

I Remember

Denny Faker 4/16/15

For some of us our memories of living in this North End neighborhood are remembering a big part of our lives. I, for example, moved in to the North End when I was 21 years old. My son Eric, was born here and my wife and I carried him across the street to visit Wrights Park to feed the Ducks all through his childhood. How could a person not fall in love with the giant trees, fall colors, the large old Victorians, snow covered and decked out for Christmas and our Tacoma winter and the sound of trains whistles and fog horns to remind us that our homeland is the great northwest.

None of us can keep from falling in love with the North Slope. We all feel it; we all share it, and have shown an uncompromising drive to protect it.

Many years have passed since I was in the early years of owning the Bavarian Restaurant at Division and North K St. By the mid 1990's local crime, vandalism and unsavory transient neighbors had pushed us to draw a line in the sand. We had had enough and it was time for us to take back our neighborhood.

I decided to go out one afternoon and knock on doors to ask our homeowners if they wanted to meet at the restaurant to talk out our concerns and maybe work on solutions to those ever-growing problems.

On the first day a lady at the door said, "Yes, I'll be there, but what can be done about My Home." I told her we would sure try to help. Walking to the next address I was puzzled and thinking, her home, what does she want us to do about her home. We've got a whole neighborhood to fix I'm afraid we can't stop with one house. To my surprise that question was posed by more and more neighbors as the visits went on and by asking what they were talking about I learned it was the name of a Boarding Facility that housed troubled individuals who needed socializing support from city, county and state agencies.

It was a large facility full of residents who were very troublesome to us all and a lot of them on meds, and not controlled at all by the facility management. Needless to say our first meeting was about "MY HOME." We banded together, involved the licensing agencies and pressured the owner to clean up his operation or lose his licenses. That felt great until the next Christmas Eve when the couple living next door to "MY HOME" and I received our own knock on the door. Delivered to us were legal papers opening a lawsuit for one million dollars for forcing My Home's owner to rob his tenants of their constitutional rights. Immediately all of the licensing agencies instructed their people to back off and we were in it alone.

About a year and twenty five thousand dollars in legal fees later, the suite was dropped if we shut down our efforts to control his operation.

I guess that we got what we fought for, but at a very high emotional and financial price. Now we realize how much more we should have done to better our beloved part of Tacoma's north end. We had been regularly meeting and continued to do so. We formed the North Slope Historic District to protect and preserve our one and only part of Tacoma with the rich history.

Now when I take an evening stroll along the cracked sidewalks that border our cobble stone streets, when I look up into the huge old-growth trees and see those same Victorian homes, I stop to soak up the sights and sounds, the smells and peace we love and still work to protect and pass on to another generation of homeowners.