

# Hospital cleans up Nob Hill

Soon, Charlie Harms will be but a memory and a footnote to the local hospital operation. Likewise, what was once a family compound known as the Nob Hill Subdivision west of Cheyenne will be nothing more than bare land with a single house standing at its north entrance corner.

As Charlie finds himself another high paying leadership position in some other city, former residents of Nob Hill can only remember what it was like to gather multiple families of the same lineage for holiday activities and family occasions.

For years to come, how many is known to no one at this point, those families who lived at Nob Hill, in solitude and peaceful coexistence with the others there, will drive west from Cheyenne on Happy Jack Rd., perhaps to Curt Gowdy Park or on the way to Laramie, and see the vacant and undeveloped land that used to be home to them, and wonder why they were indiscriminately chosen to have their land snatched from them.

And, for what?

Even at the time the land grab was being made, the county commissioners who would have to had granted public use of the right of eminent domain to remove any recalcitrants or holdouts, had no idea how the hospital, then known as United Medical Center, would finance such an undertaking. And they still don't.

One might think that such a question would be answered before knocking on our neighbors' doors to tell them the hospital wanted their land and if they were unwilling to sell voluntarily, the hospital had the power to take it through the use of condemnation and eminent domain.

Now the hospital owns most of the land that was once Nob Hill - a parcel of land platted the year Wyoming became a state, 1890 - with no idea what they can do

with the land, or when.

Overlooked in the power struggle lost by Charlie Harms when he was sold out by the hospital board of directors and county commissioners is the fact that a heavy-handed and unnecessary action forcibly removed many families from homes they had lived in for generations.

The hospital will defend its action by telling stories of a landowner who was an over-the-road trucker and didn't even know he owned the parcel which had been left to him. And they will tell of landowners who were only too pleased to sell to them. They might have been pleased when the hospital's agent offered them more than the appraised value - more than the owner, parent or grandparent had paid for the parcel a half century back.

The homes were modest, some maybe less than that. Looking in from the outside, many who travel Happy Jack frequently might think the Nob Hill residents were lucky to get what they did for those houses and land. But, when the government comes calling for your home someday, you will realize that what appears to be a good price to someone else might not be a good price to a property owner. When you were born in a house, lived as a married person in that same house, and had your own children while living in that house, a stranger cannot fix a price that takes those things into consideration.

The hospital retained a real estate agent who led off the negotiations with a threat to forcibly remove homeowners if they were unwilling to sell. He reminded them that, if the county used eminent domain to confiscate their homes, the most they would get is "fair market value" and a pittance for relocation. Unsophisticated owners believed what they were told, accepted the threat as fact, and took what they could get. And, for what? Why? Their homes have been razed. The

debris is finally being hauled away.

And Charlie Harms, the instigator for a new Cheyenne Taj Mahospital, is gone. He was discarded like the Nob Hill residents' belongings. Like the memories those residents had for decades and even generations out there.

Whenever a new CEO or city department head steps off the Trailways and the first thing he wants to do is change the name of something, send him packing. To suggest that a Cheyenne hospital is a regional anything when there are bigger and better hospitals 50 miles to the south is foolishness. Vanity. Cheyenne Fire and Rescue? Because the earlier initials were confused with Cheyenne Frontier Days?

The hospital will now cry "poor mouth." They will say they can't get by with the rates they charge, what they are reimbursed by WinHealth and other insurance providers, that their costs are too high, that they need more parking by a hospital they had planned to abandon.

Here's guessing they will seldom venture out Happy Jack and view the devastation they have wrought - to families and property. "They" meaning any board member who participated in the destruction of a family compound and any county commissioner who stood by silently while a hospital used public power to force people to sell their property. All but one.

After ignoring the demolition debris for several weeks, the hospital is finally seeing to it that the debris that just a year ago was a house, or a garage, or a commercial business, or a shed, that which is now a pile of lumber, sheetrock and brick, is finally hauled to the landfill.

The determined remaining family member who refused to be bullied, who refused to accept the threats from the real estate agent who told her she had no choice?

She is back working this school year in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Fearful that somehow the hospital could still reach its tentacles out illegally and snatch *her* house - not *their* house - away from her. When, and if, she returns to make Cheyenne her permanent home once again, she will not be able to look out her windows and see her grandmother's house, her siblings' houses, her uncle's house. Those houses will all be in the landfill. Only hers will remain. And bare land.

Chances are her family members will be very uncomfortable about returning to her house for gatherings when she's in town. You cannot go home again when your home has been razed and hauled away.

Who cares?

Few, probably. Not Charlie Harms who will land in a smaller market, maybe to again devastate a neighborhood under the guise of progress. Hospitals are never big enough, they never have enough beds, never enough doctors. Nor the board members or commissioners who participated in the needless displacement of a few dozen residents. Who cares?

Where were the doctors who became so vocal when they wanted the resignations of Harms and board chairman Bill Bagley?

Where were the neighbors to the hospital that didn't want to have six rundown houses demolished or moved from south of the hospital parking garage?

Why was there no defense put up for the property owners at Nob Hill? Houses out there were not in worse condition than those deemed to be "historic" near the garage. Nob Hill houses were probably built before those built at Camp Russell and later moved into town. Why weren't they historic? Because they were out of sight, well out of the city limits? For now.

Who's next?

Which neighborhood will be razed for a library, a viaduct, a hospital, a road, a bridge, for any public project either the county commissioners or city government craves where your house now stands? Will it be your house, your neighborhood? Don't rely on neighbors to come to your aid. That bigger building with the larger parking lot from which to check books out doesn't seem more important than the homes of residents. But it did to many.

And, if you get three times as much for your house and land as you paid for them, the confiscators will sleep well, even though it will take you twice what you got for it to replace it in today's market.

It helps if those responsible for the displacement of fellow residents have no conscience. Kind of like those in the country who never felt any guilt for the relocation to internment camps of loyal and patriotic Japanese-Americans during World War II. Someday, there will be a need to throw more people off their land. But that day hasn't arrived for you. Yet.

