

The Cheyenne you never hear about

FEB 16/93
FEB 16

Residents have been hurt by the publicity their street has received.

WE'VE had enough." So say residents at the Oakdale Apartments at 84, 86 and 88 Cheyenne Ave.

No, not THOSE Cheyenne apartments, 95 and 105. These apartments are on the east side of the street, across from the apartments that have made Cheyenne Avenue famous, er, make that infamous.

Bad publicity about THE Cheyenne apartments has frustrated, embarrassed and angered residents in that neighborhood, especially the Oakdale apartment complex since most everyone assumes if you live on Cheyenne and in an apartment, you have to live in THOSE Cheyenne apartments.

Some of the residents even admit to getting off a bus stop early or late so people don't get the impression they live in THOSE Cheyenne apartments.

"It's not fair," said Esther Dawe, who has lived 21 years in the Oakdale Apartments, the last six as manager. "We just want people to know that everything up here isn't bad. That most people keep their homes and apartments in great shape and that we love

living in the area. We just want to be heard."

Okay, knock yourselves out.

"I was riding on the bus and had to tell two old biddies off," said Donna Pelly. "They were sitting behind me and talking about how our buildings had cockroaches. I turned to them and said 'our buildings never had and do not have cockroaches.'"

PROUD OF HOME: "We're proud of where we live," Dawe said. "We take good care of it. We care for our tenants but that doesn't make news. Cockroaches, sewage and gas getting turned off makes news."

"When we finally get people out here to look at the buildings, we rent them. But when people call us on the telephone, we give them all the information and they're impressed. When we say Cheyenne Avenue, we get a click. They don't even say goodbye."

A quick inspection of the premises shows well-kept, clean buildings, one of which has been completely renovated. The others also are being upgraded. It's obvious the buildings' owners are putting money into upkeep and, without question, they are affordable.

"The stigma attached to all this has hurt our occupancy," Dawe says. There are 54 units per building. "We have five vacancies in our totally ren-

ovated building and there's no way that should be."

Residents in this complex are getting a complex of their own. They've informally decided to launch a publicity campaign emphasizing that just because an address is Cheyenne Avenue it doesn't mean it's THOSE apartments.

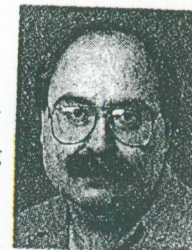
The proverbial final straw that prompted this move came when Dawe's husband, a General Motors employee, was rushing out of GM after finishing his shift.

A worker called out to him: 'Hey, rushing home to turn on the gas?' referring to the threatened gas cut by Union Gas at THOSE Cheyenne apartments because the landlord won't pay his bill.

'EMBARRASSING': Pelly received a call from friends of hers who told her when the gas was turned off she could stay with them, although she would have to sleep on the couch.

"It was embarrassing," Pelly said. "I don't need to sleep on anyone's couch."

"That was it, enough's enough," Dawe said. "As you can tell, there's plenty of heat here."



MORRIS DALLA COSTA

The London Free Press

Dawe believes the problems at THOSE Cheyenne apartments are both landlord and tenant generated but she isn't interested in getting into a political discussion. Her concern, and those of others in the neighborhood, is how to remove the stigma attached to that area.

"Bernie MacDonald (Ward 3 councillor) is looking into changing the name of the street," said Dawe.

She also believes publicity, the good kind of publicity, will help.

It has become obvious, though, that the problems at THOSE Cheyenne apart-

ments are affecting more than those who live in and own the buildings. They are affecting an entire neighborhood, unfairly. A neighborhood in which residents pay their taxes and their bills. Maybe it's time the city remembers that and does something to help.

"This is our home. We're proud," Dawe said. "We shouldn't have to apologize (for) living here."

How right they are.

Morris Dalla Costa appears Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.