

# Better Austin Living

*The Best Place to Start Your Real Estate Experience*



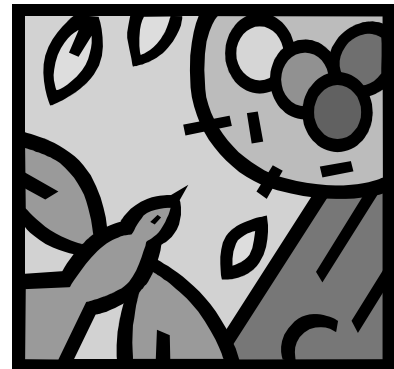
News You Can Use from Your Friend in the Real Estate Business

## The Real Meaning of Peace

There once was a King who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of *Peace*. Many artists tried. The King looked at all the pictures, but there were only two he really liked and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror, with peaceful, towering mountains all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of *Peace*.

The other picture had mountains, too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky from which rain fell and in which lightening flashed. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all. But then when the King looked closer, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water and noise, sat the mother bird on her nest...in perfect *peace*.



Which picture won the prize?

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The King chose the second picture. "Because," explained the King, "*peace* does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, no trouble, or hard work. *Peace* means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of *peace*."

Let the spirit of love gently fill our hearts and homes. In this loveliest of seasons may you find many reasons for happiness. May the peace and joy of the holiday season be with you throughout the coming year.

*My Best Wishes to You and Yours - Ryan*

## 5 Simple Ways to Introduce Me to Your Friends & Family



Give me a Call or send me a Text message **512.773.3493**



Send me an Email @:  
**Ryan@BetterAustinLiving.com**



Please Pass Along This Copy of the **Newsletter**



Visit my website(s) @:  
**www.BetterAustinLiving.com**



Lets be Facebook Friends @:  
**Facebook.com/RyanFrance**

Who's the one person you know who could most use my help? ***I sincerely thank you for your referrals!***

## Origins Of Common Terms

The origins of some figures of speech are obvious – “putting the cart before the horse,” for instance. Others are a little more obscure. Here are the explanations behind three common expressions:

**Pulling the wool over their eyes.** In the 17th and 18th centuries, thieves and robbers would yank their victims’ wool wigs down over their eyes so they couldn’t see who was attacking them.

**Blackmail.** In 16th-century England, mail meant “rent” or “tribute.” Debts that had to be paid in silver were called “whitemail.” A debt that could be paid in any other way – from livestock to property – was called “blackmail.” Because blackmail did not have a set value, the person collecting the debt could extort any amount or anything they wished from the debtor.

**Red tape.** For centuries, it was a British custom to seal important documents with red wax and red tape. Cutting through it was the only way to get at the documents and read them.

## Don't Try Forcing Yourself To Sleep

The harder you try to fall asleep, the more elusive dreamland becomes.

In an experiment, scientists split 100 college students into two groups. One group was told to fall asleep as quickly as possible; the other was instructed to go to sleep whenever they could.

The “fall asleep quickly” group took longer to drift off than their counterparts. The scientists theorize that *trying* to fall asleep creates a sense of frustration that drives sleep away, similar to insomniacs, who constantly monitor their state of consciousness and wake themselves up time and time again, creating a self-fulfilling situation.



# Stay Safe On Escalators

Escalators are everywhere, and it's easy to take them for granted and possibly get careless when using them. Every year, thousands of people end up in the emergency room because of escalator accidents, with children and the elderly at the greatest risk for serious injury. Follow these basic safety tips for ascending and descending without mishaps:

- Make sure your shoes are tied. A dangling shoelace can snag or get trapped in the escalator's grooves or sides.
- Keep an eye on loose clothing so it stays clear of steps and sides.



- Always hold the handrail. When carrying packages, keep one hand free so you can safely hold on.

- Stand in the center, not the sides.

- Face forward so you can watch where you're going and when to step off.

- Step on and off carefully. Watch the steps as they move so your feet are positioned correctly. When you step off, get clear of the area right away to prevent collisions with people behind you.

- Use the proper escalator. Walking (or running) up or down the wrong escalator is dangerous.

- If you have children with you, be especially careful to apply these guidelines. Adults should hold the handrail, and children should hold the adult's hand. Or, for safety's sake, use an elevator if available.

## Did You Know?

On average women say 7,000 words per day. Men manage just over 2000.

Every person has a unique tongue print.

The average golfer plays 23.2 rounds before recording his or her first par.

The American Restaurateurs' Association reports that the average restaurant loses around 12 pieces of silverware each week.

The average leopard has 874.3 spots.

A sneeze can exceed the speed of 100 mph.

10 percent of all human beings ever born are alive at this very moment.

About 10% of the world's population is left-handed.

Offered a new pen to write with, 97% of all people will write their own name.

## KNOW THY TRIVIA?

1. According to Olympic Rules, how many “feathers” must a badminton bird have?
2. On February 6, 1971 the first golf ball was hit on the moon by \_\_\_\_\_?
3. Although identified with Scotland, the first bagpipes were actually attributed to what culture?
4. Between 1931 and 1965, how many Oscars did Walt Disney win?
5. Who was the first actress to garner 1 million dollars for a single film?
6. How many hairs are on an average human scalp?

**Answers are on the back page of  
this newsletter**

## A Bountiful Spectrum Of Celebrations

December is a month of celebrations and holidays that span many different countries and cultures. Don't miss out on any of them.

Here, in chronological order, is a guide to what your friends and neighbors are up to this month:

**Hanukkah.** This year this eight-day Jewish holiday begins at sundown on **December 1** (because the traditional Jewish calendar begins at sunset). Hanukkah marks the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem following the Jews' victory over the Hellenist Syrians in 165 B.C. According to the Talmud, the Jews had only enough olive oil to keep the eternal flame in the Temple burning for a single day, but miraculously, the oil continued

to burn for eight days, during which time the Jews were able to produce and consecrate fresh oil for the flame.

Hanukkah is observed by the lighting of a nine-branched candelabrum, called a *menorah*. One candle is lit each of the eight nights, with a central candle lit each night to light the others.

**Al-Hijra.** The Islamic New Year is observed this year on **December 7**, the first day of the month of Muharram, when the prophet Muhammad and his followers emigrated from Mecca to the city now known as Medina in the year 622. Several years earlier Muhammad had advised some Muslims to leave Mecca to escape persecution, but remained there himself until growing hostility prompted them to relocate.

*Hijra* means “migration” in Arabic, and is related to the Latin *hegira*, which also refers to a journey or migration. The Islamic New Year is not marked by religious rituals or observances, but many Muslims use the occasion to reflect on the past and future, as well as the original Hijra itself.

**Christmas.** This Christian holiday on **December 25** celebrates the birth of Jesus, sometime between the years 7 and 2 B.C. The word “Christmas” comes from “Christ's Mass,” a phrase first recorded in old English as *Cristes mæsse* in 1038. Christmas



began to be observed with feasts and celebrations in the Middle Ages; King Richard II of England hosted a Christmas feast in 1377, with a menu that included eight oxen and 300 sheep.

The colonial Puritans of New England disapproved of Christmas celebrations, which were banned during the 17th century. But other colonists observed the day with Christmas trees and nativity scenes. President Ulysses S. Grant signed the law making Christmas a federal holiday in 1870.

**Kwanzaa.** A seven-day celebration of African heritage and culture observed annually from **December 26 to January 1**, Kwanzaa was created in 1966 by activist Ron Karenga to provide African Americans with a holiday that emphasized their shared history and experience. The name Kwanzaa is derived from *matunda ya kwanza*, a Swahili phrase meaning “first fruits.”

Houses are decorated with African art and colorful cloth, and seven candles are placed in the *kinara*, a candleholder. The central candle in the kinara is black, with three red candles on the left and three green candles on the right. The candles represent the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa, which are contemplated each day as one is lit: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

## Beware Of Poinsettias!

If poinsettia plants are a “must” for your holidays, here’s a note of caution: A recent study indicated that individuals who are allergic to the latex in rubber may be allergic to poinsettia plants because both are of the same plant family. Researchers warn that about 40 percent of the approximately 26 million people in the United States and Canada who are allergic to latex could experience a reaction to poinsettias ranging from a skin rash to wheezing, chest pain, falling blood pressure, and shortness of breath.

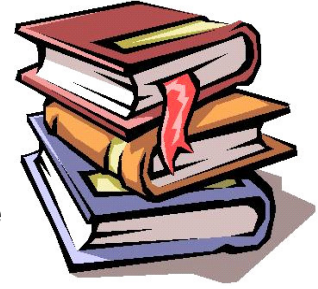


### Would you Like to Know What Your Neighbor’s House Sold For?

Oftentimes you will see a For Sale sign go up in a neighbor’s yard and then a couple of months it may come down. Sometimes the house sold, sometimes it didn’t. You can’t always rely on second hand information. If you are interested in what the house down the street sold for or what the sales activity has been in your neighborhood for the past six months, I’d be happy to provide that information to you. All you have to do is send me an email with the information that you are looking for and I’ll shoot you a quick response with anything you need. Email me at [Ryan@BetterAustinLiving.com](mailto:Ryan@BetterAustinLiving.com)



# From My Nightstand



So . . . The finally tally is probably going to be somewhere around 32 or 33 books read in 2010. I've completely finished reading 30 at the time that I write this and I'm confident in my ability to finish 2-3 more by the end of the year. That being said, I read one of the books 3 times this year (Why you ask? - Look below). So in essence, that means 35 books completed which is only one shy of my goal. Maybe I can find a children's book to read to get to 36. It was a lofty goal and one that I wasn't completely sure I could attain. But it was also fun and I learned a lot. Since this is the last newsletter of the year I thought I would summarize the Top 5 books that I enjoyed this year. Wow, this is going to be tough.

## Top 5 Books That I Read in 2010 . . .

**#1. The Rhythm of Life** by *Matthew Kelly* - This is the book that I read 3 separate times this year and I'm starting the fourth as we speak. What kind of book is worth reading more than once in a single year? This one. Different books speak differently to different people and this one speaks strongly to me. As the book title indicates, the message of this book is the search of the rhythm or the balance of life and living on purpose. Its spiritual and introspective and supernatural all the same. There are parts that are cliché, sure but the overall message is as good as gold. This is definitely the best book I read this year and probably top 5 I have ever read.

**#2. Linchpin** by *Seth Godin* - I've said on numerous occasions that Seth Godin is one of my favorite authors. In this book he challenges us to become "Linchpins" - someone who is indispensable, who cannot be replaced. He encourages us all to become artists. By Seth's definition, an artist is not just some person who messes around with paint and brushes, an artist is somebody who does "emotional work." Work that you put your heart and soul into. Work that matters. Work that you gladly sacrifice all other alternatives for. I think deep down, regardless of who you are or what you do, there is a piece of all of us that wants to become indispensable. Again, it all comes down to finding something you are passionate about and following that star.

**#3. The Compound Effect** by *Darren Hardy* - I read two books this year on compounding effort over time or in other words doing the tiny, seemingly inconsequential things every day that ultimately yield huge results over time. This book and *The Slight Edge*. While both were good books, I enjoyed this one more and that is why it gets the nod. Darren is also the publisher of *SUCCESS Magazine* which is also packed full of great content.

**#4. Go-Givers Sell More** by *Bob Burg & John David Mann* - I was a big fan of their first book, *The Go-Giver* and an even bigger fan of this book. I love books that deliver an impactful message woven inside of a story and that is what these books do. That message being; that giving is the most fulfilling and effective path to success.

**#5. First Things First** by *Stephen Covey* - This was a tough call as there are a couple of choices for #5 but this book won simply because it was the first book that I read in 2010 and set the tempo for the year as a whole. The things that I put into place as a result of reading this book set in motion a plan that made this my most successful year yet.

# Protect Yourself From Identity Theft

Anyone can be the target of identity theft. To safeguard your money and your credit rating, take these common-sense precautions:

- Access, print and carefully examine your credit report at least once per year.
- Do your homework on how online sites like PayPal and eBay work before you use them.
- Be skeptical of “business” emails with incorrect grammar and spelling errors.
- Don’t cash or deposit checks from people or businesses you don’t know.
- Monitor your credit card and bank accounts even if you don’t use them very often.
- If you do become an identity theft victim, cancel your credit cards, call your bank or financial institution, and file a police report.

## Recycle this Newsletter

When you are done reading the newsletter this month, do me a favor. Instead of throwing it away or putting it in a pile on your desk, pass it along to a friend, neighbor or co-worker so that they can enjoy reading it too. It’s a simple and pressure-free way to introduce me to other people.

Thanks for *Not*  
keeping me a Secret!



# Shop Savvy At The Grocery Store

**Don’t assume those items** stacked at the end of the aisles – like sodas and chips – are on sale. This is a trick to make them seem like they’re marked down. More often than not, they’re marked at the regular price.

**Know that you pay for convenience.** Skinless chicken breasts cost more than those packaged with skin. The same applies to pre-cleaned and cut carrot and celery sticks. Quality may not vary. It’s just a matter of deciding whether you want to put a little extra work into it.

**Try the store brands.** If you compare the contents and nutritional value of name-brand versus no-brand items, you’ll discover that they’re often identical. In fact, they’re often made in the same plant in the same way.

**Avoid grocery stores on the weekend.** The stress of crowded stores and long lines makes you more susceptible to speed buying. Try to shop during weekdays, first thing in the morning or later at night.



**Ryan France**

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1. 14 2. Alan Shepard 3. the Romans 4. 35 5. Elizabeth Taylor (Cleopatra) 6. 100,000

P.S. Be sure to call me when someone you care about says they'd "like to buy a house, but..." and I'll get them started with my first newsletter, *Five Simple Things You Need To Know To Make The Home Buying Process Easier.*

**Ryan France, Your Personal Real Estate Consultant  
StoneHaven Realty, 512-773-3493**

Here's a quick note to let you know how I can help you or anyone you feel comfortable introducing me to.

Many people dream of owning their own home, but are put off by the horror stories they've heard about the process: securing financing, looking (and looking and looking) at houses, mountains of paperwork, inspections, and the multitude of people who are part of the transaction.

While the home buying process is complex, with the right information it can go smoothly and end with a happy homeowner. So, the next time you're in a conversation with a friend, family member or neighbor and they mention how much they'd like to own their own home but just can't face the challenges, feel comfortable enough to take out your cell phone, look up my number (512-773-3493), and call me immediately. I'll give them a free subscription to my monthly HomeFinder Newsletter – it's packed with information that will help take the hassle out of the home buying process.

**Take the Hassles Out of Buying a Home**