

Life in Bonita: A good inspection can save future headaches

By CHRIS GRIFFITH

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BONITA SPRINGS — You can't judge a book by its cover and you can't judge the condition of a home just by how it looks either.

Ask any real estate agent that has been in business for a while the most unusual tale they can share about a home inspection. I've seen old houses almost come through inspections clean with flying colors and nearly new homes that had thousands of dollars in repairs to be made. Some of us have also seen some really gross and creepy stuff, too.

Remember the Polaroid instant cameras? That's how I explain home inspections to most buyers. A home inspection is basically a snapshot of the condition of a home at the time of inspection. It doesn't guarantee that something won't break in the future but it does give insight into the current condition of the home, past issues that may have been remedied and issues that may cause further damage in the future if they're left untreated.

Home inspections are invaluable for most buyers. Imagine, the home inspector is going into a home and giving the systems a thorough working over. They will be condensing weeks or months of discovery a homeowner would have to do to find defects, into a few hours of inspecting. All of the appliances are run, the water and drains are run, all power outlets are tested, the air conditioner and heater are tested, and much more.

It could literally take years for a homeowner to discover that an outlet in a guest bedroom wasn't working or that a GFCI outlet was wired incorrectly. It's one of the more common defects that turn up in home inspections. Sometimes the outlets are wired wrong or corrosion inhibits them from functioning properly. Finding out that a GFCI outlet is wired incorrectly can be deadly. The outlets are made to "trip off" if there is moisture or contact that grounds the electricity. Properly working GFCI's alone would be worth the price of a home inspection, especially if you're on the wrong end of that wayward current.

Even if you're buying a short sale or a foreclosure, you should get a home inspection. Sure, the contract that is being used is probably an "As-Is" contract but that doesn't mean, "As-Is and held hostage to a house full of unknown defects." If there are repairs or replacements to be made, you'll be able to calculate expenses and make sure that you won't be biting off more than you can chew.

Even brand new homes can have items pop up on an inspection. The "new car smell" a home has doesn't mean mistakes weren't made and defects aren't present. A home inspector can do a thorough exam of a new home and even help create the "punch list" that is given to the builder or developer to finish up the loose ends, touch up paint, adjust cabinet doors and replace cracked switch plates, etc.

Some builder warranties expire after one year.

Besides the overall structure and systems of a home, there are other inspections such as termite and wood destroying organism inspections, mold inspections, radon inspection and any further inspecting of a specific defect that is not discovered on the initial inspection. Remember, having defective or faulty items turn up on an inspection report isn't the end of the world. Many of the common items that are seen on the inspection reports are usually minor. Even when the issues are larger and more costly, it is better to know up front than to have the problem surprise a new home owner months down the road.

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