

# WHAT DOES ASHI® MEAN TO ME?

By  
Bob Mulloy

As you each should know by now, there is some turmoil within our Chapter. Each member of ASHI New England needs to ask themselves the following question, “what does ASHI mean to me?” Or put another way, “what has ASHI® done for me? Thoughts come to mind of a historical speech given by former President Kennedy, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” I ask you, what have you done for ASHI®?

As I write this article, I cannot help but notice a plaque on the wall above my desk. It states, “Bob Mulloy is member #561 of the American Society of Home Inspectors.” That plaque leads me to reflect on my past history and my attainment to date, all of which seems to be a direct result of my membership with ASHI®.

Looking back, it was 25-years ago (time flies) that I learned about home inspectors and began the quest of becoming one. I began researching the profession and found the task very difficult as there were no computers and no internet back then. My quest lead me to contact those 2-3 home inspectors listed in the yellow pages and ask questions about their business. Fortunately, one of them, named Mel Chalfen, turned out to be an ASHI® member and invited me to attend a local Chapter meeting.

I obtained a meeting reservation form and noted that a coat & tie were mandatory, that alone told me something and formed expectations of professionalism. I attended my first meeting with trepidation and left both enlightened and humbled. I had sat beside experienced home inspectors and listened to their conversations regarding many things of which I was ignorant. I listened to the education speaker and learned. Upon leaving the meeting and my first exposure to ASHI®, I reflected on my experience that evening. The other inspectors I met were cordial, they exhibited an elite level of professionalism and they taught me that the profession requires a life time of learning. I learned that I had much more to learn and I wanted to become a member of ASHI® so that I to could represent myself to the public as an elite professional.

And so, I began a pilgrimage of research and study to accrue the required number of inspections and the knowledge needed to pass the exam. Back then, if applicants passed the initial membership requirements of testing and peer review, they were accepted as “interns” until full membership was attained. It took me three years to become a full member! The road was full of bumps and I was impatient, but when that full membership plaque arrived in the mail, it was one of the proudest moments in my life. I have other diplomas as well, but none of them mean as much to me as the one from ASHI®. I am very proud to now consider myself one of the professionals and I strive to “do what I can” for ASHI® by helping to educate others.

To me, ASHI® means the camaraderie of fellow inspectors. I have become friends with many other local and national ASHI® members over the years and all have been available anytime I needed assistance. Certainly we are business men and compete with each other, but we are also ASHI® members who refer prospective clients to other members when we are busy or the distance is not practical. We cover for other buddies when they take that much needed vacation or when health problems occur. ASHI® members make up a Society of professionals and a support system that has no equal.

As for education, I would never have survived in the business without ASHI®. The things I have learned and continue to learn by attending Chapter meetings, education seminars, and national conferences and by reading *The Reporter*, have made me a “wise old owl.” A “wise old owl” is one who knows that he or she does not know everything!

As you reflect upon what ASHI® means to you, one might compare its organizational structure to local or national government. We have both local and national elected officials who represent us, the members. In government, when you have a concern or a complaint, you have the opportunity to voice your opinion to your local representative or senator orally or in writing. Similarly, our local Chapter has members who are elected to serve on the Council of Representatives (COR). Our Chapter core reps attend national meetings and express the concerns of the local Chapters and their members. A governmental system is in place called democracy. If you have a concern, a complaint or a suggestion, you should follow the “chain of command” and give our Society’s government a chance to work. Please answer honestly. Do you know who our local Chapter COR reps are? Have you contacted one of them to voice a concern and asked that your concern be brought to a council meeting for discussion? Lord knows the wheels of government turn slowly, but the system does work and if enough voters or members speak up, their voices will be heard and effective change will take place. Remember the old saying, “quitters never win and winners never quit.”

I had the pleasure of sitting next to our national President during our last Chapter meeting and after listening to both he and Chapter members speak, it became blazingly apparent that all of the complaints raised by the members indicated one clear and consistent problem with ASHI® - a lack of effective communication from the top down to the members! I expressed that very observation with the President during supper and was surprised to hear that he heartily agreed and that was why he was present and why the minutes .of Board meetings are now being emailed to members.

I sense that members are frustrated and feel as if there is taxation without representation. The complaints I heard indicate that the members feel they have no opportunity to vote on changes such as “branding, special assessments and dues increases.” Sadly, I honestly share some of those same concerns. During this past

year, ASHI® has taken a jump-start in its evolution and the members have not had enough information or time to keep abreast of the changes nor to digest their implications. Yes, communications have improved with the emailing of the minutes of Board meetings, but swift changes affect each member's finances and cause one to reflect on the changes by asking, "What am I getting for my money?"

President Stephen Gladstone explained that budget increases required a dues increase to meet expenses. He further explained that the "Branding" effort was only one year old and represents a long-term effort to make ASHI® a household word. He indicated that the Branding effort is growing very successfully through media exposure, but that the plan needs the assistance of the everyday home inspector to promote "The ASHI Experience" to each client, and to utilize available pre-written media releases and articles at the local level. That is what you can do for ASHI®. Inform each client that you are an ASHI® member and what that signifies. Participate in local home buying seminars and promote ASHI®. If all members wave the ASHI® banner, then ASHI® should become a known trademark and prospective clients will seek out members as recognized professionals. BY the way, the report cards that you give each client go into the inspector's personal electronic file and are available for viewing by the inspector ONLY. Sort of a self-evaluation tool and a marketing tool, whereby you could advertise that 95% of your clients were satisfied with your service.

Division and rancor only prevent us from focusing on the challenges ahead. Before I retired as a public school teacher, my union dues were four times ASHI® dues and each year there was a significant price increase. We all tend to measure the cost of something by the fee we charge for a home inspection. Well, as an ASHI® member, you should be seeking a professional fee commensurate with your attainment and one inspection per year should cover your dues. Dues may have gone up, but I consider the price a bargain compared to my former union dues and the value that I receive.

In closing, I urge each and every one of you to ask yourself the question, "What does ASHI® mean to me?" I think you will recall more good than bad, and will come to the realization that ASHI® is not perfect, it is evolving but is still recognized as the best the organization of professional home inspectors. Yes, we have conflicts between ASHI® Standards of Practice and MA Standards of Practice and our firewall with real estate brokers, but Massachusetts is only one small piece in the overall puzzle. I respect and prefer our state's Rules & Regulations versus a perceived collusion with brokers in other states and hope that ASHI® itself will someday signify that the brokers and home inspectors are part of a team of professionals, but that each has independent roles and clients. The public needs to feel reassured that the home inspector they hire will be a fair and unbiased professional, a member of ASHI®. For change can take place, you need to speak up and be heard! I am proud to be an ASHI® member and urge you to help ASHI evolve into your picture of perfection by offering constructive criticism and promoting change instead of quitting.