

—People Plus—

Kathy's Kolumn



**By
Kathy
Tobin**
PUBLISHER/
EDITOR

Larry and I purchased this newspaper from Clara Keenan 36-1/2 years ago.

It's hard for me to comprehend that much time has passed.

Back on April 1, 1982, we had a 2-1/2-year-old son and I was 8 months pregnant with our second child. Today, our children have children of their own.

Clara had been thrown into the role of publisher a few years earlier when her husband, Ken, died unexpectedly from an aneurysm. As far as I know, Clara had no true background or interest, really, in running

a weekly newspaper. It was Ken's baby.

But when the business fell into her lap without warning, she took the bull by the horns and ran the company to the best of her ability. Ken was always buying the newest gadgets and had equipped the *Leader* with a state-of-the-art darkroom that was probably the finest (even for most dailies) in Wisconsin. It's my understanding that Clara had to address some financing issues too. She didn't come across as someone who would sidestep challenges.

Coming from a newspaper background, my family and the Keenans had known each other for years. In fact, there's a picture in our newspaper files of an old Green Sheet issue with me and one of my brothers fishing with two of the Keenan kids during an outing here. I was about 5 years old.

When Clara decided to

sell, we must have come to mind. Larry and I had owned but sold a newspaper we had in the southern part of the state, and proved to be eager to come to the Northwoods of Wisconsin. The transaction happened during a recession and I was quite pregnant, but we were young and anxious to relocate here.

It took us several years to pay off Clara, but one thing that stands out in my mind was, for the most part, she stood back and let us run things as we saw fit. That first Christmas she helped sell ads during a brief get-away, taking everything off Larry's desk and piling it in a corner. That didn't go over particularly well and we never asked her back. But other than that one instance, she was hands-off, which I think could be extremely hard for a former owner of just about any type

of business.

Larry still laughs about the time he saw Clara driving through town, jerking along after she decided to learn, at an advanced age, to drive a stick-shift car. Again, she was a woman of determination.

Local printer and former *Leader* employee, Louie Heuser said one special thing he recalls about Clara was her beautiful roses. Apparently, she had a secret technique. He says she dug up her bushes each fall and placed them in a gunnysack and buried them in a swampy area behind her home in the Hiawatha Heights area. In the spring they were replanted. The blossoms were huge and magnificent, he says.

A part of this paper's history, and one of only a relatively few *Tomahawk Leader* publishers over the course of 100-plus years, Clara died Thursday, Sept. 20 at the age of 92.