

When Things Go Wrong With Your Home

There may come a time that you discover something wrong with your house, and you may be upset or disappointed with your home Inspector.

Before you allow yourself to become overcome with frustration remember; living in a house can only discover some problems. Everything cannot be discovered during the few hours of home inspection. For example, some shower stalls leak when people are in the shower, but do not leak when you simple turn on the tap. Some roofs and basements only leak when specific conditions exist. Some problems will only be discovered when carpets are lifted, furniture moved or finishes removed.

These problems may have existed at the time of the inspection but there were no clues as to their existence. Our inspections are based on the past performance of the house. If there are no clues of a past problem, it is unfair to assume we should foresee a future problem.

Some say we are inconsistent because our reports identify some minor problems but not others. The minor problems that are identified were discovered while looking for more significant problems. We note them simply as a courtesy. The intent of the inspection is not to find the \$200 problems; it is to find the \$2,000

problems. These are the things that affect peoples' decisions to purchase.

The main source of dissatisfaction with home inspections comes from comments made by contractors. Contractors' opinions often differ from ours. Don't be surprised when three roofers all say the roof needs replacement when we said that, with some minor repairs, the roof will last a few more years.

While our advice represents the most prudent thing to do, many contractors are reluctant to undertake these repairs. This is because of the "Last Man In Theory". The contractor fears that if he is the last person to work on the roof, he will be blamed if the roof leaks, regardless of whether the roof leak is his fault or not. Consequently, he won't want to do a minor repair with high liability when he could re-roof the entire house for more money and reduce the likelihood of a callback. This is understandable.

There is more to the "Last Man in Theory". It suggests that it is human nature for homeowners to believe the last bit of "expert" advice they receive, even if it is contrary to previous advice. As home inspectors, we unfortunately find ourselves in the position of "first man in" and consequently it is our advice that is often disbelieved.

Contractors may say, "I can't believe you had this house inspected, and they didn't find this problem". There are several reasons for these apparent oversights:

- a) We are generalists; we are not specialists. The heating contractor may indeed have more heating expertise than we do. This is because we are expected to have heating, plumbing, roofing and electrical expertise, et cetera.
- b) When the problem manifests itself, it is very easy to have 20/20 hindsight. Anybody can say that the basement is wet when there is 2" of water on the floor. Predicting the problem is a different story.
- c) If we spent ½ an hour under the kitchen sink or 45 minutes disassembling the furnace, we'd find more problems too. Unfortunately, the inspection would take several days and would cost considerably more.

Lastly, it is very difficult for the homeowner to remember specifics about the house, back at the time of the inspection when someone else lived in the house. Homeowners seldom remember that it was snowing or there was storage everywhere in the basement or that the furnace could not be turned on because the air conditioning was operating, et cetera.

In conclusion, a home inspection is designed to better the odds. It is not designed to eliminate all risk. For the reason, a home inspection should not be considered an insurance policy. The premium that an insurance company would have to charge for a policy with no deductible, no limit and an indefinite policy period would be considerably more than the fee we charge. It would also not include the value added by the inspection.

Why choose us as your Home Inspector?

In the Real Estate Business it is commonly stated that the three most important criteria for selecting a property are location, location and location. It can be said that the three most important criteria for selecting a Home Inspector are experience, experience and experience. The State of North Carolina requires a license to be a Home Inspector. Holding a license does not make a person a good Home Inspector anymore than it makes anyone successful. The qualities shared by the best Home Inspectors are experience and the ability to observe, report and communicate based on that experience. As a Home Inspector what we report affects many. Our work must be neutral, accurate and fair. Home's are like people, none are perfect, but some come closer than others.

Our Perspective:

Every inspection must be reported and accepted from a proper perspective. Our perspective is:

1. Home ownership is an expensive long-term commitment. The buyer should become as informed about their purchase as possible. Failure to do so may lead to long term displeasure or worse.
2. Homes should be compared to their peers in the same price range, not to a mystical perfection or a new house.
3. Construction and maintenance of homes is not a perfect art. The perfect house does not exist. All houses have issues, even new houses.
4. Most Home Inspectors and their reports are one sided. They only see and report the negative. All homes have two sides. We strive to observe and report the positive as well as the negative attributes of a home.
5. Observation and reporting of existing issues do not decrease the value of the home, it only makes for a better-informed buyer, seller. The value of the home is the same after the inspection as it was before. The only change is in the perception of those involved based on their newly acquired knowledge.
6. Value and price are not necessarily the same thing. Any home will be a valuable purchase

provided there is a balance between its peers in the same price range with adjustments for consideration of existing issues or systems which may not be functioning as intended. The best deal must have balance among price, terms, location, neighborhood make up and existing conditions. If you think there is a perfect balance, you are dreaming. What must be sought is an acceptable balance. This acceptable balance will make for a WIN-WIN-WIN deal. Out of balance will cause trouble for everyone involved.

7. Buying a home is often an emotional experience when it should be a logical one. The goal of Realtor and Home Inspector must be to reduce the emotional and stress the logical. Logical decisions are usually good decisions. Emotional decisions are often questionable.

Our Experience:

Retired from active construction following 30 plus years and 4,000,000 square feet of commercial construction. Involved from the trenches to the board room with projects ranging from a set of stairs to the top of the waterfall at Stone Mountain State Park, to buildings totaling hundreds of thousands of square feet.

Testimonial:

"The Raven" of The Old Hickory Council, BSA June 1997 "A more dedicated professional could not be found. His creative ideas, attention to detail and concern for our needs made this more than just a construction project. He truly made this center a treasured gift to Scouting."

"When Experience Counts"

Chris D. Hilton

Construction Consultant

Commercial/Residential Building Inspection NC1069

1028 Beecher Road Winston-Salem, NC 27104

Tele: (336) 816-7756 Fax: (888) 522-6547

E-Mail: chris@chrisdhilton.com

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Chris D. Hilton
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