The Origin of the â??Claims Cornerâ?•

Description

I was asked to submit a story about how the Claims Corner series began.

For much of my career in the title insurance industry, first employed as a title examiner trainee at my fatherâ??s law firm in Alexandria, VA in 1971, to becoming a title insurance agent in 1976, and then an underwriter and employee for a major title insurance company in 1979, I had heard it stated that title insurance companies never had any claims. Some relatives, friends, and real estate agents (who were new to the business) would make these statements and question the need for a title insurance policy. Folks would state that since a title examination had been performed, why was a title insurance policy necessary?

VLTA Examiner

During my lifetime I have owned 12 dwellings (and some vacant land) and never suffered from a home fire but would never be without a fire insurance policy. I have never had a title insurance claim but in all but one inherited dwelling (owning a partial interest), I have always had an ownerâ??s title insurance policy. A loss from a fire or from the total failure of title, while rare, could be financially catastrophic.

Many employees in our business may not hear about interesting claim situations that would arise for many different reasons, especially through errors, omissions, faulty underwriting, and fraud. I thought it would be useful to present stories of different claims as an educational tool and provide agents and employees with examples of actual claims that could be shared with others and to show how the best title examination in the world could not always prevent some types of claims, leaving a homeowner or lender exposed to possible loss. While I was a VP & Sr. Underwriter and not an attorney or serving in our claims department, I maintained close contact with that department in following claims matters and our company felt it useful in our internal claim prevention programs.

The first few stories published in 1995 were written with a corny style in my attempt to be humorous, naturally advising the reader that; â??The claims stories you are about to read are true. The names have been changed to protect the innocent.â?• This preface was borrowed from the opening line of the old police detective TV show â??Dragnetâ?•. I will also admit to taking a little poetic license in a narrative of the claim situations, using names of characters from television (â??The X-Filesâ?•), movies (â??Ramboâ?•), old rock stars (Grace Slick from â??Jefferson Airplane/Starshipâ?•) and Harlequin romance novels.

After writing five stories, I retired from this VLTA series to focus on my employerâ??s increasing underwriting workload and continuing education assignments.

The Claims Corner series then took on a more serious tone with many articles submitted by an Arlington attorney who handled numerous and complex claims; James Bruce Davis with Bean, Kinney & Korman, P.C.

Over the subsequent years, many claims stories were submitted by many other attorneys, both in private practice and from those working from title insurance companies, such as Carol Hare, Richard E. Craig, Raighne C. Delaney, Frank T. McCormick, et al. My apology to all of those folks I have missed

due to donating about 30 back issues (that I had saved) of the Examiner to the Executive Director earlier this year before writing this article. I wish I could have compiled a complete list of these attorneys for inclusion and I know that the staff of the Examiner is thankful for all of their participation.

Apparently, some readers and the editorial staff of the VLTA Examiner must share issues or articles of this fine publication or swap them with other state associations because I was contacted by others about the Claims Corner section.

I consider it an honor that two of my corny stories (that I am aware of) were considered for other publications and edited and used by our claim department. â??Claims From the X Filesâ?• was sent in 1995 to our Chicago Title home office for revision to be used in other jurisdictions and/or a company national publication. It mentions the cause of some title insurance claims in Virginia with their percentage. Meanwhile, the story titled â??Title Pirates and Their Search For Treasureâ?• was published around 1997 in the publications of state title insurance associations in Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and California. It tells a swashbuckling tale of a title pirate who searches the land records for loose ends, gaps in parcels, and missing interests that can be acquired and then exploited for profit. The main â??title pirateâ?• preferred to refer to himself as a â??land salvagerâ?• and made claims to lakebeds and even a beach.

VLTA Examiner

My best wishes for good health and profitable times to the members of the VLTA and the continued success of the staff of the Examiner.



Donald C. Wells, Jr.
Past President of the VLTA for the 1992-1993 term and former member of the VLTA Education Committee, on Bill Johnstonâ??s Title Examiner Committee and served for a couple of years as the VLTA liaison with the Virginia Surveyors Association.

Category

1. In the News
2. Members
3. Record Room
4. Settlements
5. Uncategorized

6. Underwriting

Date Created
2024/09/20
Author
vltaexaminer

VLTA Examiner