

## Auctioned Heights home filled with 'garbage'

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Nov 2, 2014



Property belonging to former owner Paul Ball is seen in one bedroom of the home in the 100 block of East Stacie in Harker Heights on Tuesday. Ball was unable to pay the fines for the property and auctioned off Sept. 2 of this year for \$5,000 being purchased by David Lazar.

**HARKER HEIGHTS** — The man who purchased a Harker Heights home during a Sept. 2 Bell County public auction said there's more to the situation than meets the eye.

David Lazar purchased a home in the 100 block of East Stacie in Harker Heights for \$5,000 after officials claimed its owner, Paul Ball, had a backlog of fines from ordinance violations.

"He was at the auction, and I certainly would have backed off if he had made a bid," Lazar said. "But I was told this was a result of an ongoing issue since the 1980s."

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In a previous interview, Ball told the Herald he was purchasing the home for his grandchildren, whose father was shot and killed several years ago.

However, Lazar questions how anyone could live in the house.

“There is garbage on top of garbage,” he said. “And this didn’t just happen in a week, three weeks or in a month.”

An air-conditioning unit is missing, there’s no toilet and floors have trash among piles of belongings, he said.

Ball’s grandson, Steve Dodge, said when his grandfather was purchasing the home, it looked worse than it does now and didn’t come with an air conditioner.

“I was in the middle of remodeling and cleaning it out, but then it went to auction,” Dodge said. “So I don’t understand. (Lazar) bought it as is.”

Lazar said he was not the only one who bid on the house. After hearing a woman bid \$3,000, he said he bid \$5,000 and couldn’t pass up the deal after realizing Ball had another home.

After attorney’s fees and seeing the inside, Lazar said he’ll pay more than he bid to have it cleaned.

A local advertisement on behalf of Ball claims officials “had no right” to sell the home because it was not yet in the original purchaser’s name.

“I did apologize to him when I was in court, and I said to him I really am sorry,” Lazar said.

Ball previously said the matter started when city officials told him a fence at his former garage shop was too high.

The 85-year-old veteran and resident of Harker Heights since 1958 claimed permits didn't specify a height limit.

However, City Manager David Mitchell said ordinances regarding fence limits are on the books requiring how high a fence in the front of a property should be.

Mitchell said the ordinances are in place for safety reasons, such as emergency responders needing to see house numbers or allowing a clear view for motorists.

Ball said after fines accumulated, hiring a "bad attorney" to fight the case and losing, he filed for bankruptcy.

Receiving a citation and fines for three vehicles he said were licensed and registered as antique vehicles caused the bankruptcy to be overturned, resulting in the property going to auction.

On Friday, Dodge said he wasn't sure if his grandfather's attorney would allow the family to comment as to whether Ball will continue fighting the case.

Lazar said officials told him he legally has the deed to the home, which he may sell or rent.

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