

The Last Move

by [Peter Glassman](#) (August 2024)



New England Winter (Aldro Thompson Hibbard, 1935)

Retirement in 2009 necessitated a decision to make our final move from Connecticut to Rochester, New York, or San Antonio, Texas. We had a daughter, a son, and four grandchildren in San Antonio. We also had a son plus three grandchildren in Rochester. The decision-maker was the climate and my health. Our bucket list began with “no snow,” followed by “no black ice,” and “no bitter cold.” My two coronary artery stents advocated a warm environment. Our target was San Antonio, but

first, we had to sell our house.

The economic recession catalyzed by the housing market crash, still in effect, caused housing prices to fall. We contacted a real estate broker and put our home of eleven years up for sale. The feisty redhead realtor lady named Dilly Pontoon immediately put us into action.

"You have to make the interior of the house look bigger. Get rid of anything bulky right away." She skulked through the house like an executioner. "You don't need that ratty-looking computer table. Take down most of the wall decorations. It will open up the house."

"Must we?" my wife Barbara asked.

"This house is nice, but it's only 2300 square feet. Our competitors are homes starting from 3000 square feet for the same price as yours." She looked out our windows. "Two-and-a-half acres is good. Keep the yard furniture out there." She gave us a critical eye. "Chuck those bird feeders. They attract squirrels, which turn off buyers."

I didn't tell Dilly about the family of skunks, the patrolling fox, and the raccoons we saw almost daily.

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The house was on the market for eight months. We had many lookers, but we needed offers. The winter was coming on fast in October, with occasional light snow.

"Keep the front stairs, entryway, and two garages clear of any snow or ice at all times," Dilly dictated.

I moaned, "I have a heart condition. I can't shovel snow."

"I can get high school kids to do this at reasonable prices. We should also have more frequent 'open house' showings." Dilly scheduled two for this month.

The realtor required us to leave the house during any showing. The harsh Connecticut winter sent us into the cold and snow-laden roads. We would go to the nearest Dunkin' Donuts and hang out, waiting for the "all clear" from Dilly's cell phone. If it were snowing, we'd stay in our idling SUV at our driveway turn-around. A friend who saw us at Dunkin' Donuts suggested that multiple-listing might increase prospective house-hunters.

"I can do this, of course, but we may have to up the asking price because of realtor-fee sharing." Dilly didn't look enthusiastic but complied.

To our dismay, the only thing multi-listing did for us was to send us out into the cold more often. After one year with our house on the market, very few realistic offers to buy were forthcoming. We persuaded Dilly to relax the rules and let us stay during a few showings.

We were impressed with Dilly's pitching the quality of our 11-year-old colonial house, but one realtor from the multi-listings made us shudder.

That agent spoke discouragingly to an interested couple: "As you can see, Mr. and Mrs. Adams, the house we saw this morning was 3800 square feet, had more rooms, a new furnace, and is offered at the same price as this smaller, less well-endowed colonial. This unit also has more driveway for snow removal and two-and-a-half acres of lawn to mow."

We went directly to Dilly's office, enraged. I shouted at her, "Dilly, those other real estate agents are using our house to sell their contracted homes." I related our experience.

"Well, Peter and Barbara, I suggest we remove your house from the multiple listings, and I'll do more frequent 'open-house' showings."

And she did. However, after fourteen months on the market, we still had no offers. It was not a sellers' market. There were still bigger houses at the same price as ours. Short sales, repossessions, and fixer-uppers diverted favorable buyers away from our beloved home.

We were in our second house-selling Connecticut winter, and the weather turned fierce. Three blizzards, a few days apart, straddled December and January. Dilly tried to minimize our despair.

"The snowstorms are cutting down the number of buyers everywhere. The economy is bad. The only thing we can do is decrease our asking price."

We offered prayers daily and nightly, yet we still had few walk-throughs. My daughter in San Antonio said she was praying for us. My wife and I prayed. The more we prayed, the more it snowed. February gave us storms with snow accumulation in feet—not inches—and the wind created igloo-size snow drifts. The sliding-glass kitchen door to the patio had a seven-foot wall of snow accumulated outside.

Almost on the verge of becoming an agnostic or even atheistic, we persevered with our prayers. In mid-February, snow banks lined our driveway six feet high, with snow on the roof at two feet. Howling winds were blowing snow onto the now narrow walkways.

I spoke to the snowing sky, "Why has God forsaken us? What have I done to be condemned in my retirement to frigid New England?"

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At the end of February, the sun began replacing storm clouds. The roofline snow started melting, but the snow drifts were still like mini-alps. Snow showers continued, but sunny days increased. Dilly called us more frequently.

"I have an interested party." She sounded optimistic.

We prayed some more. The lighter snow persisted, and the number of showings increased. Finally, we got an offer. We were ecstatic. We called San Antonio to tell my daughter the possible good news. More people made offers. We could now go back to our original asking price.

"What happened?" I asked Dilly.

She smiled, "Your house suddenly became more desirable than the larger six-to-seven hundred thousand dollar units."

"How? Why?" Barbara had to know.

Dilly kept her smile, "It turns out that almost all new big-footage houses built over the last six years here..." she paused for effect. "...were constructed by Florida builders. They did not consider the New England climate. Almost every one of those big homes has roof damage, ice dams destroying the drywall, poor insulation, and leaky basements."

Barbara and I looked at each other.

Dilly continued, "A local reputable Connecticut developer built your house. Your roof is intact, every room is pristine, the insulation creates lovely warmth, and the basement is dry."

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We sold our house in May and moved to San Antonio with hope and gratitude. I now believe that God was indeed listening to our prayers. The snowy winter sold our house! The more we prayed, the more it snowed and the more interested house hunters it created. It had to snow to sell our home. Whenever we look back at our last move, we thank God and a realtor named Dilly Pontoon.

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