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He Said, He Said

Former Silverado landlord speaks up

by Julie Sabatier

Still no word on where Silverado is moving once the 25-year-old watering hole leaves its home in the Continental Building on Southwest Stark Street, but the gay bar's former landlord had a few thoughts to share on the situation.

Gary Nelson, who bought into the Continental Building with Richard Lawson in 2000, says he was disappointed to see Silverado co-owner Don Sexton's comments about Lawson in *Just Out* ["Silverado's Secrets," Aug. 3].

"We're not weasels...Richard is anything but a weasel," said Nelson. "He's honorable—a very sophisticated, very private man, but honest as you can get. He would never take advantage of anybody."

Sexton's unflattering characterization of Lawson as a "weasel" stems from Sexton's outrage because he and his partner, Tom Braezeale, were not informed

"They said in the little article that you wrote that they paid for the sprinkler system," Nelson said. "In fact, they paid for less than 20 percent of the sprinkler system."

According to Nelson, who was not present for the 1996 negotiations, Lawson gave the Silverado owners "very favorable terms" on the first 10 years

"We're not weasels."

—Gary Nelson

of their lease, with an option to renew the lease and extend it for five more years at a new negotiated price. The deadline to notify the building owners (then Lawson and Nelson) that they wished to begin those negotiations was Dec. 31, 2006, and Nelson claims they missed it.



This address will change, but the new location remains a mystery.

about the sale of the Continental Building to Gerding Edlen Development until after the deal had closed. (Lawson still hasn't returned repeated calls.)

"All of this is about money, and I understand money," said Sexton. "What I don't understand is looking at someone that you've had a relationship with for 20 years and lying to them." He claimed Lawson was untruthful when Sexton asked him directly about rumors of the impending sale.

Nelson confirmed that he and Lawson were bound by a confidentiality agreement that barred them from discussing the deal until after it was closed.

"I don't know many property owners who run right out and tell all their tenants when they think they've got a building sold. It just upsets everybody, particularly when it falls apart," Nelson explained. "We valued them as tenants, and we didn't want them to leave on the basis of a rumor that this was going to sell and then [have] it not happen. So it makes business sense. Maybe it's not the best thing to do, but it's done all the time."

With regard to the Silverado's disputed lease, Nelson attempted to shed light on the situation but declined to allow *Just Out* access to the document itself. For now, it remains a "he said, he said" affair.

Sexton claimed he and Braezeale received an extended 15-year lease 10 years ago when they helped Lawson come up with the money for a buildingwide sprinkler system.

Nelson says he signed an affidavit confirming that he and Lawson never received notice from Sexton and Braezeale that they wished to begin negotiations for an extended lease. According to Nelson, the Silverado lease was up in May.

"I don't care what Gary Nelson said. He wasn't there, and a judge is going to have to decide who's right in this matter," said Sexton, who insists Nelson and Lawson received a hand-delivered letter communicating the Silverado owners' intention to renew lease negotiations. He and Braezeale intend to meet the building's owner, Gerding Edlen, in court later this year.

Sexton says he also intends to find himself in court with Lawson at some point, although he remains vague on exactly why. "Dick Lawson is going to meet me in court because I'm going to sue him," he said. "This is kind of like a marriage and you find out your partner is screwing someone on the side after 20 years."

Nelson responded: "We didn't do anything illegal. We did everything that normal businesspeople do when they sell buildings, and if he wants to take issue with that, that's his thing to do, I guess."

Nelson emphasized that he harbors no hard feelings toward Sexton or Braezeale. "The Silverado people were very good tenants, and we never had a problem with them, and we wish them luck in their new location," he said. 10