

PRIDE AND PROFESSIONALISM

by Domenick Neglia, SRA, CSA-G

Appraiser licensing as mandated by USPAP has educated users of appraisal services such as lenders, homeowners, attorneys, mortgage brokers, etc., of the educational requirements and general standards of professional practice that appraisers must adhere to. Licensing has also inspired many appraisers to upgrade their approach to the profession; unfortunately, there are still appraisers who are not motivated to consistently conduct themselves as professionals. Not long ago my own house was appraised for a major lender. When the appraiser rang the bell, I put up a pot of coffee and set the timer for six minutes, with the intention that the appraiser might enjoy a cup of fresh hot coffee before he left. Upon ringing my bell, he stated that he had some measuring to do outside, and would inspect the interior shortly.

After a brief period, he completed his outside work, came inside and proceeded with the "inspection". As he walked through my house, I thought to myself that roller skates would surely help - that's how fast he did the inspection. (During this time the coffee was perking, but not ready.) He took my word for virtually all information, including age of the kitchen equipment and air conditioning unit, attic insulation, electric service, and other items which should have been confirmed with a visual inspection. I asked him how many houses he appraised in a typical day - he said "between eight and ten" - amazed at this, I further enquired as to how he could write up so many appraisals so quickly? Without hesitation he admitted that someone else in his office actually wrote the reports! He had no business card, and would volunteer his first name only, thus making it difficult to prove that the writer of the appraisal did not actually inspect the property. As he was finishing the inspection I asked if he would like a cup of fresh coffee; he politely declined, stating that he had another appointment very soon. My front door closed behind him when the coffee timer sounded - total time to perform an exterior and interior inspection of a seven room house containing almost 1500 square feet of living area plus full basement? Six minutes! I thought to myself, "this must be a world's record - if any of my staff appraisers did this I would fire them on the spot!"

Enforcement of USPAP can curtail this type of slipshod work; but more important, owners of appraisal companies must themselves understand the importance of conformance to high standards of professional practice, must enforce adherence, and not foster manipulation of the regulations to make money. In addition, better educational standards throughout the industry, especially in basic appraisal courses, will promote higher standards of professionalism. An intangible component of all appraisal education should be the teaching of pride in the final product.

With the heightened awareness of USPAP throughout the real estate industry and with increased competition for quality appraisal work, I believe that performances similar to the one described above will occur less frequently, and that pride and professionalism will predominate.