

Are you prepared?

We thought we were really ready. We gathered the supplies we needed for the Independence Day parade. We looked at everything we had to make sure it was in good condition and could be used for the float that I would pull behind my car. We tested the CD player that would blast patriotic music from the cute little playhouse that advertises my real estate business. We even bought a few new red, white and blue decorations, had all of the tools, tape, staples, straps, etc. The car was freshly washed and we were ready.

My mom and dad, the inventors of my parade entry, were the assembly crew. Dad woke up at 5:30 that morning to make sure they had a good breakfast and that everything was packed. We all met at 7:45 in our parade line-up location to assemble all of the pieces, and we knew what to do. After all, this was our third parade, so we were float construction experts. It looked great, and we were ready a good 30 minutes before the parade began to pull out of the parking lot onto Kingston Pike. We had matching T-shirts, flag bandanas, ice water for the end of the parade, and we packed a few emergency items like double-sided tape and a rope.

The parade started to move and we had to get in our spot. Mom was driving the car, and my dad and my two



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sons were walking along beside the car and float ready to hand out the 2,000 trinkets we had worked on until midnight the night before. We cranked up the music and were really rockin' when the CD player on the trailer started t-t-o-o s-s-k-k-i-i-p-p like a badly scratched record album. Nothing like hearing James Brown sing, "I live in A-A-m-m-e-e-r-r-i-i-c-c-a-a!" We wiped off the CD, cleaned out the CD player, checked the connections, to no avail.

Now we're almost ready to make the turn onto Kingston Pike, and there were already some parade watchers around us. Then, the float breaks loose from the car. What?!! Now I'm holding onto the trailer to keep it moving with the car. Quick! Pull out the emergency rope! Dad starts wrapping the rope around any part of the car that looks like it could support a trailer, when he hits a knot and can't get it pulled any tighter.

Now the tongue of the trailer is dragging the ground, pulled by a rope that is barely holding on. We are yelling frantic suggestions at each other over the blaring, skipping music trying to get everything reattached, and now we're on Kingston Pike. At this point, it's too late and we have to start smiling ...



NOW! Long story short, we made it to the end, the float stayed attached to the car, we handed out all 2,000 trinkets, fiddled with the skipping CD player all along the parade route, but we did it. Next year, we'll be prepared.

As was the case with my playhouse parade float, buying and selling real estate can have its ups and downs, even for the most prepared. Sellers may think they have their house ready to sell, then there's the home inspection that reveals unexpected flaws. Buyers may think they are ready to buy, then there's the greater-than-estimated closing costs or last-minute, hard-to-find documentation. Movers may think they are ready to move, then the moving van key gets locked in the cab. Agents may

think they have a house that is ready to close, then there's the last-minute problems with the paperwork.

The best advice I can give is to go into the buying-and-selling process expecting hurdles that you have to clear before getting to the finish line. It's a difficult process, and if you make it to the end either completely in tact or barely hanging on, then you have completed the goal successfully. Just be prepared for the ride.

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