

How did we get here?

My wife strolling our infant child around the block found the little old woman in her yard who said we should, we must buy her house there on Nevada Avenue. And so our daughter's little brother was born here and they grew up in what we all believed was the most beautiful and wonderful house and street and neighborhood in the world. During that time my wife and I made a living designing literally hundreds of beautiful homes in this city, none would compare in our hearts.

Our little ones miraculously survived living in this wonderful home on one of the most beautiful, and treacherous residential streets in America. They have long since moved on to other towns and cultures that thankfully better protect and honor pedestrians and bicyclists and neighborhoods. They won't come back. And my wife and I will likely follow, finally leaving behind the happy family memories, as well as the carnage and mayhem we have witnessed.

In 2002 my teenage son and I awoke in the middle of a cool fall night to a horrific blast from the street below his bedroom window. After dialing 911, we sleepily stumbled out into the dark knowing what we'd find--yet another car smashed to smithereens. This one had left the pavement at incredible velocity only to be stopped dead by one of the venerable old elms still standing after 100 years. As the life responders instantly arrived, in the red flashing lights we saw the young man who had been thrown out. It was too late for him, already lifeless in the soft grass in the middle of Nevada Avenue.

Exactly one year later to another cool fall morning, I was coming home from a pre dawn jog, and passed by that same

scarred tree, the one that had been adorned with flowers and goodbye notes for a year. There I saw another lifeless form face down in the soft grass. He was cold, and then I saw the revolver by his hand. I again called 911, and then our friend with security at School District 11, to plea for him to try to redirect the busloads of kids already beginning to slowly roll by the scene—Was this the young man's father returning on the anniversary of the first tragedy to the same spot in the middle of Nevada Avenue to end his own life with a bullet to the head?

Some years later my wife and were returning home on Nevada from downtown one Sunday morning. Near San Miguel there was a burned out shell of a car amidst the debris now being cleared. Someone had smashed into it and it exploded in to flames. Two small children had been pulled from the burning car by some hero, but they were horribly burned from the fire. They survived, but without their mom.

In 2012 we made our way down Nevada to pass yet another tragic scene. The old victorians are always needing plumbing work, it goes with the territory, and plumbers tend to become our familiar friends. The poor fellow that had been called to help, to come to fix things at the house in the 1400 block of Nevada had been killed there in the street, crushed dead into the back of his work truck by a car, his partner badly injured standing next to him.

In late January of 2015 I came out on the porch of our beautiful,(wonderful?) home on another fine morning. Our children no longer slept up in the windows overlooking the street, and in my older slumber I had not heard (or was there something in a nightmare?) another fatal crash in the same intersection at Espanola. Some parents were walking their

young children there across Nevada, likely heading towards Steele School, gingerly making their way across through the mess and debris being cleaned up from where the driver had careened his car into 2 parked ones and died, the oncoming traffic now oddly proceeding calmly and slowly back and forth, making the family's crossing ironically now relatively safe.

Last summer came news of yet one more senseless traffic fatality on our beautiful, no longer so wonderful Nevada Avenue. The guy was driving his corvette 90 MPH they say by Penrose Hospital when he blasted it into it into a car with yet another unsuspecting father and his young son inside. Miraculously the boy and his dad survived. The passenger in the corvette didn't.

How did we get here? How can this carnage and mayhem continue? The above stories are just of the deaths we have seen and heard about and carry with us. There probably are more, and certainly there are countless other incidents and stories of not quite so horrific human cost, but nonetheless awful and tragic and sad. Trembling stories of the near misses to our own family, like when a car veered over the curb and sidewalk into the yard near where my wife had minutes before been tending the tulips with our toddlers. And the direct hit that killed our beloved Irish Setter, Rufus, broke his back in two. Of the fierce look (of hatred?) straight at us on the face of the woman who then purposefully gunned her car towards us as we crossed in front of her in the crosswalk at Fontanero, narrowly missing my wife. Of our cars and our neighbor's and friend's cars and homes that have been smashed by this senseless demolition derby on one of the still most amazingly beautiful streets anywhere. We pick up the dead, we clean up the mess, we cry and wonder how can this continue to happen?

We have tried to change things, as much as anyone could really. We gathered with our neighbors, we talked and pleaded with the city politicians and consulted with the city planners and city engineers. We (my wife and I personally) wrote the Old North End Master Plan and with our neighbors had them all approve it in 1991 as a full part of the City of Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan: the City Council, the Planning Commission, The Historic Preservation Board, The Traffic Department, the Engineering Department—they all *unanimously* approved our Plan.

Its lengthy, but the Plan logically, basically says to solve our problem we MUST calm the traffic and protect pedestrians, protect our children and old folks, protect our *whole* neighborhood. It says to remove the state highway designation and the major arterial designation and get the semitrucks off Nevada Avenue, and *we did all that!* The Plan does not say anything about protecting the damn speeding cars and reckless drivers, or saving people from a few seconds/minutes travel time lost! It most clearly says you CAN NOT do things piecemeal, because to do partial downsizing to one or 2 'easier' streets only puts the remaining others in permanent and final jeopardy. You CAN NOT just fiddle with Cascade first and say we'll see how that goes and maybe ask City Council to approve safety sizing Wahsatch and Nevada later. Besides being in violation of our approved Master Plan, this smells of a red herring, a bad idea created and dangled in front of us simply because timid project engineers imagine their timid politician bosses are reluctant to help us on Nevada Avenue. All the analysis and experience says it will work and should be done on *all* the Old North End Neighborhood streets at once, but they then say Nevada is 'different' and all their language and scheduling and posturing says they will not honor this, nor

the promise made in 1991 to save this *whole* neighborhood from a future of continuing carnage and mayhem.

We have seen this before and for too long, we know that this timid approach will signal the death knell of Nevada Avenue as a residential street, and that will in turn ultimately result in the demise of the Old North End as a safe place and neighborhood to cherish, raise a family in and grow old in. We will fight that, as we have before.

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