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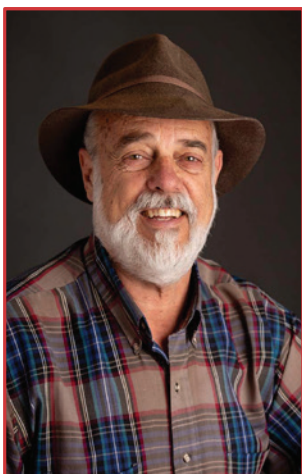
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Successful selling in cold, wet weather

With all this rain (and snow!), some people might be rethinking whether now is a good time to put their house on the market. Although common wisdom suggests waiting until the weather warms, there are some distinct advantages to putting your house on the market before everyone else does. Fewer homes on the market makes it easier for your house to stand out.

Don't worry about the fact that spring flowers aren't blooming quite yet. You can create a cozy atmosphere that invites buyers to imagine sipping hot chocolate by the fire while wrapped in a blanket on the couch as soft light shines through the window of their new living room. Here are some ways to create that ambience.

Smell

The first thing people notice when they enter a house, consciously or subconsciously, is the smell. Thankfully, our noses get used to unpleasant smells, but it's important to recognize any odors in your house that may turn off prospective buyers. Is there a damp, musty smell? Does your beloved dog spend time outdoors and then bring in wet-dog smell?

Fresh air is the best antidote, but when it's 40 degrees outside, you may not want to open the windows for too long. If your house is vacant, I recommend turning off the heat and opening the windows for a few hours, then closing things down and heating the place up before a showing.

If you have something causing a recurring unpleasant smell, you need to do more than mask it. You need to take care of it (and disclose it to potential buyers). Pet urine can be covered for a little while, but if it's in the sheetrock or subfloor, you'll need to work with buyers to decide who is going to address it.

If you're living in the house while you're trying to sell it, consider adding subtle smells to make the place feel like home – mulling spices on the stove, recently baked cookies, or very subtle essential oils in a few strategically placed locations. While mustiness isn't great, an overly perfumed house is worse (especially for those allergic to perfumes), so be careful. To check on how your house smells, ask your Realtor, or leave the house for a while and then pay close attention when you walk through the door upon your return. The more you encourage honest feedback from your Realtor (and then take their advice), the faster your house will sell.

Light

The next consideration when selling this time of year is light. The days are still relatively short, and dark houses can seem smaller than they are. Open all the curtains or blinds and turn on all the lights before prospective buyers arrive.

Clean and declutter

Another way to make your house seem bigger is to remove a third of its contents. Even if you are an amazing decorator, when a house is full of furniture, it's hard for people to imagine where their stuff would go. If you want to see what I'm talking about, go online and look at houses for sale. The ones full of stuff are a lot less appealing.

Once you've removed many of your belongings (especially anything of sentimental or financial value), it's time to clean as though your mother-in-law or maybe your boss is coming over to visit. If your house is like mine, it may have plants that need to be removed before they become petrified wood. Papers may have been lying around for so long that you've forgotten what the top of your desk looks like – put them away or throw them away.

With all this crazy weather, it's easy for us (and our pets) to track in mud. Family members should get used to kicking off their shoes before entering the house, and a towel should be available by each door to wipe Fido's paws. This is a great time to invest in good welcome mats where visitors can wipe their shoes.

Landscaping

Remember, before prospective buyers set foot in your house, they'll start judging it from the outside. Clean the yard, haul away any trash, mow the lawn (or in my case, the semi-organized weeds), and wash the windows.

If you have questions about real estate or property management, contact me at rselzer@selzerrealty.com. If you have ideas for this column, let me know. If I use your suggestion in a column, I'll send you a \$25 gift card to Loose Caboose! If you'd like to read previous articles, visit www.selzerrealty.com and click on "How's the Market."

Dick Selzer is a real estate broker who has been in the business for more than 45 years.

Help Little Lake Fire preserve your future, your loved ones, and your town

Dear Neighbors: I wanted to shine a light on a precious community resource – the Little Lake Fire Department of Willits, a mostly volunteer group that works in the Little Lake Fire Protection District – a 240-square-mile area to cover.

Approximately 45 of our neighbors volunteer for the Little Lake Fire Department with five paid fulltime staff members. Little Lake Fire works in partnership with CAL FIRE and the Brooktrails, Laytonville, and Redwood Valley fire departments – together covering 360 square miles.

It's important to know that our "fire" department does much more than cover fires....

They average three traffic accident calls a day, most requiring medical aid. That's 21 accidents a week, approximately 84 a month. In 2022 the fire department made approximately 700 runs to accidents. Yes, a lot – so be careful out there.

In the last year, the fire department had:

- 100 to 120 false fire alarms

- 48 home and business inspections
- 16 structure fires
- 20 school trainings

To be ready to render first aid at an accident, help contain a fire, or work to educate the community - staff and volunteers must go through continuous training and stay physically fit. Here is a list of the certifications, skills, training:

- Swift Water Rescue
- CPR/First Aid
- Urban Search & Rescue
- EMT/Paramedic
- Over Embankment
- High Angle Rope
- Community Events and EMT Standby
- Fire Marshal/Inspector
- HazMat Specialists

How can the community support LLFD, you ask?

- Make sure you have working smoke alarms at your home and business.
- Teach fire safety and awareness to children.
- Volunteer – you will be trained! Previous fire and medical experience is great, but not required. The district will pay for volunteers to attend a training/cert academy.
- Donate – Please mail a check to PO Box 1269 or 74 East Commercial Street OR stop by!

Donations are used for safety equipment, gear and training for volunteers. It costs about \$5,000 to fully outfit a volunteer. Donations cannot be used for anything else due to the way the fire district is set up. With the strict budget for the district, often the Little Lake Firefighters Association covers the extras for the volunteers.

Every day volunteers and staff show their commitment to protecting the community please consider getting involved.

My best and be safe.

This information is for general purposes only. Please consult a financial professional for your own situation. Individual circumstances do vary.

Nicholas Casagrande, EA, is an accountant and a financial advisor. His firm, NC Financial Group, is a wealth-management firm serving individual clients as well as small-to-medium-sized businesses. Client work includes personal and corporate taxes, investment planning, insurance, and real estate. NC Financial Group's Willits office is located at 675 South Main Street. For more information, contact 855-240-6606 or nicholas@ncfinancialgroup.com (taxes) or Nicholas.Casagrande@Ceterafs.com (investments).





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Located 15 minutes west of Laytonville, borders. Branscomb Road. There are meadows with lovely building sites, redwood trees, borders the South Fork of the Eel River. Power is on the property. Multiple-use zoning.
\$295,000



Cozy Home in Brooktrails
With 1352 sq.ft., 3 bedrooms, 2 full baths. Open floor plan including living room, kitchen and dining. Recently purchased a new range, refrigerator and garbage disposal, plus a new 30 year roof. Pretty views, private, large yard for landscaping.
\$260,000



Nice Manufactured Home
With 3 bedrooms and 2 baths. Great location in Parkside Mobile Home Estates with a small backyard. Stove, dishwasher, refrigerator, microwave, washer and dryer stay. Lots of kitchen cabinets. There is a wheel chair ramp. Please call for more details.
\$99,500



3.3+- Level Acres
Great opportunity for a commercial business or investment property. There is a 1,700+- sq. ft. office building with 4 separate offices and 2,646+- sq. ft. of office space. Approximately 3 acres are paved. There is a new septic system and city water. Used previously for years as a truck shop business. Many more details call for information.
\$740,000



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The day-to-day thing

I had a somewhat profound and touching experience a couple of days ago. I woke up unusually early, unable to sleep. I heard some erratic scratching of little Rudi's claws on the hall carpet. He's not the kind of cat who ever sharpened his claws on the carpet and in any case, this was not a claw-sharpening kind of sound.

I got up and there was Rudi laying on the floor facing the wall. "Are you OK little boy," I said. He stood but staggered unsteadily then collapsed on the floor. I lay my hand lightly on his back and he let out two deep, low moans – then stopped breathing. I waited for quite a while trying to see if I could detect any sign of breathing, but there was none. He had died.

He was an old boy, nearly 17, and had been slowly deteriorating over the past few months. Breathing heavily, more difficulty walking despite the pain med I gave him every morning and evening. He slept a lot, moving from one favorite place to the next for long naps. Still eating, but less then he used to. Letting go. I knew it. I knew he was near the end, but he was still always waiting at the door when we got home.

Many years ago as I was getting ready to leave the office, the last one still there, I heard a loud plaintive meowing outside my rear office door. It opened onto a kind of wild storage area behind the building. I went out and tried to find where the sound was coming from but couldn't find the kitten. There were feral cats that lived back there. I figured the mother would find her baby. I left for the night.

The next morning I was the first one in, and I still heard that loud distressful calling out of a lost kitten. I went out again looking. The only place I hadn't looked the night before was in a big pile of old signs stacked up randomly. I slowly, carefully unstaked the signs one by one. There at the bottom was a tiny kitten. How he got there I will never know.

I picked him up and brought him inside, setting him carefully on my jacket on the deck. I called Frank Grasse, our vet and asked if I could bring this kitten in. "Come right over," Frank said. He was the kindest of men and an old friend who had cared for many dogs and a couple of cats for us over the years.

Frank examined this tiny, little kitten then said, "This cat is only 8 days old." Without even asking me, he handed me a little doll-sized baby bottle and a couple of cans of baby formula, then told me, "You have a new family member." I called Joe, and he came to the office and cupped the kitten in his hands to warm him. We filled the bottle and Joe held it to the tiny mouth that eagerly sucked on the nipple, happy and content.

When we brought him home our dog, Sophie, who had never had pups, immediately began to groom him. I had filled a box with kitty litter and set him in it. He immediately knew what to do. What he didn't know was how to clean himself after pooping. If a dog can have a disgusted look on her face, Sophie had it. She carefully cleaned his little butt, and was his mommy from then on. We fed him, but Sophie watched after him. We named him Rudi.

Joe was still teaching at the time and brought Rudi to school with him each day, in the box he lived in to keep him from wandering off. Joe's students delighted in holding this little guy and feeding him with the tiny bottle of formula. They were learning how to care for a baby. Learning how to care for a "pet." These kids really grew to love Rudi.

As he grew he did all the cute kitten stuff. Jumping straight up in the air when I yanked a ball of yarn on a string. Hiding under the tarp covering the wood pile with his tail sticking out. Bringing lizards into the house then letting them go. Lizards would pop up in the strangest places. I would catch them and let them go well away from the house.

One day a big stray black cat began turning up near the house. Sophie would chase it away. I would catch a glimpse of it, but figured it would find its way home, but after a few weeks it was clear this cat didn't have a home to go back to.

One day when Sophie wasn't around I called to it, and it came right up to me. Although he seemed quite large – it was a male – I picked him up and he was skin and bones, and fur. I made a home for him in our large fenced garden that Sophie couldn't get into. I would bring him food and water every day. There was plenty of shade from the tall tomato plants, peppers and rhubarb. We named him "Big."

One day I came out to feed Big and there, neatly laid across his bowl was a dead rat. Not partly eaten or torn up. I realized it was a thank you gift for me. I was so touched that I almost cried. He wanted to let me know how much he appreciated that I had given him a home. Yes, humans are not the only animals with feelings – like gratitude. Eventually, as winter came on, we moved Big into the house. He and Sophie came to a truce and eventually became friends.

After some years the country place became too much for us to take care of, and we all moved into town - Sophie, Big, Rudi, Joe and me. They had a big yard of their own. Eventually Big died, then our beloved Sophie. Rudi was the last to go, just a few days ago. The first time in well over four decades that we don't have a "little one" in the house.

I'm so grateful that Rudi died quickly and at home. "That's how I want to go," I said. Of course, none of us knows when or how our inevitable death will come – just that it will someday, thank goodness. Can't imagine living on and on. Getting used to death is one gift our pets give us. They teach us that life, at least physical life, comes to an end. A lesson I've been taught over and over again.

We grieve, but for me, I'm grateful for their friendship. My dogs and cats have always been family. Over the years beloved friends and family have died. How we grieve differs for each of us but ultimately, hopefully, we learn to be grateful along with missing those that have gone on before us.



Bill Barksdale
Columnist



Pretty much every day I think of loved ones that have moved on with life's journey. Each person, each dog and cat. Life is a kind of stream that flows. Sometimes smooth, sometimes rough. The death of someone we love is one of life's most difficult experiences. Illness and disability are certainly part of that journey too. Life is not always kind, nonetheless that's part of it all.

We laid Rudi's body in front of the fireplace, one of his favorite wintertime spots, as he let go – does some sort of spirit leave the body slowly as some believe? I don't know. It just made us feel better to let him be there for a while. It's difficult to let go of the ones we love sometimes, usually. Inevitable but not easy. Goodbye little boy, and thank you.

Bill Barksdale was inducted into the 2016 Realtor® Hall of Fame, and served as Chair of the County of Mendocino Assessment Appeals Board settling property tax disputes between the County Assessor & citizens and businesses. Read more of Bill's columns on his blog at www.bbarksdale.com.



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 <p>3 bed, 3 bath 2-story home on 33+/- acres. Features arched doorways, hardwood flooring, a wood burning fire place, a light-filled dining room, kitchen with large island and custom pine cabinetry, laundry/utility room and storage shed. PRESENTED AT: \$623,000</p>	 <p>Well established business with great customer base. Five spray bays and one soft touch, drive-through automatic. Covered vacuum area with six vacuums, one upholstery and carpet cleaner, and nine air freshener/ cleaning products vending machines. PRESENTED AT: \$1,400,000</p>

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While you're checking your current policy to confirm whether or not you have comprehensive coverage, consider tuning up the rest of your protection.

Remember – UP doesn't sell insurance, so if we suggest that you consider increasing your bodily injury and property damage limits, you can trust that it's for your own good – not ours.

In 1974 a Ford Mustang cost \$2,900. That was the year California first required drivers to have a minimum level of insurance to cover accidents where people get hurt or killed. The original minimum limits were \$15,000 for one injury or death; \$30,000 for multiple injuries or deaths; and \$5,000 for property damage (15/30/5). Back then, \$5,000 was enough to cover the cost of repairing or replacing your brand-new car ... not these days. And medical and lawsuit costs ... fuhgeddaboutit.

After many years of contentious debate and hard work by the Consumer Attorneys of California and other injury victim advocates, California has finally raised those mandatory limits to 20/40/10 (effective by 2025). Kansas, Indiana, Connecticut, Nevada and Delaware also raised their minimum limits in recent years.

If you or an insured family member are in an accident that results in injuries and/or property damage above your insurance limits, you may be responsible for paying the difference out of your own pocket. If an under- or uninsured driver is wholly or partially responsible for the accident, you'll want protection for that scenario as well.

If you have assets to protect and can afford it, you definitely want higher than the minimum liability limits, AND adequate uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage.

For more on auto insurance, visit our buying tips library at <https://uphelp.org/buying-tips/>.

United Policyholders is a non-profit 501(c)(3) whose mission is to be a trustworthy and useful information resource and a respected voice for consumers of all types of insurance in all 50 states. To learn more, visit www.uphelp.org.



59 Alameda Ave., Willits
\$315,000

Downtown Willits with a very short distance to shopping and transportation sits this 1680 sq ft single-level home with detached 2 car garage on a large lot! The home is a 1989 manufactured home on foundation with the primary bedroom & bathroom on one side & away from the 2 other bedrooms. Featuring an open living space and separate laundry room, vaulted ceilings, dual pane windows, central heating, carpet and vinyl flooring. There is a covered patio area between the house and garage for added outdoor living space, and a carport alongside the garage for additional parking.



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