

Due Diligence

By Mike Harris

There are two concepts of Denver: "Queen City of the Plains" and "Cow Town." The civilized city of Brown's Hotel and that of the Brawling Cowboy, Mining Capital of the West." Both absolutely true.

The first time I saw Denver was in 1943. I had been inducted into the army at Ft. Dix, shipped to Miami for basic training, and then to Lowry Field's Photo School in Denver.

Thousands of soldiers from all corners of the country became exposed to an environment they would never have encountered normally. Most were less than twenty years old, single, and inexperienced. I was street smart and well on the way to becoming settled. This call to service was a bump in the road.

When I was settled in my quarters there was an older soldier in the bed next to mine. I had more in common with him than the under-twenty group. Paul D. Mitchel was a veteran of WW One, an enlisted man, a former Sgt. Major, and a part of General Pershing's headquarters. I made him my mentor. One of the smartest things I ever did in my whole life!

In 1943 the City of Denver was bursting at the seams, soldiers everywhere. After thirteen weeks of Photo School I was rotated out with just a smattering of the knowledge Uncle Sam felt would be useful in the war effort.

On my next visit to Denver, I was a sixty-three, a retired veteran visiting my son and daughter-in-law who had chosen to make Denver their home. We sublet and spent the whole summer in Denver, left for the east in time to vote, and on to Florida for the winter. So we established a pattern that lasted sixteen years. Denver grew and prospered, and along with the city, so did my family.

Move the calendar to 2012. I am looking at my ninety-fifth birthday, circumstances have changed, and after a family conference the consensus was that I come to Denver to live. So I left the war zone of central Philadelphia and relocated to Denver, a mature and civilized city.

Polite and relaxed people, the city disarmed me. I told my street smarts, "This is not the east coast, relax! It is not a war zone." I disregarded the red flags that 'street' kept flashing. I went along to get along, but did not do due diligence.

Since my old H.M.O. covered me for sixty days, AARP sent a representative who enrolled me in the wrong H.M.O. I connected with the wrong primary care doctor and wrong specialists, which shortly resulted in four surgeries. In four months I became a debilitated ninety-five-year-old senior who had come to Denver not taking any pills, with no aches, no pains, and feeling immortal. Suddenly I was fighting for my life.

Looking to blame somebody, angry and irrational, my father's teaching prevailed. "When looking to blame somebody for seemingly being wronged, look into a mirror first." Seeing myself, it came to me, it was all my own fault. I was disarmed by the City of Denver, I did not listen to the constantly flashing flags of street smarts, I did not do due diligence. I really should only blame myself.