

This column highlights promotions, transfers, hirings, awards won and other key personnel moves within the suburban real estate community. Send a brief biographical summary—including the towns of residence and employment and a black and white photo if desired—to: Movers and Shakers, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, 48150. Our fax number is (313) 591-7279

Shires joins office



Diane Shires has joined the Coldwell Banker Schweitzer team as a sales associate in the Birmingham office. Shires, an Oakland University graduate, is a member of the National Association of Realtors and the Michigan Association of Realtors. She lives in Birmingham.

Meisner joins C21



Rebecca Meisner has joined Century 21 Town & Country in Birmingham as an associate broker. Meisner, a multi-million dollar sales producer, has 10 years experience in the business. She's a Graduate Realtors Institute and Certified Residential Specialist.

New people announced

Kenneth Neumann/Joel Smith and Associates, an architectural, planning and interior design firm based in Southfield, announces two appointments.

Aydin H. Erhan, RA, joins the staff as a project architect. He has a bachelor of arts in Architecture from Lawrence Technological University and has 12 years of professional experience in all phases of project development for health care, commercial, religious and residential facilities.

Erhan lives in Commerce Township. Elizabeth Nyquist, who worked at Neumann/Smith from 1992-94, rejoins the staff as an interior designer. She will concentrate in the areas of programming, space planning and interior design.

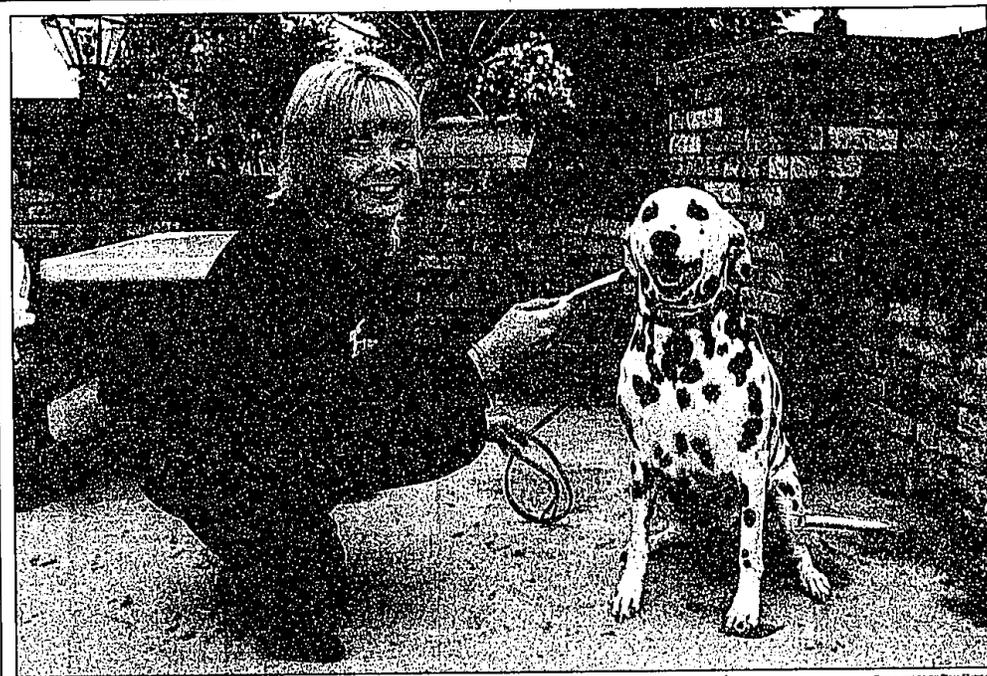
Nyquist has a bachelor of science in Interior Architecture from Lawrence Tech where she was awarded the Taubman Company Scholarship for design excellence.

Joins home inspectors

Paul Linsenbergh has joined the BrickKicker Home Inspection Co. in Rochester as marketing director. He brings a marketing degree from Miami (Ohio) University as well as several years experience in the real estate industry to the position. Linsenbergh lives in Beverly Hills.

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STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HARVEY

Making friends: Realtor Sheila Clark often brings treats for clients' pets so they can get used to her and her scent.

Pets don't belong at showings

BY DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

A dog may be man's best friend, but the family pet can become a complicating factor when it's time to sell.

"I've worked with buyers who wouldn't go into houses when they heard a dog barking," said Tom Tedesco, a Realtor with RE/MAX Executive in Troy.

Jane Solomon, a Realtor with Chamberlain in Birmingham, was once bitten by a dog while doing an inspection.

"I was told the dog was friendly," she said. "When I went to take him, he lunged and bit me. I was furious. I'm more wary now."

Then there are experiences with more exotic pets.

Sherry Hetkowsky, an associate broker with Remerica Country Place Realtors in Canton, found the perfect house for a client except for two things — a family of boop constrictors and a tarantula in separate aquariums on the premises.

"It was unbelievable," Hetkowsky said.

"I had a house once where a bird said, 'Bird shit,'" said Sheila Clark, a Realtor with Century 21 Today in Livonia. "I guess the bird picked it up from the owners. The prospects laughed. They weren't that offended."

Problems are with animals that are loose.

"Most folks are comfortable with their own pets and their pets with them. Owners are used to the smells, noises and the wear-and-tear generated by their animals."

The same isn't true for prospective buyers, strangers who show up with their own expectations and sensory awareness.

"Pets tend to have odors," Solomon said. "We tend to live with them and not notice."

"Cat odor is a big turn-off," Tedesco said. "A lot of people have allergies. I recommend they (sellers) call a professional company to try and eradicate that odor, if possible, and put poultice through the house."

"I had a condo listing that had a good-size dog," said Carol Copping, a Realtor with Real Estate One in Northville.

"The sellers replaced carpeting that had smells and dog hairs and, during the time it was on the market, took the dog to a brother's house in the country. That was just great."

But Copping and her colleagues acknowledge that not everyone is willing or able to do that.

"Dogs to most people are like children," Solomon said. "It's hard to talk with people about pets."

Containment is the key.

"People need to make arrangements for a showing," Hetkowsky said. "Either they put the dog in a cage in a utility room or get a neighbor to come to take the animal to their house."

And out of sight isn't always out of mind.

"I had a client once who had a dog in a cage, but it wouldn't stop barking," Copping said. "I suggested they take the dog for a walk when I have a showing."

"Then some people will take the dog for a ride — which is a nice thing to do — but leave a huge food bowl half-filled in an obvious place," she added. "Scratch marks around doors and windows also are telltale signs of pet on premises, Copping said."

Clark, who owns a Dalmatian, parrot and salt-water fish, recommends that sellers with pets hire a Realtor who either lives or has an office nearby.

"I have shoveled and cleaned dog poop before showings," Clark said. "I keep an air freshener in the trunk of my car. If I took a listing in Canton, Redford and Plymouth and all had dogs, I'd be in trouble."

Birds can present special problems.

"Most larger birds are likely to bite a stranger," Clark said. "You have to put a note on the cage, 'Please don't put fingers near the bird.' You shouldn't spray an aerosol around a

bird. It could kill it."

Clark has techniques she uses to make friends with dogs.

"One thing I do is give people (sellers) a T-shirt or sock I've worn," she said. "I also rub a rawhide bone on my sock to get a scent on the bone."

"I always keep bones in my car that have my scent. When an animal sees me, it always seems to know me."

It also pays to be on friendly terms with neighbors and their pets.

"If neighbors have a yapping dog, hopefully you can get their cooperation and have the dog inside during a showing," Copping said.

"Give the neighbor's dog a bone so it knows you," Clark said. "If you give him a chewy, the dog will hide, go eat and won't bother you."

There are services that will clean up after pets in yards which may come in handy for a listing, a neighbor or both. Sometimes, it's worthwhile to spend the money.

"I've even had to take a dog to a groomer myself because it was so dirty," Clark said.

Empathy is the watchword.

"Think about it in the eyes of the buyer," Solomon advised. "You want them to be as comfortable as in their own home. Do you want someone coming in and playing with the dog or looking at the house?"

Condo owners pay more than their fair share

REAL ESTATE
QUERIES



ROBERT M. MEISNER

Q. Our city is proposing a tax increase to fix the roads. We live in a condominium and maintain our own streets. I do not think it is fair to be taxed by the city and not benefit as do all the other taxpayers.

In fact, do you agree or disagree that many condominium owners pay more taxes proportionately than individual homeowners on city services received?

A. This is one of the major disparities among condominium owners that needs reevaluation by the municipalities. Unfortunately, the municipalities may not readily accept a determination of this disparity in treatment and, ultimately, only litigation may remedy this inherent inequality.

I have been approached on occasion by several associations desiring to commence legal proceedings to seek to remedy this wrong. However, the costs may be prohibitive for one association to defray, and it would appear that a concerted effort among many condominium associations will be necessary in order

to take on the Municipal League as well as any individual municipality.

Political pressure should continue, however, in behalf of condominium associations to address what would appear to be total inequality in regard to the costs of services being provided.

Q. I am a real estate broker who is distraught at the actions of some of my compatriots in this clearly seller's market. Some listing and/or selling brokers are lying to other brokers and their customers regarding simple matters of communication to provide information and to communicate offers in an effort to make sure that they get the very best offer in a competitive situation.

What can be done to ensure that a buyer's agent and customer are protected against unscrupulous selling and listing brokers who may lie and be deceitful in order to maximize the benefits inuring to them and their client.

A. Unfortunately, I have not only heard about this problem in today's environment from clients, but have personally experienced it on several occasions. Obviously, the listing broker has a fiduciary responsibility owed to the seller to maximize the return to the

seller on the property in question.

However, the listing broker has a fiduciary and legal responsibility owed to other brokers and to the public in connection with their conduct, including honesty and integrity.

If a selling or listing broker promises to be available to negotiate a transaction or to accept an offer and does not do so, or intentionally becomes evasive so as the broker is unable to reach the listing broker with an offer, that, in my judgment, is an actionable conduct that can be pursued both legally and administratively through the various state agencies, local boards and/or the courts.

Brokers are going to incur the wrath of the public in increasing numbers and litigation unless they stop and recognize that even in a hot seller's market, they owe fiduciary responsibilities to their fellow brokers and customers.

Robert M. Meisner is an Oakland County area attorney concentrating his practice in the areas of condominiums, real estate, corporate law and litigation. You are invited to submit topics that you would like to see discussed in this column, including questions about condominiums, by writing Robert M. Meisner, 30200 Telegraph Road, Suite 467, Bingham Farms MI 48026. This column provides general information and should not be construed as legal opinion.



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