



From The Home Inspector

When My Home Gets To Be Too Much For Me

By: Francine Taylor & John Woodmansee

There comes a time for many of us when living in our home changes from being satisfying to being a burden. We see it all around us, especially in older folks. The home that was once the fulfillment of the American dream now becomes an embarrassment. Why do folks let their property get shabby? Sometimes the answer is simple. The owner became poor and cannot afford to maintain their place. Then again, some owners just don't fit our idea of a responsible homeowner: industrious, clean, tidy, pleasant & thoughtful of neighbors.

There are less obvious reasons that people lose their commitment to keeping their homes neat and clean. Imagine that we are having a frank discussion with the owner of a house that is cluttered, unkempt, and in much need of maintenance. Here are some of the things that might be said:

"My house is this way because I just can't keep up with things, and my needy house shows my inability to care for it the way I would like to. My body is like this house.....failing, deteriorating, not like my home and I were years ago. I can't take care of this place; I just focus on caring for myself."

"I don't need a big house any longer. My kids are living their own lives. My spouse is gone. This place is too big. I just need a little space to keep me happy, so I don't go into the rest of the house."

"I worry about the house, and I know that I should get someone to take care of things. But where do you find people who will do things right, people that you can trust in your home?"

"Yes, I used to keep a pretty home, but that was when people came to visit and we visited them and we all were proud of our gardens and our new things. We were always sort of entertaining each other. Those friends have moved away or died, and those of us who remain prefer to stay home and not visit around. What's the point in keeping a pretty house when there's no one else to enjoy it but me. What I have suits me fine."

"Frankly I got tired of taking care of this place. It drives me nuts. There is always something that needs cleaning or fixing, and I don't want to spend my time as a slave to this place. Life is too short to be trapped in chores and struggles just to keep up appearances"

We inspectors and agents spend a lot of our time in someone else's home. We come with our cameras and note pads. We are not exactly "invited guests". In the case of home inspectors, owners have a special wariness about our being in their home; we are intruders, just snooping around for the bad stuff. At best, we are the examiners who see their home for what it is with all the normal things like dust, cooking odors, pet hair, wear and tear of everyday living. At worst, we may be seen as critics who don't see the home as a safe, beloved nesting place, but we are there to find every fault in the place, and, by association, the failings of those who live there.

How do we deal with being the "unwanted guest" in someone's home? This topic is the focus of our discussion for the REALTOR® / Home Inspection Committee, next May 11th at 3 PM, WSRAR headquarters. We have good conversations. Join us!

About the authors: REALTOR® Francine Taylor, operates MyPlace Realty Service & John Woodmansee, The Home Inspector Co.