

Home inspections - Why you should know more.

With rare exception, virtually everything happens for a reason. That is the most basic and critical underlying principle which guides a home inspector in their quest for discovery. Possessing a fundamental understanding of cause and effect relationships is what defines a true professional. There is nothing magical, mysterious, or transcendent about being a good home inspector. It is simply a matter of having unwavering diligence to protocol and an ongoing, dogged determination to become more intimately aware of these relationships.

Obviously, an inspector simply cannot poke and probe every square inch of a house - it just isn't reasonable during the time allowed for an inspection. Therefore it is absolutely essential that an inspector knows how to direct their inspection. They must take their knowledge about where to look, how to look and why, and incorporate it into a consistent, effective and systematic inspection protocol.

In a sense, an inspection proceeds in a, "guilty until proven innocent manner". In other words, an experienced inspector will look for what they expect to find until they either find it, or they are convinced it is not there. That is the essence of turning theory and understanding into protocol. That is the critical skill set which differentiates a professional inspector from the lay person, the real estate agent and the contractor. Without that, performing an inspection is really nothing more than a series of random acts where discovery is left to luck and chance.

Long ago, I wrote an article for this paper where I used the analogy of a mechanic checking out a used car as it seemed a good way to illustrate the importance of having a home inspection. There I shared my story about winding up with a lemon because I didn't follow that advice. That was 1976 and you can bet I haven't made that mistake since then. More importantly, I have taken the time to educate myself a little more about the vehicles I drive. No, I'm not a mechanic, nor do I aspire to be, but at least I have a better understanding now when something is wrong, or when a mechanic may not be doing the best job for me.

In the same way, and for similar reasons, I think it is important that consumers and real estate agents alike should understand more about inspections. That isn't to say that they need to understand things at a technical level. But they should know enough to recognize those qualities which exemplify a good inspection and personify a

professional home inspector. Without that, referring an inspector, or choosing an inspector, becomes a random act itself where the outcome is also left to luck and chance.

Despite all the horror stories of bad inspectors and all the efforts to educate the public, there are still those folks who shop for an inspector as they would shop for the best price on a new Kia. It is likely that will never change. But for those who think otherwise, taking the time to learn more about the inspector and the inspection process will go a long way toward having a positive experience and avoiding misunderstandings. Ask about how the inspection will proceed and what you should do during that time. Ask about any concerns the inspector has and be sure to share your concerns with them. It may even help you understand some of the things you can do to facilitate the inspector's task. After all, if you are prepared to spend two or three hundred thousand dollars, or more, on your home, don't you really want the best inspection you can get? Isn't it worth just a few minutes of homework?

Larry Stamp

Cameo Home Inspection Services

Larry owns and operates Cameo Home Inspection Services. This article is from his upcoming book, "What if Houses Could Talk?" He can be reached at 360.459.1632.