

*The following letter is from a soldier stationed on Fort Stewart, GA that was completing a home inspection course and needed to conduct an actual home inspection to graduate.*

## **Home Inspection Ride-Along Project**

*Jeff B.*

I had the privilege of shadowing the best home inspection professional in the coastal area. His name is Mark Evans of Evans Home Inspections, LLC. Mark is a ASHI Certified Home Inspector, ICC Certified Member (Building, Electrical, Mechanical, and Plumbing Combination Inspector), IAEI Member, Licensed Contractor, Certified FEMA Disaster Housing Inspector, a Construction Director for Habitat for Humanity, and a Member of the Liberty County Chamber of Commerce, not to mention veteran from the US Army Corps of Engineers.

I arrived at the property about 15 minutes early while Mark was walking around the outside of the property with the real estate agent in tow. He was checking for any potential concerns and locations of critical exterior components. After he made his initial assessments the clients arrived. Mark introduced himself to the client and her father. He named the associations he was a part of along with some other credentials to put the client at ease and to ensure that he was a professional.

The inspector was friendly and courteous to the client. He provided insight on concerns that went past the usual vague description; he explained the issues to the extent that the client, who had no construction or home improvement experience, could comprehend. He had a “to the point,” non-condescending, proactive approach, keeping the client in close proximity at all times.

He had enough experience and know-how not to carry a cookie-cutter checklist. He examined each room thoroughly, catching even the smallest detail. He pointed out cosmetic deficiencies to the client and explained that he doesn't include them in his report. He didn't have to test any kitchen appliances, due to the fact that new appliances would be installed as part of the purchase agreement. The house has a brand new high efficiency central air system installed by a local professional that Mark was familiar with. The water heater was a cause for concern and was recommended for replacement.

Mark made notes throughout the inspection and took several pictures along the way. After the inspection he asked the client if she had any questions, and after addressing them, he went into a review and summary of his findings, including recommendations. He collected his fee and rechecked the client's phone number, mailing and e-mail address. He then let the client know that he would be sending a binder containing his report, recommendations, pictures, and the receipt.

Overall the inspection process took approximately three and a half hours to complete. It started with a fifteen minute introduction, a three hour inspection, and a fifteen minute conclusion. He charged \$300 because of the relatively small size of the home and limited appliance inspections. Larger square foot homes with extensive heat pumps and other amenities could be up to \$1200.

The inspection included the driveway, exterior wall coverings, exterior and interior light providing appliances, doors, windows, central air unit, ducting, vents, exterior vents and stacks, fireplace, roofing, water heater, visible plumbing, walls, ceiling, fans, receptacles, main panel, and outside main service panel, garbage disposal, toilets, showers/baths, drains, flooring, thermostat, insulation, chimney, flashings, soffits, air filter, smoke detectors, ect.

Areas that are not included in the inspection could be most easily described by the disclaimer on the summary-

*“Evans Home Inspections’ inspectors are not required to report on the following: Life expectancy of any component or system; The causes of the need for a repair; The methods, materials, and costs of corrections; The suitability of the property for any specialized use; Compliance or non-compliance with codes, ordinances, statutes, regulatory requirements or restrictions; The market value of the property or its marketability; The advisability or inadvisability of purchase of the property; Any component or system that was not observed; The presence or absence of pests such as wood damaging organisms, rodents, or insects; or cosmetic items, underground items, or items not permanently installed. Home inspectors are not required to: Offer warranties or guarantees of any kind; Calculate the strength, adequacy, or efficiency of any system or component; Enter any area or perform any procedure that may damage the property or its components or be dangerous to the home inspector or other persons; Operate any system or component that is shut down or otherwise inoperable; Operate any system or component that does not respond to normal operating controls; Disturb insulation, move personal items, panels, furniture, equipment, plant life, soil, snow, ice, or debris that obstructs access or visibility; Determine the presence or absence of any suspected adverse environmental condition or hazardous substance, including but not limited to mold, toxins, carcinogens, noise, contaminants in the building or in soil, water, and air; Determine the effectiveness of any system installed to control or remove suspected hazardous substances; Predict future condition, including but not limited to failure of components.”*

The following are pictures and narratives showing deficiencies found during the inspection that are included in the report.

**Roof Gable:** The roof decking is exposed just below the ridge on the back side of the roof. The area has been repaired and many of the shingles are loose.



Recommend repairs by a fully qualified licensed contractor.

**Plumbing Water Heater:** (safety Hazard/Explosion) The temperature, pressure and relief valve drain termination was not located. Hot water came out of the top of the valve when it was tested. The temperature of the water is hotter than 120 degrees. Lower the temperature by adjusting the heating elements.



The end of the pipe may be underground somewhere around the perimeter of the house. Locate the pipe and remove any soil that may be lodged in the pipe.

**Electrical Wiring Notes:** (Safety Hazard/Shock/Fire) 1). More than one grounded conductor (neutral wires) are sharing the same terminal set screws inside the main panel located in the laundry room.



2). The well pump 12 gauge conductors are over-fused and enter a 30 amp double pole circuit breaker inside the main panel.

3). The ground fault circuit breaker in the main panel is defective. It failed to trip when tested. Ground fault protection is missing on all kitchen countertop outlets.



4). All exterior floor light non metallic cable is exposed and unprotected from physical damage. The conductors are improperly wired into light fixtures and outlets.



5). The grounding conductor is disconnected from the rod below the utility meter. FYI use a direct buried rated bronze acorn ground clamp to secure the conductor to the rod.



Recommend repairs by a fully qualified licensed electrical contractor.

*Attic:* (Safety Hazard/Fall) The access fold down steps are unsafe. The frame and steps are damaged. The stairs are not fully secured to the ceiling framing. Hot air is leaking into the hallway and is entering the air handler return.



Recommend a fully qualified contractor install a new access stairs with insulation.

*Laundry:* (Safety Hazard/Fall) The dryer flexible vent duct terminates inside the attic near the air handler. The insulation and ducts are covered in lint.



Recommend a fully qualified licensed contractor replace the flexible duct with smooth metal ducts and terminate the ducts up through the roof inside a damper type dryer vent hood with out screens.

In conclusion, I was very pleased with the experience and will be pursuing more training and education in home inspection. Mark let me know about a two-week training seminar that will prepare me for the ASHI exam. I'm going to look in to attending those classes, and any other training that I can find as well as utilizing the Army's free correspondence course system.

I think that the home inspection field would be personally rewarding and fulfilling even on a part time basis. I took interest in this profession for a reliable part time supplemental income, after seeing an inspection first hand; I am comfortable and confident in my decision.