

Special bond eases couple's loss

By Marcia Killingsworth

For the AJC

Sunday, October 12, 2008

Our house hunters:

The phone rang in the hotel room where Delle Griffin, Loren Schmerler and their dog, Sydney, were staying. Both work for Schmerler's company, Bottom Line Management, a business brokerage that sells companies. The couple has been preparing their house for sale — paint, carpets, reglazing the cabinets — but had to relocate when Sydney had a reaction to the fumes. This call, at 3 a.m., was the worst of their lives: A neighbor reported their house was on fire. When they arrived 20 minutes later to fire engines, flashing lights and closed streets, there was nothing left.

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Courtesy: Delle Griffin and Lore

Loren Schmerler, dog Sydney and Delle Griffin

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http://www.ajc.com/homefinder/content/homefinder/stories/2008/10/12/home_search.html 10/15/2009



Credit: David Caselli

House #1

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Credit: David Caselli

House #2

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Credit: David Caselli

House #3

Stunned and overwhelmed, the couple turned to Ed Robeson of Keller Williams Realty First Atlanta, who they had hoped would sell their house. "Ed was the first call I made, at 3 a.m.," Delle recalls. "It just seemed natural to turn to him." Her instinct was on target: Robeson quickly found off-duty firefighters to salvage belongings from the rubble. It takes a very special person to shepherd clients through such a loss, Griffin points out, and as they began their search for a new home, both Griffin and Schmerler knew without a doubt that Robeson was not just their Realtor, he was their friend.

Choice #1: Beautiful entry

Originally listed at \$550,000, this five-bedroom, four-bath traditional in Roswell's Clary Lakes subdivision was built in 1989. "It made a beautiful impression when you walked in," Griffin recalls, and had been updated well. It also boasted a beautiful private backyard. Another selling point was the neighborhood covenants, which, Griffin explains, "help protect and ensure the value of those homes."

Choice #2: New screened porch

Built in 1990, this four-bedroom, three-bath house was a true, one-level ranch also in the Clary Lakes subdivision, so it, too, was protected by neighborhood covenants. Griffin and Schmerler liked the mature landscaping, large daylight basement and a newly added screened porch. It was bright and open and had the perfect place for Schmerler's office, separate from the living space. It originally listed for \$489,000.

Choice #3: Great flow

Also a true, one-level ranch, this four-bedroom, 3½-bath home was in the Brookfield Country Club neighborhood and was very close to the couple's old home. It had been beautifully updated, Griffin says, and had a great flow and a partially finished basement. At \$498,700 and built in 1986, the house was all-brick, something high on their list since the fire, and was set in a lot that backed up to woods on one side and to a golf course on the other.

Which house did they choose?

House No. 2. "What sold me on the house was when we went out onto the screened porch," Schmerler smiles. "As soon as I sat down and looked at the backyard, I knew I had found heaven ... I didn't even want to look at the rest of the house." Griffin said she loved everything about it ... everything was on one level, it was very bright and open, and the neighborhood covenants protect their investment. After losing everything in the fire, the couple acknowledges that there have been bumps in the road — the sheer volume of things that must be replaced, from all of their new winter clothes to dishcloths, and the precious items that can never be replaced — but those have been eased by Robeson. "Ed has been a blessing to us at a horrible time," Griffin says, "and has shown great empathy for our loss." She adds that this was the worst possible way to begin a house hunt, but "having Ed behind us every step of the way got us through it."