

Chicago Life

MAGAZINE

Book Reviews

Escaping Condo Jail by Sara E. Benson and Don DeBat (Sarandon Publishing \$24.95)

This epic 624-page tome can save you thousands of dollars and free you from the angst of being trapped in a condominium you cannot sell or escape from, due to horrible neighbors, overpriced maintenance fees, petty rules and regulations, and, at times, downright dangerous conditions. Instead of being sentenced to years of barking dogs and threatening neighbors, this book offers a comprehensive guide to avoiding getting trapped in the first place; how to assess your investment; navigate condo rules and laws; and how to deal with the board, which are just some of the areas fraught with pitfalls.

If you think condo living is easy, a 2012 survey “Violence in Homeowner Associations,” that collected data from managers, staffers and homeowners, showed that 52 percent had been threatened with physical violence from an angry resident one or more times, 13 percent were actually physically assaulted.

Written by journalist Don DeBat and Realtor Sara E. Benson, the myth of the carefree, glamorous condo life is painstakingly debunked and replaced with cold hard facts. The authors don’t condemn all condo, cooperative apartment and homeowner associations. They want prospective buyers to get the information they need; owners to know their rights; and board members to know what they’re doing. The book is carefully researched and full of information sorely needed by the one in five Americans that have bought into the lifestyle.—*Marilyn Soltis*