

Where to Live

Patsy and I decided to buy a house in Colorado Springs, rather than start out renting. I had enough time the last weeks at Fort Carson to check out some possibilities. And I still had my Veterans benefits to cut our costs a bit.

So we settled on a brand new house on Squaw Valley Drive east of Academy Boulevard in a new subdivision on the expanding east part of the City. It sat high looking over homes below with a big view to the south and southwest. That was insured because there was a steep and deep back yard - which had no vegetation on it - just a steep sandy slope.

We were encouraged in our decision a bit by the fact that the architect of the subdivision and of numbers of house styles in it lived next door to the house we bought. If the designers of our home lived in one, we thought we had some confirmation of the value of the house.

In retrospect that 'yard with a view' was as much a liability as an asset - for it would require a lot of costly vegetation, and plenty of 'yard work' to sod and grass up that large 'back yard.' And I was hardly the harry homeowner type. I had little appreciation for the technical problem that the steep slope would pose in the simple problem of getting grass and sod to 'cling' to the slope, and not be displaced by rain water.

In fact I was so deterred in tackling that problem - and its cost - now that I was on a retired Colonel's pay - we never did cover that back yard slope. We had moved to another home way across town before we had done much work on our first one.

While most of the rest of my narrative about my family's life after my military retirement will be reported here under "Married Life" I will here describe the phases of my thoughts and actions between the time - 18 months - we moved to Squaw Valley drive, and I plunged into my pioneering venture - Enjoy Colorado.

Choices

With young David attending Fountain Valley School and destined for some college, I had to on just a Colonel's retired pay 55% of what I had made on active duty - and with no substantial savings or estate - find another source of income.

I was not interested in 'double-dipping' as many of my classmates who retired in the Washinton DC and northern Virginia did - going right back to work, either in a Federal defense position, or for a defense industry. Justified in their own minds on the basis they brought a career's worth of military and wartime 'experience' to bear on the job - improving it. (downplaying the value of the 'inside contacts' they might have still in the military that could give the company an 'edge' in getting contracts - which for many a general officer was the primary value they were hired by defense industries.)

I just didn't like the taste in my mouth of double dipping. So I didn't attempt to do it.

Looking for a straightforward job in some medium or larger non-defense business was ok, though I had few credentials to commend me to any employer - except a surplus of 'leadership' skills. I could manage a bunch of men out in any wilderness!

I knew that retired military in the Pikes Peak region often went into the real estate business, selling - as real estate agents - housing for the forever-turnover military of the area. That was often feasible on a 'commission' basis because the retirement pay was assured, even if sales - and their commissions - were not, or were very seasonably variable.

To test those waters I took the time go through the local "Jones Real Estate School" that swiftly qualified one for a state real estate licence. So I got mine, but did not seek an agency to work through. Learned some things however.

The last choice, which was attractive to me, was to go into business for myself. I had a novel set of ideas that I was ready to try.

A Hard Look at the City

While I cruised around the city, getting to 'know' it better than I did when growing up or from Fort Carson, one fact slapped me in the face.

When I went downtown I saw a wasteland. The great and original Antler's Hotel was gone and replacing it was just a dull vertical slab with no character, much less historical architecture. The view westward down Pikes Peak Avenue from a block or two east had been, for 75 or more years the iconic view everyone east of the Mississippi, of 'Colorado' with Pikes Peak looming in the background saw in magazines, advertising, and movies. It was the most powerful 'ad' for Colorado and Colorado Springs tourism.

It had been torn down a few years before, reputedly because it

had serious structural problems caused by a prior fire. But there was apparently no consideration to replacing it with a hotel with visual, much less historic, character. It looked dull.

Then I realized that a parking lot was where the original, world class, Burns Theater (later housing the "Chief" Movie theater) had been. Gone, as I learned, from a conscious act by the city's 'Urban Renewal' authority which was embarked on replacing the city-pronounced 'slum and blight' by buying up the old buildings, discounting the land price using HUD Block Grant Funds and then soliciting new investors - usually from other cities - to build anew a more modern and economically viable business building. Again, destroying the historical buildings.

Finally I saw that Fannie Mae Duncan's celebrated "Cotton Club" - both by the blacks, including black soldiers - and iconic national black musicians who played there such as Louis Armstrong - was gone.

Except in this case the building had not just been purchased in a buy and sell private transaction using Block Grant funds, but by the exercise of the city's power of 'Eminent Domain' - a forced sale. Fannie Mae, who was as responsible and charitable small business owner as any in Colorado Springs, pulled up stakes, moved to Denver, and never came back.

Now I was stunned. In this purportedly highly conservative, Republican dominated city I grew up in, with its main newspaper of Liberatorian persuasion - not only had a Federal Urban Renewal project been created by city government, and buildings purchased and torn down with Block Grant Federal Funds, but the city acted with the power of Eminent Domain to

force some private owners to sell their properties which were then also torn down. All to be followed by enticing investors to buy discounted (from market value) land and install new businesses and build new modern buildings. While all vestiges of Colorado Spring's downtown historical character and architecture was slated to disappear.

At the same time I had been noticing, even while still at Fort Carson, that IBM's local facility had left the city. As had Digital Corporation with a large plant, parts of Hewlett Packard, and Apple Computer's fabrication plant, were going, even though the city was growing in population.

Questionable Economic Policies

Even though I had decided to start up my own small company in Colorado Springs, I began to question the soundness of the economic policies the city 'leadership' was embracing, for a future that was going to be different from the past. As much from 'Future Shock' as anything. As my time permitted I intended to find out why the city was taking the path it was, and what it portended for the future. I even wondered whether I should continue to live in Colorado Springs.

But now I turned my new venture - "Enjoy Colorado" based on what I thought would be a future-type of business.

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