



## Award-winning house on an acre in southern Westchester

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"Designed as 'house for living' by award-winning architect, George Nemeny, this 1950's contemporary is in move-in condition and has great potential for building up or out. Located on one acre that backs up to a reservoir, it has seasonal water views. Plus, a private neighborhood pool, tennis courts, children's summer day camp, \$959,000."

The adage "A lawyer who represents himself has a fool for a client" applies to many professions, including ours. So when my wife and I decided to put our house on the market, we interviewed several residential Realtors.

We knew that this house would not appeal to the traditionalist. Its buyer would be either a future occupant that loves its "California style, nestled in woods just a half-hour drive from N.Y.C." or a McMansion developer salivating at the thought of a "one acre residential lot in southern Westchester zoned for a larger single-family home in a desirable neighborhood."

I admit that I first tried the FSBO route with an ad on Craigslist. I priced it at \$1 million and received only one response from a brash Realtor who told me the house needed \$100,000 worth of work and that he would list it in the \$800s. Having poured a lot of sweat equity into this place, I found his assessment insulting as well as uninformed. He didn't know the neighborhood or appreciate the property. Although most of my neighbors have cookie-cutter houses constructed in the early 1950s and 1960s, my house was built by an honest-to-goodness award-winning architect of enough renown to have rated a detailed obit in the Times.

Our second prospective Realtor was more enthusiastic about the house and turned me onto an engineering firm (Pro Check Home Inspection Services) that generated a free, detailed seller's inspection report. It identified several minor repairs that a buyer's engineer might make note of, most of which I have since resolved. On the other hand, I couldn't get the Realtor to generate a written listing agreement! It was his listing to lose and he lost it because I feared this pattern of delays and excuses was an indicator of a future lack of follow up with prospective buyers.

So we ended up listing with the broker behind door #3. He is the self-proclaimed neighborhood "King Realtor" on account of the number of deals he did here during the sellers' market. He gave the listing to his young protégé and we have no qualms with him because he has been very conscientious. Now if only he could deliver a buyer, or at least some shoppers!

One of the few prospects who have toured our house loved it. Although their negatives were: "It needs a new kitchen. It needs new bathrooms." What? They don't work? Of course they work and they work efficiently. \$3,000 worth of new kitchen appliances (even though all of the existing ones work perfectly fine), refinishing the teakwood-color cabinets and new countertops would give the next owner a new kitchen! We already replaced the floor a few years ago with Italian porcelain tiles. The architect designed what was possibly one of the first ever kitchen/great rooms combinations. The kitchen's floating workstation doubles as a half-wall separating it from the great room. However,

if a prospective buyer really hates the 1950s aqua and flesh-color bathrooms, I applaud their good taste!

I recently passed by a Tudor-style house that need work and probably a lot more than \$100,000 worth. Let's start with its poor curb-appeal. The owner would be smart to get a pet goat to devour its knee-high front lawn and donate the broken down car in the driveway. The half-timbering is so warped and rotted-looking that it is probably beyond a paint job. But because it is located in a neighborhood where houses sell for more than \$1 million, it would probably command at least in the high eights.

Back to my freshly-painted house with its several well-maintained garden beds and pond on nearly an acre in southern Westchester. As the humorist Mark Twain once said, "Buy land, they're not making it anymore!" If it sounds as if I am trying to sell my house, I am!

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