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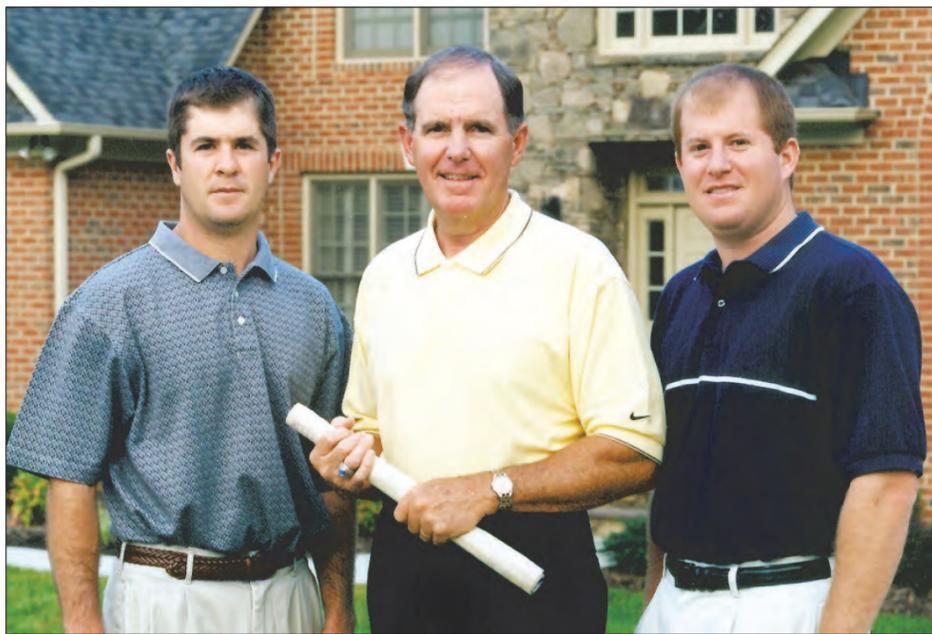
AGENT OF THE WEEK

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**a family affair**

Joe F. Berini Construction Company celebrates 50 years



Top, a spacious kitchen with center island and granite countertops is the center of a Berini-built home in River's Edge, off Rose of Sharon Road in Durham. Above, Joe, Dante and Donny Berini continue the family business started by Dante's uncle, Joe Bernini, in 1959.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

CONTRIBUTED REPORT
BY REBECCA R. NEWSOME, MIRM

Durham

Very few would argue with the statement that 50 years in business is a true accomplishment. Add to the statement that a family business has prospered for 50 years, and nothing short of a standing ovation is in order!

"It all actually started more than 80 years ago," says Dante Berini, president of Joe F. Berini Construction Company.

"My grandfather was a stone mason in Pittsburgh who was lured to Durham in the late 1920s to utilize his skills in construction projects at Duke University. All five of his sons became involved in the building industry, including my father, John Berini. My grandmother persuaded my Uncle Joe to enroll in Duke University's Engineering School. Uncle Joe made her very proud when he graduated from Duke in 1939 and entered the field of commercial construction."

As the story goes, Joe was acknowledged for his abilities in the commercial field, but it didn't give him the total satisfaction he desired. He debated his options, and decided to blaze his own trail. In 1959 Joe opened the doors to a residential building and development company, Joe F. Berini Construction Co. Inc.

In the late '50s, few residential builders and even fewer developers existed in Durham; Joe was a pioneer. He began development of his first neighborhood, West Hills, located in West Durham in 1961. Joe was in the right place at the right time — West Hills included 41 homes and was completed in 1966. Joe found his niche.

During these early years of the company, Joe realized he needed help, and was pleased he didn't have to look far. Joe's nephew, Dante, was eager to learn and seemed to have a knack for the business. He began working with Joe in 1963 while earning his business degree at East Carolina College (now East Carolina University).

Upon graduation, Dante began work with Joe on a full-time basis. Dante's high standards, eye for detail and strong work ethic meshed perfectly with Joe's direction for the company.

Together they developed Westwood Estates, a neighborhood of

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SMART MOVES

Tips on buying a first home during this summer season

UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

This summer, many who've long wanted to buy their first home are determined to make that dream come true. And the combination of bargain home prices and low mortgage rates make the idea of home-buying seem especially alluring.

"In most areas, sellers still outnumber buyers by a wide margin. That means buyers remain the kings of the market," says Monte Helme, a former Century 21 executive and consultant to HouseHunt Inc. (www.househunt.com).

Helme says prospective first-time buyers are especially numerous now and represent an unusually large portion — about two-thirds — of all purchasers. Normally, repeat buyers are more numerous than first-timers.

"If you're a new purchaser and are eligible for federal tax credits available to first-time buyers, you can practically write your own ticket now," he says.

Clearly, those who've lost a job or expect to be not in a position to buy a home this summer. But people less affected by the recession are likely to find a much warmer welcome at the lenders' office, assuming their credit scores are strong, Helme says.

Tom Early, a real estate broker and former president of the National Association of Exclusive Buyer Agents (www.naeba.org), says a strong credit history is now crucial to obtaining a mortgage.

Ellen
JAMES MARTIN

Here are a few pointers for those who'd like to buy a home before Labor Day:

■ Obtain mortgage preapproval before shopping for a property.

In the past, many prospective homebuyers could simply pick up the phone and arrange for a tour of properties led by a real estate agent. But now, an increasing number of agents, especially veterans in the field,

want evidence that their clients are truly eligible to obtain a home loan.

As Early points out, it's no longer sufficient to call a mortgage lender and provide a general estimate of your income, assets and credit situation. To obtain a genuine statement of mortgage preapproval, you now need more documentation, including credit reports, pay stubs and possibly even federal tax returns.

■ Manage your children during a summertime real estate search.

Due to recession-era budget cuts, a small but gradually increasing number of students attend

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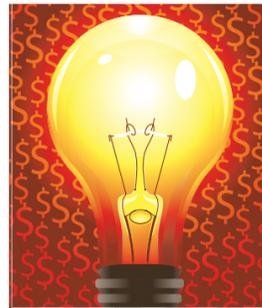
HOME ENERGY Q&ABY KEN SHEINKOPF
MCLATCHY-TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Question: I've seen you write a number of times that turning off lights when you leave a room that is empty will help save energy. I appreciate the thought, but come on, how much energy and money does this really save?

Aren't we just talking about something here that doesn't mean a whole lot in real terms?

Answer: You're right that I have written about this a number of times over the years, and I've done this because I really do believe that it makes a difference. Sure, turning out one light that you're not using isn't by itself going to change your financial picture. After all, if you turn off a 100-watt incandescent bulb that is on for six hours in a room not being used that you'd otherwise have left on, you're saving around six cents during that time.

Now before you start to snicker at this, consider that adds up to around \$1.80 per month, or more than \$20 a year. Now think about how many light bulbs you have in your home. I've seen estimates that say the



average home has 25 to 40 bulbs (think about some of the bathroom fixtures with six or more bulbs and the many multi-bulb lamps people use), and suddenly \$20 a year for turning off one bulb becomes a few hundred dollars a year for turning off a bunch of them.

When I tell people about this, I often hear that they think that turning bulbs on and off too often makes the bulbs burn out faster. Actually, frequent turning on and off won't shorten the life of an incandescent bulb's filament so there's no reason here to leave unneeded bulbs turned on.

Where this does make a difference is if you're using an en-

ergy-efficient compact fluorescent bulb (CFL). Energy experts generally agree that if a CFL is not going to be used for five minutes or more, turn it off, but frequent turning on and off can reduce its lifetime. These bulbs use only about a fourth of the energy used by incandescents, so they still will save a significant amount of money even if they're on for a couple of minutes when they're not needed.

Finally, to make my point a little stronger, take a walk around your home this evening and count how many light bulbs are turned on in empty rooms. If your home is typical, there are several empty rooms that are brightly lit, and if you ask whoever was in them last why they didn't turn the lights out, you'd hear that "I was going to be back in just a couple of minutes." Some people call this human nature, but I call it a waste of energy.

Ken Sheinkopf is a communications specialist with the American Solar Energy Society (www.ases.org). Send your energy questions to askken@ases.org.

FAMILY

CONTINUED FROM 1E

243 homes; then other neighborhoods such as Sun Pointe, Oak Daile and Rocky Ridge. Located in North Durham off Sparger Road, Rocky Ridge is still in progress, with lots available for custom homes.

More recently, Dante has been a partner in the neighborhood development of River's Edge, located off Rose of Sharon Road in Durham. The Berinis do not, however, need to develop a neighborhood in order to build in it. Croasdaile Farm, Fox Hill Farm, Hardscrabble and Treyburn are a few of the communities where Joe F. Berini Construction Co. has built custom homes.

Dante acknowledges, "Along the way, I had the best mentors for aspects of the construction and real estate industries: My father, John, my Uncle Joe, and Bill Totten, our company's longtime real estate agent and friend."

The company joined the Home Builders Association of Durham and Chapel Hill (now Durham, Orange, and Chatham Counties) in 1985, where Dante served as an executive board member for a number of years and president in the year 2000. Joe F. Berini Construction Co. has been recognized with Gold, Silver and Bronze Parade of Homes Awards, honoring the company for its high quality work. On two separate occasions, first in 1995 and then again in 2000, Dante was recognized with the Builder of the Year award from the HBA.

Two more key employees joined the company with the addition of Dante's sons, Joe and Donny Berini. Joe began working for the company on a part-time basis when he was 14 years old; after studying business and construction management at East Carolina University, he began to work for the company full time in 1992. Like Joe, Donny worked for the company on a part-time basis throughout his youth. Upon graduation from East Carolina University with a degree in construction management, he went on to pursue the field of commercial construction. In 2002, Donny joined the family business. Like Dante, Donny has been active in the HBA, where he has



Joe F. Berini Construction Co. Inc. offers new home construction, residential remodeling, additions and commercial construction in Durham County.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

served on the board of directors for several years. Donny is serves on the executive committee in the position of second vice president and will serve as HBA president in 2011. With the principles of their father, grandfather, great-uncle and great-grandfather guiding them, Joe and Donny's quest for excellence in the construction industry runs deep.

"I can't begin to express the rewards I've experienced in being surrounded by my family at work," says Dante. "I know that our type of business wouldn't work for many families, but for us, it's been a blessing. Uncle Joe passed away in 2000 ... We strive to honor him and keep his vision alive in our work every day. There is no doubt in my mind that he would be very proud of Joe and Donny and the way they handle themselves in today's demanding marketplace, as well as the way the public perceives them."

Today, Joe F. Berini Construction Co. Inc. offers new home construction, residential remodeling and additions and commercial construction projects, all primarily in the Durham County area. Each home they build or renovate, regardless of its size or price, is custom crafted to meet client needs, utilizing quality

materials and skillful expertise.

Remodeling and addition projects by Joe F. Berini Construction Co. include homes less than 10 years old to homes over 100 years old. The Berinis can enlarge, update or reconfigure existing homes to meet their clients' changing needs.

The commercial construction work of the company focuses on private businesses. Whether a design-build project, negotiated project or competitive bid project, the Berinis walk clients through each building phase, understanding what is expected of them to make each job successful.

To have survived 50 years in business, it's evident that superior building is a way of life for the Berini family. Their goal is to insure that their clients enjoy the building process and benefit from the more than 80 years' combined experience of their team. The guiding Berini principles have been to build each structure as if they were building it for themselves, and to stand behind their workmanship. These principles have served them and their clients well.

**For more information, visit
berinibuilt.com.**

SMART

CONTINUED FROM 1E

public schools with staggered school-year schedules, which means they could have vacation at a time other than summer.

But most kids still have traditional summer vacations and will likely be free to accompany their parents on their housing search. Early, however, encourages parents to leave young children with a baby sitter or grandparents so they can stay focused on the properties they are interested in.

■ Be on the lookout for highly motivated sellers.

It's obvious that seller motivation is now at near-record levels in many communities, as numerous homeowners, especially the unemployed, seek to avert a threatened foreclosure. What's less apparent is how buyers can use statistics to help them identify sellers who are most likely to give them a good deal.

"If the place has been sitting unsold for a time more lengthy than the market average for its area, you have a better-than-average chance of negotiating a favorable price," Early says.

As he notes, your real estate agent can easily obtain "days on market" data for any neighborhood or property on which you're focused. He says summertime buyers should be especially attentive to homes that were first listed at an unrealistically high price during the traditional spring selling season or prior to that.

"Nowadays, people who try to test the market with too high a price when they first offer their house for sale are usually punished," Early says. "By the time they sober up and reduce their asking price, some are frantic to sell."

■ Allow yourself to be choosy in this summer's market.

Just as many sellers with children prefer to make their housing moves before their kids start a new school year, so do most prospective buyers whose kids have similar schedules. But if you can't find the type of home you're seeking until after Labor Day, you needn't worry your kids will adjust poorly when they do change schools.

"They do well, often very well, if they change schools after the academic year gets underway," says William Bainbridge, president of the SchoolMatch Institute (www.schoolmatch.com), which provides consumers comparative information on school quality.

Though it's better for teenagers pursuing a rigorous pre-college curriculum to start a new school at the beginning of the academic year, younger kids typically thrive no matter when they make the switch, he adds.

And Early predicts that there should still be an oversupply of unsold homes from which to choose through late 2009.

"Yes, you can snag a big discount on a house you buy this summer," he says. "But if you haven't found exactly the kind of place you're seeking in the next few months, you'll probably still have access to many bargains this fall or winter."

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