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**FREE
TAKE ONE**

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“The elevator’s on the fritz again. When you’ve finished eating, grab your walker and pull your oxygen tank up the stairs to your 4th floor apartment. It’ll be fun!”

Increasingly, I am on the receiving end of contacts that suggest elder abuse and neglect by public employees who are paid to insure our senior’s care and comfort.

In the last couple of months, the suspension of lunches at one senior center; authoritarian rule in a private senior apartment complex; and, now, a letter detailing inoperable elevators at a 4-story senior’s complex, have all been brought to my attention. The problems stem from a lack of concern for the well-being of our elderly. When seniors come to me for assistance instead of calling the mayor’s office, something is terribly wrong.

Seniors contact a person they wouldn’t recognize if they saw him on the street - not the mayor. They often express fear of reprisal if the mayor or someone in the system finds out they’ve reported anything. Younger people don’t understand such a fear - the fear that someone with the power, but lacking a conscience, would serve an eviction notice on one unable to relocate because they wrote to or spoke with the Cheyenne Herald.

If you believe that such things don’t happen in Cheyenne, you’re wrong. Things have changed here. Dramatically. There is a meanness that didn’t exist two decades ago. Didn’t exist ten years ago. Cheyenne is creeping toward being an East Coast city on the Plains. The “Magic City” has become the “Get-Even City.” The daily newspaper has led the charge.

The City has the responsibility, both legal and moral, to insure that public buildings our seniors live in provide the simple accommodations those residents were promised or are legally required to be provided. A safe environment, elevators that work, lunches as scheduled, etc.

A HUD property temporarily terminated lunches to seniors who depended on that meal - without notice or concern. And then a great effort went into finding out which of the seniors had contacted the Cheyenne Herald. There was no remorse about the termination of lunches or the inconvenience to seniors - they wanted to retaliate against whomever spoke up.

On the Thursday before publication of this issue of the Cheyenne Herald, a lengthy, well-written letter came. It was four pages long and neatly printed. There was no return address on the envelope and no signature on the letter. While I will almost never pursue a story prompted by anonymous sources, seniors’ complaints pique my interest and inflame my sensibilities.

This letter should have gone to the mayor. The man I knew so well before he became mayor would have been incensed to learn that elevators in properties under City control were allowed to remain broken and inoperable for months at a time. The reason callous indifferences continue to occur is that some city employees have no worry of punishment or termination of their job for such behavior. The mayor does not seem to care. He once would have but he no longer does. How tragic.

Residents of these properties are not only elderly, as is required to live in the facilities, many are in poor or deteriorating health. They cannot climb stairs. Some have canes, crutches or walkers - and some are on oxygen which is in limited supply in their portable tank when they leave their apartments. If they cannot return to their rooms because the elevator is broken again - or still - they may run out of oxygen. These are not college football players at 7220’ who inhale oxygen to catch their breath. There are senior citizens who inhale oxygen just to breathe.

My own father told me one time that his greatest fear of dying was by smothering. He worried that he would not be able to get enough air to keep him alive and he would smother. Suffocate. People inhaling high levels of oxygen either cannot go without it for long, or fear they cannot. To be stranded away from their oxygen supply because the building elevator is inoperable again must be frightening.

At other times, residents are confined to their rooms because the elevator is out (the second elevator has been inoperable for nearly a year). This shameless indifference by city employees, tolerated by the mayor, must end. We can only hope a new mayor has a conscience. And a heart.

Jewelry “burglaries” were inside jobs

Cleaning services do not have to be licensed nor their employees bonded

The City of Cheyenne requires that transient merchants going door to door be licensed. The City does not require that a cleaning or maid service be licensed.

In other words, someone coming **to** your front door needs a license but someone coming **through** your front door into your house when you’re not there, does not.

The City requires the young children who sell soft drinks, water and snacks along the CFD parade route be licensed.

The City requires beauty and barber shops be licensed, and requires that your bicycle be licensed. They require Christmas tree lots be licensed. They require auctions be licensed.

But a business that sends employees into your home to clean while you’re not present does not need a license nor bonding for that employee.

Various people employed by the City of Cheyenne must be bonded. Accountants and other professionals have to carry bonds. But a cleaning company employee who will have access to your jewelry, silver, clothes, electronics and other valuables does not have to be bonded.

The relevance of the foregoing is that the recent string of “burglaries” were not burglaries at all. They were larcenies.

The daily paper reported that considerable jewelry had been stolen from Cheyenne homes - their August 19 issue referred to “burglaries.” The CPD asked anyone who believed their home was “burglarized” and are missing jewelry, to contact a CPD detective at 637-6510,

A burglary is defined, in criminal law, as **“the breaking and entering of the premises of another with an intent to commit a crime.”**

But there was no burglary involved with these thefts. An employee(s) of a well-known local cleaning (maid) service is alleged to have stolen jewelry from homes and, in at least with the victim I am familiar with, the house was one he was assigned to clean. Were the others?

Why didn’t the WT-E report that it was a larceny, not burglary? It is important that homeowners know local cleaning services are not required to be licensed by the City and do not have to bond employees and may not have insurance to cover losses of expensive pieces of jewelry.

It would be wise for trusting homeowners to be a little more cautious in the future. Cleaning companies are facing the same labor crunch as other small businesses. Are they resorting to less qualified and less honest job applicants to get the jobs done?

If you have used a cleaning service, you should do an inventory of your jewelry - especially those pieces that are gold or diamonds or a combination of both. If you cannot account for a piece, contact the CPD to look at what they have recovered and hasn’t been returned to an owner yet. Then, do whatever is necessary to insure that cleaning employees (often temps) with access to your home in your absence, have been properly screened - preferably bonded. These larcenies were stopped because a woman was missing a piece she often wore. Pieces seldom worn would be harder to notice missing.

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