

Don's Home News

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How to Separate Fact from Fiction: Consider the Source

Fake news has been, well, in the news over the past few years. While the Internet has taken much of the blame for made-up news that goes viral, it's worth remembering that fake news predates the Internet by years.

Take, for example, *War of the Worlds*, a 1938 CBS radio show based on H.G. Wells' 1897 science fiction novel of a Martian invasion of the United States. The broadcast, enhanced by so-called live news reports, was said to have caused panic in the streets of New York.

Even some legit news media organizations reported that people were hospitalized from shock, and one individual was said to have died from a heart attack induced by the broadcast. Except that, like the invasion, the panic didn't happen. Later reports proved this beyond a shadow of doubt.

Most of us don't want to be fooled or, worse still, embarrassed by passing on something that's later debunked, so how do we distinguish?

Ironically, by turning to the Internet. The place where most fake news is disseminated is also the place to find help. Google, as well as Snopes.com and other reputable fact-checking websites, are great debunkers of rumors, urban legends, and online scams. The expression "consider the source" (usually accompanied by eye-rolling) is bang on. And GIGO (Garbage In; Garbage Out) is not just for computer nerds. Get your news from reliable sources. (And please note, supermarket tabloids – everyone's guilty pleasure – don't qualify.)

Become a savvy consumer, read widely, and be on the lookout for facts that feel wrong. They likely are.

Did You Know?

As a REALTOR®, I:

- am a voice in Washington, D.C. on behalf of all home owners;
- use Association approved, Georgia specific legal contracts that let you rest easy at night, knowing your transaction is in complete compliance;
- have access to market specific forums and a national resource center to draw upon in the sale or search of your home; and,
- have access to advanced education on current tools, industry certifications and the latest trends.

If a licensed agent can't or won't invest in themselves each year, what makes you believe they would invest the resources necessary to properly market your home?

With less than 50% of the active real estate licensees in Georgia electing to become REALTORS®, homebuyers and sellers need to interview prospective agents and ask the question, "Are you a REALTOR®?"

Small Homes Are Trending with First-Time Buyers

According to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), first-time homes are coming in smaller packages.

The Association recently released the NAHB Home Builder Preferences Survey indicating that smaller homes are selling well, primarily to first-time buyers, such as the latest cohort – the millennials. The home builders interviewed for the report suggest that many people now prefer to purchase small. And U.S. Census Bureau figures support that position: the average home built in 2016 was 2,634 sq. ft., down from 2,689 sq. ft. in 2015.

Says Rose Quint, NAHB's assistant vice president of survey research: "2016 marked the end of an era that began in 2009, when homes got bigger and bigger with more amenities. I expect the size of homes to continue to decline as demand increases from first-time buyers." Smaller homes are finding favor with other groups as well. Retirees who enjoy traveling find that smaller, lock-and-leave residences fit their on-the-go lifestyles, and economic realities mean that they now have to think small.

While both the downsizing and millennial buyers are comfortable with less space (and the resulting savings on utility bills), they still expect the luxurious finishes and modern amenities available in larger homes. Millennials, because that's what's trendy now, and retirees, because they don't want to feel they're settling for less.

As a result, home décor magazines and TV network programs are touting the benefits of small homes and showcasing elegant space-saving solutions designed for those who want to scale down their homes without changing their lifestyles. Because they won't.

Winning Friends & Influencing People the 21st-Century Way

Dale Carnegie's classic how-to book still makes a lot of sense: even in the 21st century, it's human nature to want (and need) friends.

In a recent FastCompany article, Stephanie Vozza points to a Harvard University study that indicates making friends is important for good health: "A lack of strong relationships increases your risk of premature death from all causes by 50%." But finding new friends can be tricky.

Of course, we live in a digital world, and if making online friends is your goal, it's a cinch. Mind you, some of those new digital friends may turn out to be bots or algorithms, but they can give the impression of friendship.

It's different with real people. And if you want to know who would make a good friend and who would not, there's lots of

advice available. Notes Jon Levy in Speed, a pop-up blog from *New York Magazine*, "Don't invest too much time engaging with the wrong people. When approaching someone, begin with a litmus test." For example, "If you wave at someone from across the room and they wave back, they're friendly, you can approach."

Levy also says we are more likely to connect with someone with whom we have something in common. Just find out what, and connect.

Vozza, too, has suggestions for making new friends, including not waiting for others to make the first move, and following up on their overtures.

It seems the basic tenets of Dale Carnegie's system still work. You can make real friends. Even in 2017.

Quick Quiz

Each month I'll give you a new question. Just email me at donzahnle@gmail.com or call 404-939-1309 for the answer.

What part of your hand typically isn't affected by carpal tunnel syndrome?

Thanks for All Your Referrals!

I succeed when people like you refer me to your friends, neighbors and loved ones. It's the best kind of feedback I can receive. So thanks for continuing to pass this newsletter on to people you care about.

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 or text me at 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 and we will arrange a time to get together.

Worth Reading

Getting Older, Sleeping Less

By Jane E. Brody
The New York Times

Seniors experience insomnia more than young people. But thanks to young peoples' use of their tech screens before bed – an activity that promotes insomnia – they're also at risk. Brody's article describes different kinds of insomnia, what causes it, and how to prevent and treat it. Read this for more information – just not on a screen before going to sleep. **More:** <https://tinyurl.com/April-2017-on-sleep>

Six Things You Should Know about Flying, According to Flight Attendants

By Kristin Wong
Lifehacker.com

Here are all the things flight attendants wish passengers knew. On a Reddit thread, flight attendants shared ... and shared. The common theme: passengers cause most of the in-flight turbulence; for example, passengers initiate accidents when they don't wear seat belts. So when an attendant says, "See you next time," it's likely to mean: "I hope I'll never have to fly with you again." **More:** <https://tinyurl.com/April-2017-on-flying>

How to Recover from Emotional Exhaustion

By Ingela Ratledge
Real Simple

What to do after a big family blowup or receiving bad news? It's hard to go on, so the day after may be worse than the day of. Ratledge presents three scenarios and tips on getting up and dealing with it. If your kids were upset, ask them why. If you've gotten bad news and need to take some time off, take some time off. It's real simple. It works. Try it. **More:** <https://tinyurl.com/April-2017-on-recovering>

Improvements That Increase Your Home's Value

This year, if you're looking to increase the value of your home but are unsure what home improvements to make, think curb appeal.

According to a recent report from *Remodeling* magazine, curb appeal projects, such as changes to windows, siding, and doors, lead to a higher return on investment (ROI) than interior improvements.

Over the past 30 years, *Remodeling* has compared the average cost of improvement projects with their value at resale, based on the experience of real estate professionals. The magazine's 2017 Cost vs. Value Report supports the generally held opinion that today's home buyers, while still enthusiastic about the bells and whistles, want to ensure their homes are

structurally sound with all systems functioning efficiently.

Remodeling's projects include a basement remodel, an entry door that was replaced with 20 gauge steel, and the addition of stone veneer. All of the 29 projects tracked returned on average 64.3 cents per dollar spent.

Among the trends, the higher return of curb appeal projects and projects that required the replacing of windows, doors, etc. Replacement projects generally scored higher than remodeling projects; the ROI of replacement was 74% and of remodels was 63.7%.

As in the previous year, adding loose fill insulation to the attic returned 107.7% and was the only project on the list whose value exceeded its cost. Steel

door replacement and addition of stone veneer also paid off, at 90.7% and 89.4% respectively. Interestingly, these are among the cheapest projects, although their costs were up over the previous year.

Those who want to tackle an interior project might do well to consider a basement remodel, providing it's done well; a high-end basement remodel was perceived as high value, returning 7.4% more than the same project last year, while a mid-range basement remodeling project only increased in value by 3.3% over the previous year.

Something to consider when you're planning your next home improvement project.

“Western” Diet May Cause Brain Changes

Obesity and diets high in fats and sugar (a.k.a. the “Western diet”) may be damaging our brains. According to a recent article on NPR's website, that's the conclusion of various researchers, including some at the American University in Washington, D.C., and the University of Cambridge.

The damage often shows itself through memory loss: in one study, obese kids struggled more with memory-related tasks than children who weren't obese. As American University psychologist Terry Davidson noted, a “vicious cycle” of poor eating choices is resulting in brain changes. He says, “I think the evidence is fairly substantial that you have an effect of these diets and obesity on brain function and cognitive function.”

With the growing interest in the link between obesity and brain changes, scientists may be homing in on ways of targeting obesity. For example, one study showed that eating while watching TV resulted in overeating and increased the likelihood of getting hungry sooner. Says Lucy Cheke, a psychologist at the University of Cambridge, it's one of the “small, easy changes that people can make that don't involve a lot of self-control ... but that can still make a significant difference.”

It's April. Let's Celebrate ... Guitars?

As it turns out, April is a month that honors more than just April Fools' Day and (sometimes) Easter. So bust out your calendars to note these sometimes weird, sometimes wonderful, April observances:

International Guitar Month: A celebration of guitars, guitarists, and guitar products. Rock on.

National Couple Appreciation Month: Apparently founded in 2010, this

designation is meant to inspire couples to do something that reinforces their bond.

National Decorating Month: Just in time for spring cleaning, get inspired and give your home a fresh look.

National Soft Pretzel Month: A great excuse to eat one (or two, or three) delicious, pillowy, salty or sweet soft pretzels.

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

What is a CMA?

If you want to sell your home, here's a fact: you don't set the selling price of your home, the market does.

A comparative market analysis (CMA), as prepared by your real estate listing agent, takes the emotion out of deciding on the asking price. It's based on fact, not how you feel about your home, and it helps determine how much you can sell your home for. A CMA uses comparables (similar homes previously sold in the area). It will look at their sales prices, how long they were on the market, and the difference between their selling and listing prices.

This analysis should be complete before you set your asking price. Depending on many factors, including the CMA, you may decide on an asking price within a \$10,000 to \$25,000 range of your home's value. Here you'll need your agent's best advice – based, of course, on the CMA as well as your agent's knowledge of the market.

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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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Thanks for reading! If you would like to tell me what you think about this newsletter, or if you're thinking of buying or selling real estate, please get in touch.

Salted Chocolate Pecan Pie Bars

Happy National Pecan Month!

Makes 15 to 20 bars

1 cup butter, softened

½ cup brown sugar

2½ cups flour

½ teaspoon salt

3 eggs

¾ cup light corn syrup

½ cup brown sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

8 ounces semisweet chocolate chips

2 cups pecan halves

1 teaspoon flaked sea salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line a 9 x 13 in. baking pan with parchment paper, leaving a 2 in. overhang on two sides.

In a mixer, cream butter and sugar for 2 minutes. At low speed, add flour and salt until combined. Press dough evenly into pan. Bake 30-35 minutes until slightly browned. Remove and cool. Meanwhile, whisk eggs, syrup, sugar, and vanilla until smooth. Fold in chocolate and pecans. Pour filling over crust. Bake 30-40 minutes until the center is set. Remove and sprinkle with salt. Cool completely before cutting into bars.

