

TV house hunters frustrate loyal fan

by Mary Ellen Collins

My entire family talks back to people on TV. They are all sports fans who freely dispense advice to referees, umpires, coaches and players. I lack the sports gene, so I reserve my passionate feedback for house hunters who let HGTV record their efforts to find a new home.

Having been through the home-buying process five times, I'm addicted to a half-hour format that compresses what takes weeks or months into three 90-second house tours, several minutes of pro and con debating, and an always-positive resolution.

Whether I'm watching a young family who can no longer cram their kid-related paraphernalia into an 800-square-foot bungalow or yuppies who want an upscale condo with proximity to upscale shopping, their predictable (coached?) comments drive me crazy.

The Realtor leads buyers into the first house, at which point someone always says, "That window lets in a lot of light" or "It's really bright with the window."

"That's what windows are for!" I yelp, knowing that out of the hundreds of houses John and I have looked at, we've never made such an inane comment. (And if we were ever on the show, I would refuse the suggestion to wax enthusiastic about a pane of glass.)

Within the next three minutes, one of the buyers looks down and says, "Wow — hardwood floors" or looks up and says, "Wow — crown molding." My personal prejudice makes me murmur in agreement about the lovely floors; but since I've never commented on crown molding in my life, I can't believe it thrills every single person on the show.

As the buyers amble through the house, I continue offering my two cents worth.

"I'd rather have granite than marble countertops," says a whiny wife.

"A lot of people really like the marble," the perky Realtor replies.

"They're both better than the crummy laminate you have now!" I add.

To the clueless souls who veto

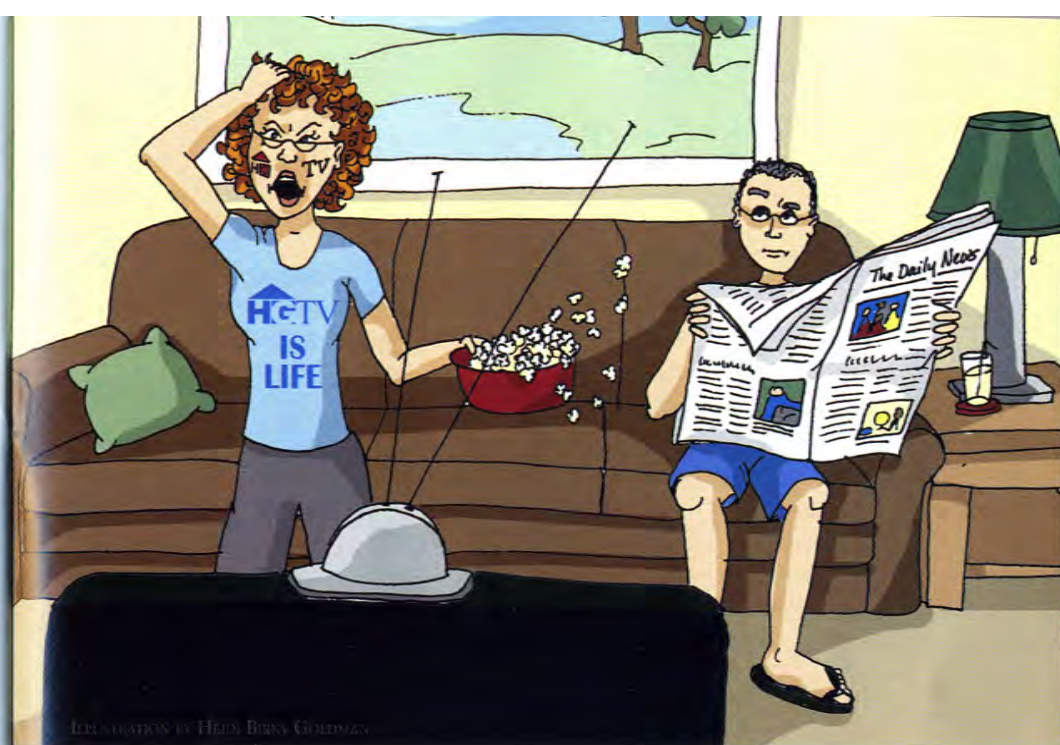


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a house because it has a lavender dining room, I issue an impatient, "Buy some paint, for crying out loud!"

I advise the people who want peace and quiet that, "You'll never drown out the highway noise with that puny little garden fountain!"

And with the guy who lets a hot tub blind him to the yard the size of a postage stamp, I feel compelled to remind him, "You said your priority was having room for your dogs to run!"

Once we've seen all three houses, I join thousands of other viewers in guessing which home the buyers will pick. I listen to their stilted conversation about the upsides and downsides of each home, make my choice

based on their words and actions, and find that I'm wrong 99 percent of the time. I throw up my hands and shake my head — over their mistake, not mine. I have so many valuable insights to offer, if only they could hear me through the screen. And when I wonder why I keep watching something with such a high frustration quotient, I realize that maybe I possess the family sports gene after all. I'm just a different kind of armchair quarterback. **KEG**

Mary Ellen Collins and her husband, John, live in Boca Raton, Fla. When she's not grappling with the ups and downs of making a house a home, Mary Ellen reads, does yoga and worries about coming up with column ideas. E-mail her at maryellenc@angieslist.com.