

## The abandoned "Safeway Subdivision" houses

Wanna own one?

Cheap?

There are two areas of Cheyenne that often get overlooked. Or looked down upon. The oldest houses, some well-kept, some not. Small yards, fenced in front instead of in the back. Mailboxes on the house, not on a post by the street or a community box down the block.

Occupied, often, not by first generation struggling mortgage payers who cannot afford new furniture but worry only about how the outside of their house will impress neighbors but by second or third generation Cheyenne residents who own everything inside and usually the car parked at the curb or in the driveway. Until those in Bar X and other newer subdivisions in and around Cheyenne, transportation is more important to these people than impressing a neighbor.

Their Ford and Chevrolet or Dodge may be dinged and have paint fading, but they can stop it when they approach a stop light or stop sign, unlike the Lexus driven by those in tonier neighborhoods.

What most of these residents want is simply to be left alone. For the City to keep the neighborhood as safe as they can and repair the streets when they need it.

What they don't want is for that same City or County to which they've paid their taxes and in which they have supported local merchants all their lives to come to their doors and order them out.

And, while those in Bar X sometimes can't afford new furniture because of their mortgage payments, they are safe. They are secure. They will never answer the door to a representative of the City, County or local hospital who is there to tell them their house is wanted for a street, a library, a hospital or a viaduct.

No, the people I'm talking about live on the southside. Not in South Cheyenne but on the southside - the area between the UP railroad tracks and Fox Farm Rd. And the people who live on the westside - not as many but residents taken for granted. Expected to support the local grocery store chain when it wanted their business, then accept with grace and silence when that store decides it doesn't want to be in that area anymore and asks the State of Wyoming to buy them out.

Houses near the hospital are deemed historic. That's the eastside. Neighbors suggested they would chain themselves to the buildings rather than allow them to be demolished. Historic, but not as old as many of the houses bought by Safeway and emptied for their emptier promise of a new store.

Research by a local resident who does not want to see the historic houses to the west of Safeway razed shows that they are not only old, but have been home to some of Cheyenne's most notable residents. She tells me that she learned that the man who built the Becker Hotel, appropriately named "Becker," lived in one of those houses. And an inventor who holds many patents.

Imagine the hue and cry if there were an effort to demolish the Becker Hotel. That building now houses the Wyoming Business Council, the single greatest jobs creator in the state - their own. And it is considered historic while the guy who built it - obviously older - lived in a house that is not considered historic. Nothing on the westside is, it seems. If we were looking for properties visitors might want to visit, we should have designated the house taken from a Japanese-American lady as historic and made it a tourist attraction. After all, how many Americans, born, raised and deceased on our soil, have twice been displaced because the government took their land? How many? One that we know of and she lived in Cheyenne at the end of her days - after earlier being displaced from her property in California during WWII.

I spoke earlier today with Rich Cathcart of the State and asked him whether the State would consider giving those houses to residents who would move them and reside in them in Laramie County. He said at the State Buildings Commission quarterly meeting in April, he would broach the subject and thought there might be a way to accommodate those who want to preserve at least some of those old houses. Obviously, the transfer of ownership would have to be done in a manner legal and the taker would have to agree to move the house within a reasonable window of time.

It will be interesting to see how this idea progresses. We will see how sincere residents are and how accommodating the State will be. But, at the least the possibility exists that the houses can be saved.

## Removing writing from the PAWS test would be a huge mistake

Ongoing efforts to dumb-down standardized tests have been met with hand-wringing on why our young high school and college graduates aren't prepared for the workplace.

When test takers didn't do well on antonyms, antonyms were removed from the test. As test scores slid over the past forty to fifty years, points were awarded for starting the test. That's right, when one put their name and other requested information at the top of page 1, they were given points. If they didn't answer a single question, they'd still have a score.

I have never forgotten a parent-teacher conference my wife and I attended for our younger daughter - she was in the fourth or fifth grade, as I recall. She was always in the gifted and talented programs (I know, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree) in Minnesota public schools, one of the best in the nation. One of the G/T teachers handed me a paper and asked me to take a look at it. He had taken the students to a nearby cemetery and they were to write of the experience. I read some of my daughter's work and he asked me what I thought of it. I said, "there are a lot of misspelled words." He said, "I don't care about that. I just want

the kids to be able to express themselves." Well, I cared about that and thought spelling was part of the expression. Our daughter could have learned anything teachers tried to teach her. More obedient than her dad, she would have picked up on correctly spelling every misspelled word if directed or required to.

Spelling errors on these pages are almost always the result of typos. Because I type faster than a Thompson submachine gun can put out rounds, sometimes the fingers put down letters in reverse order and spell a word, albeit the wrong one.

Our daughter later spent time in advertising. She had to spell and did. But, the public school didn't think it important.

Writing is a critical skill. Writing teaches spelling, vocabulary, punctuation, use of words and meaning of words. You don't put down a word you don't know the meaning of - you'll look it up first. Few of us will be successful writers like J.K. Rowling or Stephen King. And, while writing letters has been supplanted with calling or texting on a cell phone, being able to write should still be a goal of public education. Not further dumbing down tests so scores can be higher. That's wrong.

## The \$300 million mea culpa

A show of hands, please. How many think Tiger Woods wrote the apology he delivered to breathless millions the other day? How many thought someone else?

I didn't watch it live - I hate to see grown men grovel in front of strangers who are in no position to sit in judgment on them - but did save a link to it in case I wanted to watch it later for a story.

Some of what he supposedly said is almost comical. As reported by media, of course, and God knows they get it wrong as often as they get it right anymore.

Did he really say when he returned to golf he'd be more "respectful" of the game? As though golf demanded more "respect" for marriage vows than, say, curling? The game had nothing to do with Tiger's transgressions. His infidelity. Golf provided him the fame and resources to attract and use the women who chose to be used.

One thing that is very interesting to me about this whole sordid episode is why Tiger was given the JFK treatment. Why

was the story of his serial misbehavior never reported - NEVER reported - until after a harmless accident last Thanksgiving? With paparazzi, cable networks, other PGA golfers and their wives, enemies on the tour, how was Tiger's unfaithfulness to the beautiful blonde and adorable children kept under wraps?

Much of his "hooking up" was done in public settings and in view of dozens, even hundreds. Is Tiger Woods so mesmerizing that no one thought this a good story until he backed into a fire hydrant on his own property?

From what I've read or heard (I won't sink to watching his staged news "conference"), an apology this sincere hasn't been seen since Larry Craig and his wife stood and explained his toe tapping and Mark Sanford "apologized" for lying to friends and foes alike about his whereabouts that left South Carolina without a chief executive for days. Tiger, go back to playing golf. You have a character defect that won't change with public mea culpas. Pay Elin \$300 mil and move on.

**What is the Cheyenne Herald? It is a bi-weekly publication that I hesitate to refer to as a "newspaper" but calling it only an "Opinion/Commentary" publication does not adequately describe it either. While much of what appears on these pages is opinion, commentary, and/or essay, much of it is breaking news. When we disclosed that former Cheyenne Police Chief Bob Fecht had purchased, with public money, a master's degree in criminal justice from an unaccredited diploma mill in Mississippi that was never authorized to issue degrees, that was not opinion. That was not commentary. That was fact. That was news. On the other side of the coin, when I opine that the latest city attorney isn't up to the job yet, that is my opinion. Because I write virtually everything presented on these pages, bylines are not used. They're not necessary. An article written by someone else will have a byline. The Herald is not a member of the Wyoming Press Association. What is presented here is original. Space is not filled with wire service fodder, comics or crossword puzzles. The Cheyenne Herald is Wyoming's only investigative publication and that distinction is taken seriously.**

*Dave Featherly*