

## You reap what you sow

When I opened to the opinion pages of the local daily this morning, I was glad I didn't have a mouthful of shredded wheat.

These guys are unbelievable.

After years of encouraging the city government to operate in secrecy and repeated cajoled them to break the law, they've now all of a sudden "got religion."

The editorial begins: **"Why is it that governmental bodies expect the people to 'trust' them?"** That's a very good question and it cost City of Cheyenne residents several hundred thousand dollars to get an answer during the tenure of Jack Spiker. And, the daily paper never made a peep. They condoned it. They ordered it. They endorsed it. They never objected to the secrecy in everything done in government during those eight years.

The fact that the daily is on the right side of this dispute with the new City administration (having to do with an Appeals Board meeting behind closed doors), does not erase, or in their own attorney's word, "cure," their willingness to stand mute for lawlessness for most of this century.

The words in their editorial are surreal. To read it, you'd think *your* daily newspaper had actually been a guardian of openness in government. They haven't and it torques me to see them act now like they were. They editorially encouraged the Spiker administration to ignore any input

from the public and continuously break the law. To paraphrase Richard Nixon, the daily always wrote, "If the City does it, it is not against the law." They believed that.

Do they (the daily) seriously think that readers have forgotten their behavior from 2001 through 2008? Or forgiven it?

Had these words been written and adopted by the complicitous newspaper back in 2001, the following eight years might not have been wasted: **"Anyone who watches government knows that it often acts in its own best interests. Some will call that cynical and that's OK. Our job is to keep an eye on government, not simply accept that all is well."**

What did they write? **"Our job is to keep an eye on government..."** My God, what a lie. What an absolute, unadulterated lie.

Is it too late for the Tribune-Eagle to join the Cheyenne Herald in "keeping an eye on government"? Probably. They lost the credibility previous editors and publishers had built by being between the sheets with the previous City administration. And, violating state campaign laws by making undisclosed contributions of advertising space to propositions the mayor supported didn't help their reputation any, either.

Our job is to keep an eye on government?

Had I read that a bit sooner, there would have been shredded wheat all over the room.

## Solicitations by a grocery checker

I hadn't stopped to think about it, but maybe one of the reasons I prefer going through the self-service lines at the grocery store now is that it avoids having a checker asking me for my change for "x" cause or if I'd like to donate to a certain charity like Jerry's Kids.

Earlier this Saturday, I bought a couple things at the Pioneer Safeway and was asked if I'd like to donate to a program for Breast Cancer Research.

To just curtly say "no" doesn't explain the reason(s). And the checker probably thinks I'm uncaring and a cheapskate. The latter is true, the first is not.

It just seems inappropriate and unnecessary for me to explain to her that I give to all aspects of breast cancer research.

And, it's none of her business, nor her concern, that my wife is a two time breast cancer survivor and that between us and our insurance companies, we have "donated" a helluva lot more to breast cancer detection, its treatment and finding a cure than most other customers who will go through her line today. Combined.

Believe me, we are grateful that breast cancer detection and treatment has made greater strides than almost any other type of cancer. We are happy we can say she is a two time survivor. That is great.

Still, I despise having a grocery store checker, or a clerk in Penney's, ask for a donation or to keep the change - whatever the reason or the cause. I don't even know what diseases we contribute toward finding the cause, a cure or better treatment. My wife handles the responsible stuff in our household. I mow the lawn, take out the garbage and publish the Cheyenne Herald. I did take care of most of the recycling trips but now, with the blue lid container, that is off my shoulders.

The other day, my purchase was \$4.99 and the checker dutifully asked if I'd like to donate my change. I know. I know. A million pennies add up. But mine was a single penny. And it's the principle that I oppose, not the cause.

So, I say "no" without an explanation, turn to leave and feel their eyes glaring a hole in my back. A lot of us donate to the causes we support and refuse to give to those we don't or any at the grocer. Some contribute through United Way and feel that's enough.

Safeway is trying to help and for that, I applaud them. But making me look like a jerk in the process isn't appreciated. Tell you what, giant California corporation, you write me a check for the out-of-pocket expenses we've had in my wife's battles with breast cancer and you can have every coin in change I'm entitled to when I buy a gallon of milk. Fair enough?

## The land on Chalk Bluffs

This subject has resurfaced. The guy who bought ~1,000 acres of land for the purpose of developing a new subdivision called me the other day and asked if I'd meet with him so he could update me on further developments with that land.

*The earlier stories appear on the Cheyenne Herald website - March 4, 2008, page 4 and March 18, 2008, front page, so I won't rehash everything about his first brush with protective county commissioners but some review is necessary.*

Three and a half years ago, the 991 acres was purchased for \$1.65 million. The buyer had taken all the normally required steps to gain approval for a subdivision he planned for the land. The land lies on the south side of Chalk Bluffs Road, ending where the asphalt road ends going east off Hwy 85. He had taken his plan to the county planner, who endorsed the subdivision with praise, saying "this is exactly what we want for these open space subdivisions. The regional planning commission approved that initial plan by a 7-0 vote.

There were to be 139 lots, with an average lot size exceeding 7 acres.

The plans were similar to several others in the county that had been approved.

After unanimous approval by the then city/county planning commission, the county commissioners (Jeff Ketcham, Diane Humphrey and Jack Knudson) denied the plat 3-0. The reason: "You need to go meet with your neighbors."

There are three neighbors.

True Ranch reps told the developer that they didn't care about his subdivision, they were just backing their neighbors, the Atchison Ranch and Ed Prosser.

There was no issue about water availability - the developer had done more than adequate testing to determine there was ample water - at 500 feet. Terracon, a city/county favorite, was used for the test wells. Engineering costs were \$300,000.

A road study was also completed. There was never opposition to the planned subdivision for the usual reasons - water, roads, schools, access, etc. Only because neighbors did not want these new homes near them. Only Prosser is near the subdivision - his house is right across Chalk Bluffs Road. There is a little house to the east of this parcel but none of the three neighbors reside in it.

Subdivision regulations were followed, the county planner at the time praised the subdivision plans, the developer used both Terracon and AVI Engineering, whose work is usually rubber stamped by the city and county departments and the governing bodies. The AVI representative was Brad Emmons, who had just headed the development office, which considered both city and county plats at the time. It was not his first rodeo.

To try to appease the objectors, the plat was altered to 108 lots with an average

lot size of 9 acres gross, including green space. The reconfiguration had curved streets and was more layout-pleasing than the first plan, in my opinion.

The planning commission approved the plat, this time 5-2. But, the county commissioners rejected the revised plan 2-0 with Jack Knudson abstaining.

Wanting to salvage something from the land that he thought would quickly result in an approved plan and lot sales to generate money to apply on his loan, the developer came up with a bit of a radical plan to sell 35 acre lots, something the commissioners had no say about.

To sabotage that plan, the commissioners passed an "emergency resolution" to subject mobile homes placed outside the city-controlled boundaries to much more stringent standards than those *inside* the boundary - including foundations, roofs, age, etc. They made it so a mobile home owner could not transfer any home older than 20 years, could not replace a very old mobile home that may have burned down or been destroyed by wind damage with other than a new one and place it on the 35 acre lots on Chalk Bluffs.

*What the two county commissioners did to accommodate lifetime friends and neighbors (and the wealthy Trues) is the primary reason I decided we must increase our number of commissioners. If only two residents could do that much damage to a single resident, with no sound bases to make decisions, we have to try to prevent that from happening to anyone else. To ignore what educated professionals like county planners and the AVI and Terracon firms recommended, and to overrule the planning commission whose members have experience in developing, is a dangerous thing to tolerate. The pair (a school teacher and a dairy farmer) have had a long time to try to come up with legitimate reasons to reject the subdivision but there aren't any. Just friendship. The emergency resolution was further evidence of the lengths gone to to thwart one man's development of land or recovery of funds invested. That is not the Wyoming I want to live in.*

The property owner has run into mischievous behavior on the part of local banks and local appraisers, on top of the deliberately destructive behavior by two county commissioners. Two among our 85,000 residents. Only two. Even Jack Knudson had the good sense to avoid voting the second time around. Residents have every right to ask for an unfair advantage. Very right. They are not at fault.

This update may serve as a warning to those two commissioners. This guy has too much money invested and has already lost too much personally, including a family member's residence, to give up. He now has allies. He will find a way to best their selfish and unwarranted behavior. At one point, one of the neighbor's "offered" to buy him out. As I wrote earlier, that was never going to happen. And it didn't. What goes 'round, comes 'round, commissioners. What goes 'round, comes 'round.