

REAL ESTATE NEWS

Tune to your car radio as you house hunt

REAL ESTATE LISTINGS

Listings features news and notes about Oakland County real estate. To list an announcement, write: Listings, Real Estate Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009. Our fax number is (810) 644-1314.

HELPING HAND

At the annual Coldwell Banker International Business Conference in February in Orlando, Betty Barbour did more than participate in educational sessions and attend the company's trade show. She helped "blitz build" a house for a low-income Orlando family of five in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity.



Betty Barbour

Barbour is the associate broker at Coldwell Banker Schweitzer Real Estate in Bloomfield Hills. More than 6,500 brokers, owners, managers, realtors and employees from all over North America attended the conference.

STATE OF THE ART

Realtor Grace Stauffer of Chamberlain Realtors in Birmingham has completed a specialized course in computer applications for the residential specialist.

With state-of-the-art equipment, course participants got an in-depth look at contact management, marketing, and financial software packages for real estate. They were given guidelines for choosing the right personal computer system for increased efficiency to serve clients.

MILLION-DOLLAR STAR

Joel Stempin of Beverly Hills became a member of Real Estate One's Million Dollar Roundtable. He was also awarded the Rising Star Award following his first year in the real estate business.

PHONE HOME

Weir, Manuel, Snyder & Ranke Inc. is now servicing potential home buyers with a 24-hour Home Hotline. To use the hotline, dial 1 (800) 778-9495 and then enter the three-digit code shown in the newspaper, next to the picture of the home you are interested in.

The Home Hotline offers a "talking tour" of homes. The offices of Weir, Manuel, Snyder & Ranke serve Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, West Bloomfield, Farmington Hills, Troy, Bloomfield, Rochester and Rochester Hills.

— Becky Burns, special writer

BY JANICE THOR-KRAMER
Special Writer

If you'd rather not tour open houses, hook up with a Realtor or cruise neighborhoods for phone numbers on yard signs. Talking House may be the way to begin house hunting.

Talking House is a small electronic device that allows house hunters to get sales information or their car radios. Just pull up to the home, tune to 1610 AM and listen to a 90-second sales pitch without leaving the front seat. If you like what you hear, give the agent a call. If you don't, move on.

"Today, most house hunters are working couples who don't have a lot of spare time," said Realtor Paul Schwartz of Century 21 West, West Bloomfield. "We're a 24-hour-a-day society. This device works all day, so it's a winner."

Schwartz, a former high school biology teacher, likes gadgets and innovative marketing ideas. When he heard about Talking House, he bought three. After installing one in a

White Lake Township listing, he says he had enough inquiries to sell the ranch-style house three times. He settled for one closing, but got a cache of potential clients from calls generated by the device.

The house sold in three weeks because I had a bigger pool of potential buyers. The seller said it was like having two Realtors," Schwartz said.

Talking House isn't new (the current model appeared in 1992), but consumers will see more and more Realtors relying on radio activated messages to reach potential clients, according to Scott Matthew of Realty Electronics Inc., the Fond du Lac, Wis., manufacturer of Talking House.

The firm has sold 30,000 units at \$200 apiece since 1992. A lease-purchase agreement runs \$12-\$14 a month.

"It gives people vital information immediately. That's key today," the former Realtor said. "Most home buyers begin their search by driving around a favorite area looking for

yard signs. Instead of passing up a house that might look too small from the outside, they can tune in a radio message and possibly find out it has four bedrooms and a walk-out basement."

Some Realtors claim a single call generated by Talking House is more than 10 times as productive as a call from a yard sign, the manufacturer said.

Talking House weighs two pounds and is about the size of a phone answering machine. It plugs into a grounded outlet inside the home. The message is recorded like an answering machine greeting and stored on computer chips. The device is FCC approved, so Realtors don't need federal or city permission to hook up. House hunters can pick up the message 250-300 feet from the curb.

Realtor Katie Rosario of Chamberlain Realtors, West Bloomfield, says one seller was so intrigued with Talking House, she drove around her neighborhood near Green Lake just to see how far the radio message carried.

"Maybe it was a clear day because she picked it up outside the subdivision," said Rosario, who bought five units in 1992.

"I get good, legitimate sales calls from Talking House. It's not a cheap marketing tool, but I like trying new things and being able to offer my clients something extra."

Potential home sellers can tune in Talking House messages to see how their house compares others in the area. The real estate agent's message usually tells lot size, square footage, number of bedrooms, baths, recent updates and amenities, such as a wrap-around deck, hardwood floors or skylights.

"I can't be available 24 hours a day, so (Talking House) gives me a competitive edge," Schwartz said. "You go into combat carrying a lot of equipment. This is just one more thing."

For more information, call Realty Electronics, Inc. 1 (800) 444-8255.

Exploring rentals, lawyer referral, investment condos

CONDO QUERIES



ROBERT M. MEISNER

Q Do you have an opinion as to whether or not a rule barring rentals during the first year of ownership is reasonable?

A I am not aware of any reported cases on that subject in Michigan; however, I believe that a good argument could be made that it is reasonable and, indeed, such a rule was upheld by a Florida Court, which upheld the association's right to pass a rule that precluded an owner, if his unit was being rented, from allowing a new buyer to extend the lease agreement with the tenant.

Q I am a new owner of a piece of property. I am aware that sooner or later, I will need the services of an attorney who will help with landlord-tenant problems. I

understand that I will have to pay charges to an attorney on a flat fee or an hourly basis. However, I cannot afford to pay an exorbitant fee for every simple matter. Is there a source, a state referral bureau, or even a brand new student lawyer, who may perform the services for a smaller fee?

A It is suggested that you contact the lawyer referral service of the bar association that has jurisdiction in your area. For example, you may contact, in the metropolitan Detroit area, the Oakland County Bar Association Lawyer Referral, the Detroit Bar Association Lawyer Referral or the Macomb County Bar Association Lawyer Referral. I suggest that you may also wish to contact the State Bar of Michigan in Lansing for any further suggestions they may have in regard to lawyer referral services.

Q We are thinking about buying a condominium for an invest-

ment in the Aspen area. Do you have any suggestions in terms of what we should be looking for in terms of our investment?

A Buying a condominium as a recreational facility may or may not be a good investment, generally speaking. In talking with Realtors, you will find that you will not receive a large cash flow, although depending upon the region in which you purchase a condominium, there may be a likelihood for an increase in the value of your unit. However, in such places as Aspen, the cost of buying a unit may be cost prohibitive and may have already peaked. In places like Telluride, however, where the area is still under substantial development and is relatively unknown, the opportunity for capital appreciation may be greater, although not obviously necessarily guaranteed.

In any event, wherever you buy a condominium, you should utilize the same strategies of protection that anyone needs to utilize in buying a

condominium, i.e., understand the condominium documents, know your developer or the condominium project, as the case may be, and understand your responsibilities and particularly the restrictions of the condominium project. In the case of a recreational condominium, also be extremely familiar with the methodology by which the condominium will be managed in the absence of an on-site board of directors.

Robert M. Meisner is an Oakland County attorney who concentrates his practice in condominium, real estate and corporate law. Submit questions by writing: Robert M. Meisner, 30200 Telegraph Road, Suite 467, Bingham Farms, MI 48025. This column provides general information and should not be construed as legal opinion. To leave a voice-mail message for Robert M. Meisner, dial (313) 953-2047, mailbox 1871. Hear his radio show, "The Law of the Land," 1-2 p.m. Wednesdays on WCAR-AM 1090.

Observer & Eccentric Community Classifieds

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TO PLACE AN AD



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Oakland County.....(810) 644-1070
Rochester/Rochester Hills.....(810) 852-3222
Fax Your Ad.....(313) 953-2232

Walk-In

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Friday
9:30 am-5 pm

AFTER HOURS:

Use Our 24-Hour
Voice Mail System
(313) 591-0900

Deadlines

For Placing, canceling or correcting of line ads.
Publication Day
MONDAY ISSUE: 8:30 P.M. FRIDAY
THURSDAY ISSUE: 8:30 P.M. TUESDAY

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PLEASE CHECK YOUR AD

The Observer & Eccentric will issue credit for typographical or other errors only on the first appearance of an advertisement. If an error occurs, the advertiser must notify the Customer Service Department in time to correct the error before the second insertion.

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

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FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION ON OPEN HOUSES - CALL

HOME LINE
313-953-2020

— Results Closer To Home —

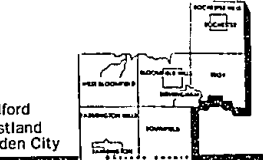
Your Choice Communities:

- Birmingham • Rochester • Livonia • Redford
- West Bloomfield • Farmington • Plymouth • Westland
- Troy • Southfield • Canton • Garden City

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