Choosing the Wrong Home Inspector Can Really Mess With Your Purchase

After nearly a decade in this business, I have learned the value of having a good inspector to recommend to my buyers. A poorly trained or incompetent inspector can mislead a buyer into terminating a contract over an issue that may not even exist. This happened just last month when the buyer’s inspector claimed that the foundation and basement slab in one of my listings was cracked and heaving. I had to call in engineer Tom Stroud, who wrote an opinion that there were no problems with that foundation and basement slab. He had prior inspections of high quality, and he had an interesting example of that. He had a listing where the garage door has a big gap between it and the floor on both sides, but it is touching the concrete in the middle. The inspector claimed, quite logically, that the garage floor was settling on each side. I called in a mud-jacking contractor to raise the sides, but he said, no, the sides weren’t settling, so the middle must be heaving.

Well, it turned out that both were wrong. My handyman, Mark, convinced me that, in fact, the 50-year-old wooden garage door was sagging in the middle and that the floor was actually level. Quite unexpectedly, we ended up solving the problem by replacing the garage door! Lessons like this contribute over time to our collective expertise.

Even an experienced inspector can make mistakes, of course. I had an interesting example of that this past week. I have a listing where the garage door has a big gap between it and the floor on both sides, but it is touching the concrete in the middle. The inspector claimed, quite logically, that the garage floor was settling on each side. I called in a mud-jacking contractor to raise the sides, but he said, no, the sides weren’t settling, so the middle must be heaving.

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