

How not saying goodbye has turned into tears this week

When the gavel was ready to hit the block at the Jefferson Common Council meeting Tuesday night, I snapped a quick picture and sent out a short tweet.

“My final council meeting ...” Twelve minutes later, I was out of the council chambers — one of the shortest council meetings I’ve ever attended ... and my last.

As most of you probably know by now, today, June 7, marks my last day at the Daily Jefferson County Union. After 23 years in newspaper journalism, I’ll be moving to AC Business Media, a business-to-business publication company across the river in Fort Atkinson. My first day is Monday.

Twenty-three years seems like such a long time — and it truly is, when you think about how things have changed. Laser printers were just coming into common use on campus when I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh in 1996. My first job out of college involved working on MycroTek word processors — ancient torture devices that were as likely to print every document in your personal queue as the document you wanted.

But in May of 1996, things were simpler. Then, I was “just” a sportswriter. Over the next 13 years, that would be primarily what I remained — covering dropped flyballs, torn ACLs, game-winning 3-pointers and volleyball aces

From Out in Right Field

– Jennifer Eisenbart



who won state titles.

Through it all, I always found solace in writing this column. No matter how crazy sports would get, a column allowed me to work through all the complex emotions that sports inspired. I wrote about controversy, I wrote about special students and coaches who left an imprint on my heart, I wrote about the Green Bay Packers.

Through everything — a switch from “just sports” to “sports and news” in 2009 and a hard switch to community editor in 2013 and then to the Daily Union lifestyles and special sections editor on April 10, 2017 — there were two constants in my work life: a career in newspaper journalism, and this column.

In my time here in Jefferson County, this column has given me the opportunity to share so much. Stories about my cat, the importance of family, the heat, the cold, sleeping in on Saturdays, finding my center in terms of religion, self-worth, bullying ... you name it, I wrote about it here.

This column turned out to be my golden tie to this wonderful community. I’ve been stopped numerous times by complete strangers, people who only wanted to tell me they enjoy what I write. I realized in the last two years that I’d ended up sharing myself through these columns, and perhaps that served as the best introduction I could have made when I moved here.

Since arriving in Fort Atkinson, my job has taken me so many places. To Haumerson’s Pond, for not just the grand opening of the warminghouse, but as a scary clown on the Haunted Hike. To Jefferson and the haunting, overgrown grounds of St. Coletta, and to the Council for the Performing Arts to cover children’s theater.

It’s taken me on stage with Fort Atkinson Community Theater — both as a journalist and as a performer — and it’s taken me into the community of Koshkonong, where the number of lumens in a neighbor’s lightbulb and the placing of liquid manure lines might sound small, but are big in the eyes of residents.

And it’s taken me to all of you, the people who read this column. In a sense, it brought me home — to my new home in Jefferson County. Thank you all for a great experience here, and don’t be strangers.

The world is a strange and wonderful place. I intend to continue exploring it.