

# The McJunkin Messenger

News To Help You Save Time And Money

April 2010

## “Crunch, Crunch” Or “Knock, Knock”?

Crunch. Crunch. That was the sound of Joe Markham’s problem. The three-year-old German Shepherd he’d adopted, Fritz, loved to chew rocks. So much, in fact, that his teeth were one-third their normal size.

In every other way, Fritz was a wonderful and loving companion. But Markham knew the dog’s one bad habit was endangering his health. So Markham, a partner in a motorcycle/auto repair shop, encouraged Fritz to try softer substitutes: radiator hoses and motorcycle tires. But the dog didn’t favor either of these items enough for it to become a rock replacement.



One day, Fritz stretched under a workbench, pulled out a part from a car, trotted over to Markham, and dropped the part on Markham’s foot. With this rubber-knobbed gizmo it was love at first bite. Fritz forgot his beloved rocks. His new obsession had customers asking what kind of toy was making the dog so joyful.

That’s when Markham speculated that if his dog loved this type of rubber so much, other dogs would, too. And so began a long journey of prototypes, rejections, manufacturing woes, ridicule, and late-night commercial slots. But Markham persevered because he knew his *real* customers – the furry, four-legged ones – would prove him right.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Don’t Buy A “Flood Car”
- The Mighty, Majestic Redwood
- Let’s Recycle Large Appliances
- How To Avoid “Blackberry Thumb”
- Learn The New Jargon Now
- How To Exercise Your Brain
- Scientists Say Birds Use Tools, Too
- Do We Over-Share?
- Play Ball!
- Keith’s Thought Of The Month

Today Markham’s toy, the KONG, has sold 50+ million worldwide, and according to the company’s Web site, “Millions and millions of dogs have confirmed that KONG is the world’s best dog toy!”

**Is that “crunch, crunch” of a problem really the “knock, knock” of opportunity?**

*Keith*

# Don't Buy A "Flood Car"

Car experts say that, when an area of the country suffers heavy flooding, unscrupulous dealers rush in and buy flood-damaged vehicles in salvage yards, then they clean them up and resell them. It's a dangerous and dishonest practice because vehicles exposed to rising water often have malfunctioning brakes and computer systems. Here are some pointers on how to spot a flood car:

- It will have a musty smell.
- There will be rust underneath the dashboard or on the interior trunk or hood hinges.
- You'll see water stains on the upholstery or mismatched upholstery (signaling that the stained portions were replaced).
- It will have condensation or water droplets inside the interior light fixtures.

## The Mighty, Majestic Redwood

In 1963, the National Geographic Society recorded the tallest of all known trees, a majestic California redwood that stood 367.8 feet. These trees' longevity may be partly due to the fact that redwoods are not vulnerable to disease or insects, and their one-foot-thick bark often protects them from fires. Even if one is burned or cut down, a redwood is capable of sprouting a new tree from a burl at the base of its trunk. Redwoods have been known to live for as long as 2,500 years, but the average span is 500 to 700 years. Typically, the trees, which have shallow root systems, are blown down by strong winds.



The Spanish called them "palo colorado" or "red trees" after their reddish bark. Early settlers kept their poultry in burnt-out redwoods – the diameter of which could reach 20 feet – and called such trees "goose pens." The first railroads in California were laid on redwood ties, and today California wines are kept in redwood vats to preserve the flavor of the grapes. Learn more about these fascinating giants and the Redwood National and State Parks at <http://www.nps.gov/redw/index.htm>.

## Let's Recycle Large Appliances

Did you know that about 95 percent of a refrigerator can be salvaged or recycled? Here's a list of materials that can be saved in a typical large appliance:

Steel; glass shelves; liners (plastic); copper and aluminum components; polyurethane foam insulation; compressor oil; and CFC refrigerants.

# How To Avoid “Blackberry Thumb”

The American Society of Hand Therapists (ASHT) recently warned owners of personal digital assistants – such as Blackberries, iPods, and Sidekicks – of the danger of developing carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, or other hand, wrist, and arm ailments. “Handheld electronics may require prolonged grips, repetitive motion on small buttons, and awkward wrist movements,” says Donna Breger-Stanton, ASHT president. “These devices are immensely popular, and they’re getting smaller with even more features which encourages extended use. Most of the population could suffer hand ailments unless they learn to take preventive measures.” Her suggestions:

- Don’t bend your wrist in either direction when holding the device. Grip it loosely and hold it straight in your hand.
- Take a break every hour.
- If possible, place pillows in your lap on which to rest your arms.
- Switch hands frequently to reduce fatigue.
- Watch your posture. “People may strain their elbows and wrists by leaning or slouching for a long period while working on these devices,” Breger-Stanton says.

## ***March Quiz Answer***

**Question:** A part of the American Flag - T  
= Narrow structure on top of a roof

**Answer:** stripe—spire

**Congratulations** to Jonathan & Christian Richards. Your names were selected at random from all of the correct quiz entries and you’ll receive \$30 Lowe’s gift card

**Watch for your name  
in a coming month!**

# Learn The New Jargon Now

Some of the most creative thinking in the workplace comes from the desire to avoid saying what we really mean. Check out these innovative euphemisms for typical workplace antics:

**Blamestorm:** A discussion centered around finding an excuse – or a scapegoat – for failure.

**Data transport system:** A briefcase.

**Ohnosecond:** The fraction of a moment between hitting “send” and realizing you’ve just sent an embarrassing email to everyone in your organization.

**Percussive maintenance:** Hitting a computer or other electronic device in an attempt to get it to work.

**Presenteeism:** The opposite of absenteeism; an obsession with being visible at work regardless of how productive you are.

**Run it up the flagpole:** Hoping someone with real authority will give you permission to do something if you ask politely.

**Stress puppy:** Someone who thrives on pressure.

**Vulcan nerve pinch:** The awkward hand stretch needed to reach all the keys necessary for certain computer commands.

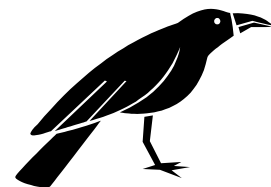
**Xerox subsidy:** Using the office photocopier for personal reasons.

## Scientists Say Birds Use Tools, Too

Humans and apes aren’t the only creatures that use tools. Now scientists at Cambridge University have observed that crows can use pebbles to get what they want.

In an experiment, crows were shown a plastic tube six inches tall with a worm floating in some water at the bottom. The birds, unable to reach the worm on their own, quickly began dropping nearby stones into the tube, raising the water level until the worm came up into range of their beaks. The crows also realized the larger stones lifted the water – and the worm – more quickly.

One small stone for a crow, one giant leap for birdkind?



## **WELCOME NEW CLIENTS**

Here are some of the new clients who became members of our “Real Estate Family” this past month. I’d like to welcome you and wish you all the best!

***Rick and Karen Conticello*** (referred by  
*Susan Herndon*)

***Thank You !!!***

***Brent and Shawn Patrick***

*We love giving recognition to our new friends and our wonderful existing clients who are kind enough to introduce their friends and relatives to us.*

## **How To Exercise Your Brain**

Like any other part of your body, your brain needs exercise to stay healthy. Although physical exercise can encourage the growth of new brain cells, mental exercises will also help your mind stay sharp. So...

- Mix up your routine. When you take the same route to work every day, or even fix the same peanut butter sandwich for your lunch, your mind stops stretching itself. Look for different activities that force you to think actively about what you’re doing.
- Stay mentally active. Crossword puzzles, sudoku, and other games can keep your mind in shape. So can taking a class, learning a new language, or reading something

challenging in a book group.

- Reduce your stress. Easier said than done for many of us, but meditation, yoga, and getting plenty of sleep can relieve pressure that interferes with the ability to form fresh memories.
- Socialize. Don’t let yourself get isolated. Talking to people and making new friends will stimulate your brain and give you more opportunities to learn and grow.
- Test yourself. Make up a few simple mental exercises. For example, try to identify the coins in your pocket, or the keys you carry, by touch instead of sight.

## **Do We Over-Share?**

Some employers are worried about what their workers are saying on Facebook and other social networking sites.

A survey by Travelers found that one out of eight people share work-related information on social media sites, and 30 percent say they don’t think posting information about their employer is a problem as long as they believe the information is true.

“An employee could inadvertently post confidential information that could cause irreparable harm to a business,” says Kathy Swendsen, President of Travelers Global Technology. “In addition, the speed and ease of publication to a wide audience makes it virtually impossible to remove the information once it’s posted.”

# Play Ball!

It's time to play ball! As a salute to the start of baseball season, here are some quotations to remind us why we love this game:

That's the true harbinger of spring, not crocuses, or swallows returning to Capistrano, but the sound of a bat on a ball. – *Bill Veeck, 1976*

A critic once characterized baseball as six minutes of action crammed into two-and-one-half hours. – *Ray Fitzgerald, 1970*

A baseball game is simply a nervous breakdown divided into nine innings. – *Earl Wilson*

I don't want to play golf. When I hit a ball, I want someone else to go chase it. – *Roger Hornsby*

Baseball is almost the only orderly thing in a very unordered world. If you get three strikes, even the best lawyer in the world can't get you off. – *Bill Veeck*

Sandy's fastball was so fast, some batters would start to swing as he was on his way to the mound. – *Jim Murray, on Sandy Koufax*



**March : Scramble Trivia**

**Trivia: I will give you clues to two words. You must figure out the first word, then subtract a "T" from that word and rearrange the rest of the letters to get the second word. The words must be given in the correct order.**

**Containers of loot - T = To ease someone's mind**

Everyone who faxes, emails or calls in the correct answer by the last day of this month will be entered into a drawing for a Lowe's \$30 gift card.

Call 281.597.7300 and leave a message or email me at [keith@mcjunkinhomes.com](mailto:keith@mcjunkinhomes.com)  
Good Luck!

# Thought Of the Month

## April 2010 Is The Last Month To Qualify For Homebuyer Tax Credit

I hope by now you have heard about the home buyer's tax credit that was extended and expanded from November of 2009 to April 2010.

First time home buyers or those whom have not owned a primary residence in the previous 3 years qualify for a maximum \$8,000 tax credit or up to 10% of the sales price of the home. Purchasers must be at least 18 years of age on the day of their purchase. The maximum purchase price for the tax credit is \$800,000.

Current homeowners who have owned their primary residence for at least five consecutive years of the last eight years and meet income requirements will also qualify for up to a \$6,500 tax credit for qualifying properties. You do not have to sell your existing home to take advantage of the credit, however the home you purchase must become your principal residence and you would have to move into that home. You could keep your original house as a 2<sup>nd</sup> home or rental property.

To take advantage of the tax credit, you must be in contract prior to April 30, 2010 and the transaction must close no later than June 30, 2010.

There are income limitations associated with the tax credits, single buyers with incomes up to \$125,000 per year and married couples with up to \$225,000 will receive the maximum tax credit. If you earn over \$145,000 as a single person or over \$245,000 for a married couple, you will not qualify for the credit.

You must live in the home generating the tax credit as your primary residence for a minimum of three years before selling it in order to not have to repay the tax credit. Exceptions to this requirement are for members of the military due to extended duty.

Please remind anyone you know that is thinking about buying a home that the tax credit expires at the end of this month.

Sellers should already be on the market since buyers seeking the tax credit will likely be willing to pay more for a home than they will after April.

There is a chance that congress could decide to extend the tax credit to support the struggling national housing market. We will just have to see.

Have a great April. (Happy Birthday, Mary)

*Keith*

As always, if you, a family member, friend or business associate is planning on purchasing, building, or selling a home, please have them contact me as early as possible so I can guide them through this complicated process.

# The McJunkin Messenger

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