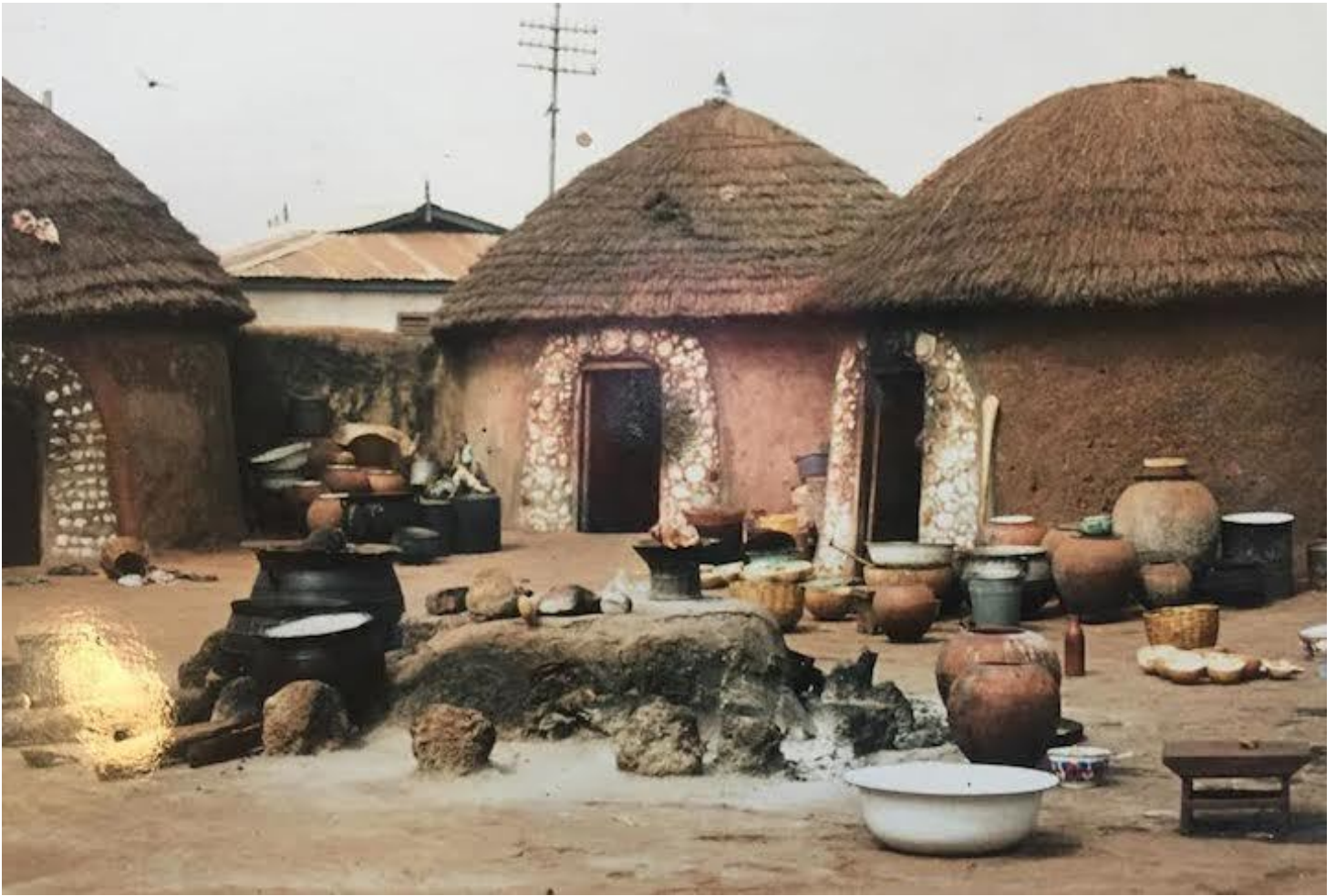
Jana Olson chandelier at 1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey

The *coup de quirky grace* is in the back yard.



Mark Olivier sculpture at 1026 Shattuck Avenue. Photo: John Storey

Normally, a Mark Olivier sculpture would steal the scene. Except when it is next to an African mud hut.



Mud huts in Ghana. Photo: Beany Wezelman

The Wezelmans saw these traditional mud huts in Ghana. They liked them. They wanted one in their backyard. In 1993, they turned to Peter Rudy, an arborist with a knack for a lot of things besides trees. He wanted to build with adobe. And so there came to be an African mud hut.



Photo: Beany Wezelman



Peter Rudy at the apex of the dome. Photo: Beany Wezelman.



Application of the mud. Photo: Beany Wezelman

The Wezelmans and Rudy celebrated the completion of the hut with many friends. Rudy and his about-to-be-wife surprised the group by getting married. On the spot. No warning. They are still married and the hut is still there.



Hut door. Photo: John Storey

The door is from Mali. It is a Dogon granary door. The Dogon people of Mali are known for their intricate carved doors, screens, and panels.



Hut interior. Photo: John Storey



Hut interior. Photo: John Storey

The Wezelmans have lived life to its fullest. They and their house and yard and mud hut exude energy and optimism and creativity. They add immensely to the Quirky Soup that is Berkeley. We are better for them.

Tom Dalzell, a labor lawyer, created a website, [Quirky Berkeley](#), to share all the whimsical objects he has captured with his iPhone. The site now has more than 8,600 photographs of quirky objects around town as well as posts where the 30-year resident muses on what it all means.

A longer version of this post may be found at [Quirky Berkeley](#).

To find other Quirky Berkeley posts on Berkeleyside, [click here](#).

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