

Sue and Bob FROM PAGE ONE

The subject of North Lawrence brought into both of their voices traces of wistfulness, regret, and, occasionally, bitterness, especially when their landlord was mentioned.

"As far as the general atmosphere of how the people act, we really enjoyed North Lawrence a lot," remarked Sue. "But there were some disadvantages to living there, like rusty water and a lot of loose dogs that get into trash and stuff. It seemed like whenever there was a storm, North Lawrence was the last to get the power turned back on. Over in North Lawrence we could take our dog and cat for a walk, but over here it's too busy--too much traffic and no sidewalk. It's just not the kind of atmosphere like North Lawrence. But it's just the busy street we live on. If we lived in the house behind us we'd be alright."

"In my opinion," she continued, "That house on Elm Street in North Lawrence should be leveled. The heater heated one room; it didn't have a fan, so there was no circulation. The whole house was running on a 30-watt fuse, the plumbing froze every winter, there was no insulation--you name it--the roof leaked."

Looking at the overall picture, Bob maintained that the citizens of North Lawrence have a feeling of impending doom for their community.

"I was told that the City Commission, during August when everyone was out of town, sneaked through a new zoning ordinance that marked certain areas (of North Lawrence) that are now residential to be made industrial. This means that once you term something industrial, then no improvement of any long-term value can be made in the houses. It's against city ordinance. So all you can do is maintain the house at its current level. And the banks won't give loans for improvements either. They (the city commission) want to turn that whole area into heavy industry. A lot of people think that's the only reason the levee was built there, along that side of the river, because they figured it'd be a good place for heavy industry. It's really a good idea, once you get down to it..."

Sue interrupted, "Except for the people who live there."

"Yeah," Bob conceded, "I've talked to some of the people who live there and they're kind of bagged by it. A lot of people think it's a bum part of town,

which it's not. A lot of the people there don't have much money but they're good people. They pretty much mind their own business. They don't tend to be real civic-oriented because they've kind of been hung out to dry all these years."

Summing up the dilemma of deciding which part of town to live in, Sue said, "The atmosphere was much nicer in North Lawrence but the living conditions are better here. I would have been willing to stay in our old house just to save money if our landlord would have fixed the electrical system, or fixed the roof, but she wouldn't put a penny into the house. Her philosophy was that somebody will always want it, no matter what shape it's in. If she would have fixed it up to what I consider safe standards we would have stayed over there. We liked it, but it just wasn't safe."

Among the qualities that Sue and Bob mentioned that North Lawrence has that Indian Hills doesn't have, "trees, quiet, and safety." They never had a lock in their house in North Lawrence. Now after the theft of their carpet and several other incidents, they feel compelled to lock-up every time they go out.



Asked about their plans for the future, Bob, who commutes to K. C., said, "I'd like to get a job in this town, but they're hard to find. KU screws that up."

Lamented Sue; "We have a surplus of workers here and the businesses get away with murder. My last job I got \$2.25 an hour and I'm a college graduate."

"That'll never change in this town," Bob said. "There's a lot of sham in this town... lotta good people too, but..."

Directions Lawrence should take?

Sue: "I wish they'd meet the needs of the people. Fake shopping: it seems like everyone goes to Kansas City or Topeka. All those downtown stores are geared for the rich co-eds only. Anybody who's a working person can't afford their astronomical prices. So unless you want to shop at Gibsons or

TG&Y for your clothes, you gotta go out of town. There are no good restaurants, either, just a lot

of fast food places. Oh, there's a few good ones, like the Cornucopia..."

Bob: "I'd kinda like to see the city stop expanding in size. It's gonna gobble up all the surrounding country. Look where it's gone... the only reason the Clinton Dam was built was so the city could expand out into the Wakarusa flood plain... The name of the game in Douglas County is real estate development. You can take that to the bank. Out there around Clinton the price of that land is gonna... (Bob made the sound of a bottle-rocket taking off.)"

Sue and Bob looked into buying a solar home, but found the price as well as the city ordinance prohibitive.

Bob: "They need to change the building codes so you can build solar homes from existing structures. Why the hell build a whole new home? You can read a book on how to do it. It may take you a while but what the heck? Architects already have this stuff figured out. It's just a matter of getting the powers-that-be to admit that people shouldn't pay that much money (for a brand-new solar home) when they don't have to. The power companies could get in on it but the thing is, like Ralph Nader says, 'Nobody has a deed to the sun yet.' So solar energy scares the shit out of them because people are getting something for nothing."

Sue, with her gift for summation, said, "Lawrence is big enough. If we get many more people, it's gonna be a mess."

Addressing their position in a suburban ambience, Bob said, "I'd like to see more landscaping done around this town than what there is. Our house is a case in point: right now it looks like somebody parachuted us down in the Badlands."

"They go in and just level the places where they build," complained Sue. "Instead of leaving the trees and vegetation, they just plough it under. Our first money is going to go into getting some trees in. This fall we'll spend two hundred dollars, and then in the spring we'll spend more."

In spite of their complaints about life here, Sue and Bob are genuinely fond of Lawrence and of their new home in Indian Hills. They've found the few neighbors they've met very cordial and like the economic security of being homeowners. But there's a pall over their basically happy world, perhaps best explained by Bob's final remark of the interview: "We need to get hedges in to stop the noise from the passing cars... Everybody would like to own a ranch, but those days are over."

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