

# I DIDN'T DO IT!

By

Bob Mulloy

My day began with sunshine on a perfect spring day. As I traveled to the site to perform a home inspection, I enjoyed the return of green leaves, flowering shrubs and warmth after having endured one of the coldest winters I can recall. Needless to say, I was a happy home inspector.

I was hired to inspect one of those “big money custom built homes,” in a town that shall remain anonymous. I arrived at the site after traveling down the ¼ mile private driveway to the retreat lot and met my well-to-do client. The gentleman introduced me to his 4 ½ year old boy named “Jeffrey,” whom he had to bring along as his wife was supervising the three girls. Next, he informed me that the boy would not be a problem because his grandmother would look after him during the home inspection. I was puzzled until he further explained that grandma lives in the home and that he is actually buying the home from his in-laws who are retiring and moving out of state. My client said that he “might have to leave me once in a while to check up on Jeffrey.” No problem said I.

My client next said, “I have one special request. My father-in-law is an oral surgeon who works a long night shift at the hospital. He is sleeping right now but should be awake in an hour or two. Could we please leave the inspection of the master bedroom suite until last and try to keep the noise down for he really needs his sleep.” No problem said I. We can do the exterior inspection and then go into the basement and work from bottom to top.

The sun was still shining this spring day and the exterior inspection was completed without event. Sadly, the roof inspection was a concern as the slots between the shingle tabs were perforated, and you know what that means. I was thinking about 40-squares and lots of money, while the buyer simply shrugged his shoulders and said, “I will be right back; I have to check up on Jeffrey.” No problem said I, I'll meet you in the basement.

As I completed my inspection of the boiler, my client returned and I gave him the Readers Digest version of how the appliance operates, design expectations and maintenance needs. There were no visible problems. I explained that I was moving on to the electrical service panel and that it would take me a few minutes to unscrew the cover. Once again, my client said, “This will give me an opportunity to pop upstairs and checkup on Jeffery again, be right back.” No problem said I.

I removed the panel cover without incident and inspected the usual components. My client arrived and I explained that the 200-amp service and breakers represent a

positive feature, etc. I also pointed out that there were two 20-amp GFCI circuit breakers in the panel and that I would like to press the “test buttons” but the circuits are labeled “master bedroom.” Knowing that his father-in-law was sleeping or might be using the master bathroom, I explained that I did not dare trip the breakers for fear of disturbing him. I asked if he would go upstairs and request permission for me to trip the GFCI breakers. So up he went, to check on Jeffrey again and ask grandma to peek into the bedroom.

I was just screwing the panel box cover back into place when he returned and said, “The coast is clear, go ahead and push the buttons.” So, push the buttons I did. Now, before you go anticipating an electrical explosion or other catastrophe, let me calm you by saying that nothing happened and I reset the breakers without incident! I went on to explain about the emergency generator system. Yes, it was time to checkup on Jeffrey again. No problem said I, while silently starting to wonder what was going on.

As he turned toward the basement staircase, the door above us opened and a grumpy doctor, dressed in his bathrobe appeared and angrily said, “Did you do something to trip the alarm; the police are at the door? The silent alarm was activated. Damn thing cost me \$50 dollars every time the police come.” Thinking the worst, that I awoke the doctor and tripped his security system, I was briefly nervous and about to get down on my knees to apologize. Instead, I said, “No, I didn’t do it! All I did was trip the two GFCI breakers and that should not have tripped the security system.

Before the doctor or a nervous home inspector could respond any further, my client said “Jeffrey!” He went storming up the stairs with me following right behind him, while the doctor went off to assure the policemen that there were no terrorists or other bad guys in the home, just a home inspector who must have tripped the alarm. Honest, I didn’t do it said I!

I was “walking on egg shells” and the doctor was about to pull my teeth out when we both heard the son-in-law speaking in the other room, “Jeffrey, did you touch the telephone?” A little sheepish voice said “Yes.” “Did you dial 911?” I guess his head must have nodded “yes,” for we both heard the son-in-law say, “Why did you do that?” The doctor and I walked into the room to witness a dad with a red face trying to reason with his son by saying, “We taught you to dial 911, but that is only for emergencies! Why did you do it?” The scene reminded me of a Bill Cosby skit as Jeffrey responded with a classical shrug of his shoulders and the words, “I don’t know.” Dad made him promise to never do it again unless there was an emergency, gave Jeffrey a hug and told the doctor that he would pay the \$50 for the false alarm.

As for me, I headed back to the basement with a smile. I didn’t do it!