

# Don's Home News

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## Bored with New Year's? Here's a New Take on It

For many of us, New Year's is, well, kind of boring: Get dressed up. Kiss strangers. Make resolutions. Here, hopefully, are some different takes on it:

The *Baltic Times* offers some unusual ways to ring in the New Year. Our favorites: Don't ... "Sleep it out. Tuck yourself into bed at approximately 8 p.m. on December 31 after drinking a nice steaming mug of cocoa. Don't forget the earplugs to block out the fireworks." And, "have a misery-fest. Resist the overwhelming pressure to be happy, and go all out to have a sublimely wretched night." The *Times* suggests watching bleak Bergman films.

Speaking of misery, many across the world celebrate New Year's Day by taking icy dips in such frozen ponds as the North Sea – a Netherlands tradition – and the Atlantic, where Brooklyn's Coney Island Polar Bears have celebrated the start of a new year for more than a century by taking a frozen plunge.

Then there is the issue of New Year's resolutions. A resolution is defined as, "a firm decision to do or not to do something." Ironically, we usually end up not doing something: Not keeping our resolutions. If you must make resolutions, make great ones.

Here is a keeper from author and psychotherapist Tina B. Tessina: Resolve to make your already successful marriage great. One of her suggestions is to lighten up: "Have a sense of humor; give the benefit of the doubt ..."

These are wise words applicable to every relationship. And worth breaking your resolution not to make resolutions this year.

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## Searching for a New Home online?

**Now you can search Metro Atlanta Listings in Real Time using the same Tools I do.**

Due to recent changes in multiple listing service rules, I can now set you up with an account where you can search for properties just as I do. No more stale and out of date data like you get on the internet from Realtor.com, and Trulia.com.

[Email](#) me today and say, "set me up with a Listing Book account."

It is FREE and takes me only minutes to set it up for you.

## Make 2014 the Year You Complete That Home DIY Project

Many people are planning to complete a much-awaited home DIY project in 2014. However, turning your home into a haven can make your life – and your family's – a long-term nightmare. It's important to stay on time and on budget. But you can do it. Here's how.

Do your research. Know what you want to do – and whether you can do it. Talk to experts at home-building stores. Watch video tutorials. Read books. Find out how long it should take and avoid unnecessary delays by ensuring you have the proper equipment before you begin.

Buy wisely from stores with good reputations and lots of experience. And as much as you want to do it yourself, don't hesitate to ask for help.

Know why you want to make changes to your home; a full-blown re-build may not be necessary. A fresh coat of paint or new tiles can bring new life to a bathroom or kitchen.

New light fixtures or curtains can enliven a room. Putting new wallpaper on one wall can be as effective as re-decorating the whole space.

Re-use and change: You may be able to make better use of what you have by re-purposing (old doors can become table tops, for example) or re-arranging.

Don't rush to buy new. Shop at recycled building material. Ask friends or family for furniture they don't want. Host an up-cycling party; everyone can share ideas. But wait until you've completed your project; after all your hard work, you're going to want to show it off.

# Artificial Intelligence Can Improve – Or Replace – Us

What was once the lifeblood of scary Hollywood sci-fi flicks, artificial intelligence (AI) has come a long way in the last 50 years.

AI, explained as machines performing activities that once required human intelligence, is a concept that has been with us since the days of Greek mythology. However, it wasn't until the invention of a programmable digital computer in the 1940s that scientists seriously began exploring the possibility of creating an artificial or electronic brain.

In 1956, AI became a formal field of study at Dartmouth College ushering in the "golden years." Unfortunately, by the mid-1970s, the complications the field of study encountered seemed insurmountable, and research funding all but dried up.

Undaunted, a handful of scientists continued to pursue their vision. While no computer has yet achieved a level of

intelligence equivalent to the human brain, there have been great strides in the last three decades.

Today, AI is all around us, and it doesn't seem the least bit scary. Some computers can learn to read your handwriting and recognize your voice. A phone understands your spoken question and finds your friend; a GPS considers traffic conditions and changes your route.

Paul Saffo, from the research firm Discern Analytics, recently told the *New York Times*: "The most important new computer maker in Silicon Valley isn't a computer maker at all, it's Tesla (Motors)," makers of an electric car. "It's a primitive robot that wraps around you."

Once now-mobile computers understand their environment, they'll lengthen the range of humans – or maybe replace them. Now that's scary.

## Quick Quiz

Each month I'll give you a new question.

Just email me at [donzahnle@gmail.com](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) for the answer.

**Which 1968 movie was based on the short story collection, *The Sentinel*, by Arthur C. Clarke?**

## Why Not Pass Me to a Friend?

If you've enjoyed this newsletter and found its information useful, please pass it to a neighbor, friend or co-worker.

And if you have any comments about it, don't forget to give me a call or send me an email!

## Are You Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?

Do you want to know how the price of your home has changed in today's market? Do you want to know for how much other homes in your neighborhood are selling?

If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, I can help.

Either call 404-939-1309 or [email](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) me for a no-obligation, professional evaluation.

I won't pressure you into listing with me or waste your time. [Read about how I feel about pressure!](#) I'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value.

I'll also give you the "inside scoop" on what's happening in the housing market near where you live!

Call me at 404-939-1309 or email me at [donzahnle@gmail.com](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) and we will arrange a time to get together.

## Worth Reading

### Great Betrayals

*Anna Fels*

*The New York Times*

Betrayals make great stories.

Readers devour memoirs by spurned lovers, burned business partners, and former friends. While betrayers may walk away unscathed, as psychologist Anna Fels notes, the betrayed are left in crisis, feeling their relationship was built on lies and every memory is up for grabs. If you need to understand the impact of betrayal on your life story, this article will help.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/Great-betrayals>

### Be Cautious of the Fallacy Fallacy

*Julia Galef*

*bigthink.com*

Some things don't match up:

mechanics who drive rundown vehicles; professional writers who send mistake-filled emails.

Sometimes, we focus too much on other people's mistakes and miss our own errors. Julia Galef, president of the Center for Applied Rationality, warns readers that a fallacy in an argument doesn't mean the argument should be ignored.

Works for your fallacies, too.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/The-fallacy-fallacy>

### A Better Way to Deal With Control Issues

*Deepak Chopra*

*LinkedIn*

Everyone is happy when they feel in control, says Deepak Chopra. Your body's normal state is homeostasis – stable but poised for action. So, too, is your mind. By maintaining this state, you maintain control. Stress and frustration can intrude on this state of homeostasis. Don't fight: Address and deal with the intrusions.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/Feel-in-control>

# North America's Luxury Home Market Is Booming

As the economy recovers, luxury properties are very much in demand, particularly in large urban areas. Homes or vacation properties worth \$1 million or more are selling quickly, often at or just below asking prices. And they're taking the housing markets in many areas along with them.

It's been a long haul. While in the largest North American cities the luxury market never totally disappeared, during the worst of the recession many buyers were holding on to their properties. The result has been a shortage of inventory, which is pushing prices up. As of mid-October, the S&P/Case-Schiller home price index showed major growth in the average sales price of homes across the U.S.

Foreign investors have also been spurring on the market for luxury properties, as Asian buyers, in particular, look to North America to invest: Many are putting their money into the real estate market.

As noted, luxury buyers usually look to large urban areas to purchase homes, while those looking for a getaway often look north to cottage country, or south to warmer climes. Areas located near big cities offer the best of two worlds: These neighborhoods provide easy access to transit and highways for commuters and nearby shopping, restaurants, and entertainment venues, as well as good schools, safe communities, park-like settings, and elegant homes.

According to recent research, upscale purchasers still believe home ownership is a great investment. So luxury homebuyers are prepared to spend time, money, and energy on a house that reflects who they are.

While size matters, it is increasingly less important than upgrades and amenities such as larger lots, pools, and high-end landscaping. Outdoor living rooms, chef's kitchens, spa bathrooms, and spacious garages are also important. As owners renovate and re-build, the economy receives a boost. Small wonder the luxury market has a stimulating effect on real estate markets and the economy in general.

## Beat Back Pain: Think Ergonomically

Those of us who suffer from back pain don't suffer alone. Up to 90 percent of the North American population has experienced an incident of back pain at some point in their lives, thanks mainly to sedentary work styles. In some, it is chronic, affecting lives and jobs. Moreover, today's mobile employees – who work in untraditional spaces – are still very much at risk

Although they are not tied to offices, many mobile workers are likely to choose a table and a comfortable chair, or even worse, their laps. Their postures are ergonomic nightmares and likely to cause them back pain. To counter this, experts suggest:

- Get up from your computer and move around.
- Don't slouch. Keep your feet flat on the floor, your back straight, and your chair adjusted to the proper height.
- Be sure you choose a comfortable office-type chair.
- Sleep doesn't just relax you, it relaxes your back muscles. Invest in a good pillow and a supportive mattress.
- Your feet affect alignment, so support them; buy well-fitting, comfortable footwear.

## Planned In-Car Wi-Fi Raises Safety Concerns

Are you thinking of buying a new car in 2014?

It could come loaded with Wi-Fi; wireless providers Rogers (Canada) and Sprint (U.S.) are teaming up to put Wi-Fi in new vehicles, possibly this year.

The move puts Wi-Fi into touchscreen dashboards and would allow drivers access to accident reports, weather, or news packages.

However, many safety experts are questioning whether adding a new distraction to the many already available in our vehicles may be a further safety concern.

In 2011, over 3,000 deaths and 387,000 injuries were reported in the U.S. as a result of distracted driving: Talking on your cell, texting, and surfing while driving now has serious safety and legal ramifications. The debate continues.

## Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

*Should I buy an older home or a newer one?*

Deciding the best route to go – old versus new – isn't an exact science, but here are some pros and cons.

### Old homes

Older homes have stood for decades and were often built by expert craftsmen. Because of this, they may have considerable character – beautiful moldings and fireplaces – and all the charm of a bygone era. If that's what you're looking for, your best bet is a home that's aged to perfection. However, character can also mean smaller closets, costly repair and maintenance.

### Newer homes

Getting the newest and latest can have its advantages, too. For example, newer homes are usually more energy efficient, conform to current building code standards and are larger. But newer homes also need time to settle, which can lead to unanticipated cracks in foundations, walls and door frames.

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**Sudoku instructions:** Complete the 9 × 9 grid so that each row, each column and each of the nine 3 × 3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9. Contact me for the solution!

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### Recipe: Simple Fish Burritos

**Serves 4**

4 fillets tilapia or other firm white fish

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 onion, chopped

½ teaspoon chili powder, optional

1 cup sour cream

Salt to taste

8 tortillas

1 cup grated mild cheddar cheese

**Directions:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a saucepan, cover fish with water and bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer for 5 minutes, or until cooked through. Strain the fish and transfer to a bowl. Flake and set aside.

Heat oil in a frying pan and sauté onion and chili powder for 5 minutes. Add to the fish with the sour cream. Gently mix and add salt to taste.

Place two tablespoons of the mixture along the center of a tortilla and roll. Place filled tortillas in a baking dish. Scatter grated cheese on top, cover with foil, and bake for 30 minutes.

