As we are growing up, most of us dream of having a family and a nice comfortable residence. Buying a house is a big and difficult decision; most people go through a lot of planning when they do it. Besides financial support, they also need to spend time searching for the right house. When they find the house they really want, the next step is to investigate the neighborhood. Many people omit this step, but it may be the most important step before deciding on a house because the neighborhood as a whole is the place in which people invest, expect to raise children, and plan to live for a long period of time.

When I bought my house in Eugene, Oregon in 1992, I was in a rush to buy a home for a family of six. I was in my early twenties, and I did not have experience buying a home. After a couple of months looking at houses which were shown by a real estate agent, my mom and I found a beautiful 1500 square foot house with three bedrooms and two baths. The house was located on a small and quiet street at the end of a cul-de-sac of average-priced homes. We fell in love with the place instantly because it met all of our requirements. It seemed that there were no reasons not to buy it. I signed the buyer agreement within two hours after seeing the house. Unfortunately, I did not check out the neighborhood, and I had no ideas what I would be getting into with my future neighbor. Having an unreasonable, greedy, and trouble-making neighbor next to me created miserable conditions, and I had to figure out the solution to our problem.

A few months after we moved into our new home, we started to notice our neighbor was giving us problems. He parked his truck across the sidewalk on the front of our property. I asked him nicely to move it because it is illegal to block a sidewalk. His response was that if I wasn’t happy with the way he parked, then I should call the cops. I notified the authorities, and they came
to my home. When they gave him a parking ticket, I thought that would teach him a lesson, but I was so wrong. The next day when I was getting ready to go to work, I noticed that there was engine oil all over my car. I suspected my neighbor and called the authorities again, but they just took the report over the phone because I did not have any specific evidence to prove that my neighbor had done it.

My mom and my grandma suffered under these poor conditions too. They love to work in the yard in the afternoon. When they were out in the front yard, my neighbor would release his dog, which would chase them away. To avoid the dog, my mom stayed in the backyard, but he put his dog into his backyard, and the dog tried to jump over the fence, barking at my mom whenever she made a move, biting a big hole in the fence trying to get over. I could have called the animal control, but I didn't want something else to happen to my property, so I kept quiet, hoping he would leave us alone. One afternoon while my mom and my grandma were working in the backyard, they were in fear when they saw an object fly across from his backyard and land next to my grandma. The object was in a sealed envelope containing a rock. My mom and grandma ran into the house and waited until I got home from work. There was also a note from my neighbor inside the envelope. He ordered me to pay him money because my mom had been digging a garden, and he said that would cause the fence to fall down.

At that point, I told myself that I had had enough abuse, and I had to take some action to protect my family. When I talked to other neighbors in the area, I learned that they were having problems with his teenage kids. The kids would sabotage the neighbors' property if they did not get something they wanted. For example, they had their friends over and went to play basketball at my neighbor's basketball court in the middle of the night. After the neighbors told them to go away and not use the court at such a late hour, the next thing they knew their cars had scratches on them, and their houses had toilet paper wrapped around them.

I asked my neighbors to come forward and confront him, but no one was willing to do that because they were afraid of retaliation. I had to take the matter into my own hands. I started to gather evidence. I took some pictures
of his kids climbing over the back fence, which they did frequently. I also made notes of the times when his dog was chewing on the fence and chasing people on the street. I even videotaped daily activities on his property. After I got all the evidence that I needed, I presented it to the authorities, and they told me that the first step was to try to work things out with the neighbor before taking him to court. They sent me to an arbitrator, who acted as a neutral third party in the dispute. My neighbor was not too happy when he saw me in the arbitration hearing, and he blamed me for everything that had been happening. I presented all the evidence to him in front of the arbitrator, none of which he could deny. The arbitrator told him that if he did not cooperate with me, he intended to support me one hundred percent if we ended up in court. My neighbor had no choice. We laid down some rules in writing, and both of us agreed to them.

After that meeting, everything seemed to work out better in the neighborhood. If you have a problem with a very difficult neighbor, first you need to communicate. If that fails, gather evidence and seek the assistance of the authorities. After all, everyone has the right to peace of mind at home.