

OUR TOWN

REAL ESTATE

THE BUTCHER OF BUCKHEAD

He's the **INSPECTOR** real estate agents fear, but he's also the one they call when they're buying.

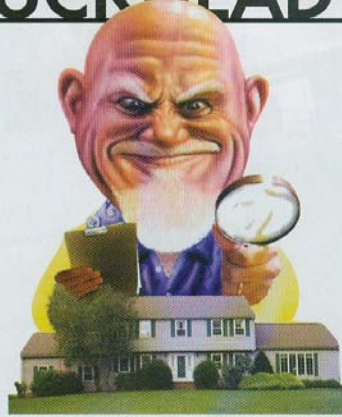
By Mike Mikula

DRESSED IN HIS HABITUAL khaki shorts, with his bald head and white beard, Doug Scott looks more like Burl Ives on a cruise than a man often called "The Deal Breaker." But the professional home inspector's eyes dance as he scours yet another house for fatal flaws.

The 55-year-old began inspecting in the early 1970s after majoring in electrical engineering at Georgia Tech. But he didn't gain his rep as an intimidator—earning colorful nicknames like "Dread Scott" and the "Butcher of Buckhead"—until Atlanta's real estate boom in the 1980s.

"Thirty years ago, I was the standard, but as people who were more accommodating began inspecting, I started looking tougher," he says. "My job is part *This Old House*, part Sherlock Holmes, and part *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*."

On this day, Scott is inspecting a nearly new six-



bedroom brick traditional in Alpharetta. It's the second home he's inspected for Lee and Carla Walker. The couple pulled out of the last deal before he was halfway through.

Scott's already spotted exterior trouble by the time he greets the anxious buyers and their defensive real estate agent. Realtors know he can derail a deal faster than two prior bankruptcies.

"They hate it when they see I'm the inspector," confides

Scott, "but many of them call me when their kids are buying a house."

The investigator enthusiastically delivers bad news before small talk can ensue. "The first thing I noted was a problem with your flashing," he reports, showing

Lee the single layer of metal sheeting at the base of the chimney, where there should be three.

Scott knows where every drop of water that hits a house will ultimately settle;

TIDBIT
Builders' most consistent mistake is unfamiliarity with Georgia's building code, says Scott.

ILLUSTRATION BY DALE STEPHANOS

and, sure enough, once they're inside, he quickly locates damaged sheetrock. To Scott, water is the ultimate enemy. "Termites are too small to have a brain, but they know they'd rather chew on wet, soft, wood than hard, dry wood."

Three and a half hours later, the house has undergone the edificial equivalent of a colonoscopy. Scott pronounces it in his top 25 to 30 percent. The Walkers are ecstatic.

"If you pass Doug's smell test, you've got a very good house," says Lee.

Scott insists, "I never tell a client not to buy a house, but I do paint a picture."

He's been told to improve his bedside manner. "These are people's dreams I'm crushing, they want some compassion. I guess if I were a doctor I'd be like, 'Wow! What an amazing tumor!'" ❧

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Atlanta

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