

—People Plus

Kathy's Kolumn

Saying farewell with my last column; 37 years later



By
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PUBLISHER/
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Well, folks, I guess this is it!

My last column.

When Larry and I purchased the *Tomahawk Leader* back on April 1, 1982, I was still in Madison awaiting the birth of our second child. But I have newspaper ink in my blood, and it took me about a week to decide I needed to contribute something to our new business venture. My first column was about baking chocolate cookies and eating the dough.

For some insane reason, I kept this up week after week. At one point I realized that I hadn't ever missed a week and it became a bit of an obsession, I suppose.

At this point, I have not missed a week of Kathy's Kolumn in 37 years.

That means I've managed to jot down some words for publication through some

pretty exciting and tense times, including the birth of that daughter, building a house, my father's death to cancer, the kids' activities and graduation from high school and college, the births of four grandchildren, the loss of Larry's parents, Larry's countless surgeries and doctor appointments, vacations, other illnesses, putting down several dogs, taking in a stray cat here at the office, and on and on. Sometimes the words flowed easily; sometimes they didn't.

I've been an open book, so to speak. Those who have followed the columns have had a pretty personal glimpse into my life and that of my family. Many of you have said you could relate to our situations. I hope I've brought a laugh now and then, and a tear or two at times. I've gotten a bit away from feature writing in recent years, but my goal often when presenting human interest stories is to evoke emotion. If my writing can do that, I figure I've been successful.

There hasn't been much time to reflect in the recent weeks before our sale, but some story highlights for me over the past nearly four

decades have included joining the local National Guard on a humanitarian trip to Panama to build bridges. That was followed immediately, on the way home, by a stop in Washington, D.C., for the National Newspaper Association Government Affairs Conference. There our family had a face-to-face meet and greet with our president and first lady at the time, Bill and Hillary Clinton. (That week was among the most incredible in my life – from open-door Blackhawk helicopter rides in the jungles of Panama to an extravagant reception in the White House.)

I can't begin tell you, too, how privileged and moved I was to join a Never Forgotten Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., joining veterans of World War II as they visited memorials built to honor the men and women who have served and defended our nation. The applause and thanks they received in airports and at memorial sites were beyond words. And their welcome home that night back at Central Wisconsin Airport in Mosinee was awesome. If you even get a chance to attend one of those homecomings,

make the effort. You will never forget it. Bring the kids, too. It's truly spectacular.

The *Leader* has been honored to carry on the tradition of the Community Awards Program since 2001. There are so many people who give their time and talents, and the night has been one way to publicly thank them. With this sale in the making, we just didn't finalize plans for this year's awards, but I'm hoping the new owners will welcome that project.

My work as a publisher and editor has consumed me at times at the expense of my family. I'm a workaholic by nature and newspaper coverage can be a 24/7, 365-days-a-year commitment. I may not have been a volunteer with the local fire department, but I can relate. I've left meals and company, holiday celebrations and family time to cover events. I've worked months at a time without a day off, and 15- to 18-hour days were not unusual. But it's all been a labor of love. It's been my life.

I apologize to my kids for my often skewed sense of priorities, and all the time they had to spend waiting to me to finish my work, either at home or, way too often, bidding time at the office. They joke to this day about napping on one of our counters or on the big pile of mail bags. Their childhood definitely suffered because of my vocation. For that I'm sorry.

Thrilled that we will finally be retired, they both showed up this past weekend to help get affairs and paperwork in order. I can't thank them enough for being there, and as the night got typically late once again (we were at the office until 5 a.m.) they joked about sleeping on

the counter. (Today's mailing bags are nearly as comfortable as they once were.)

To our employees over the years, you've been like family and will always remain dear. To that special handful of retirees who came back recently to help us in a pinch, an extra special thank you.

I know in my heart that it's time to hand over the keyboard and the keys to someone else and entrust them with stewardship of your newspaper.

It may not always be obvious but a local newspaper is a treasure to its community. Anyone who has had the opportunity to page through bound volumes of the *Leader* knows we are a history book with new chapters added each week. We are the watchdog and the cheerleader for our community. Please do what you can to support the new owners and keep alive the 130-plus years of local newspaper history.

The week before and after this one mark the end of a couple of eras for our newspaper. Former Editor Graham Foster, who gave his all to this newspaper for 38 years, died May 28. His life was recapped so nicely by former employee Mark Wurl and Pastor Mark Ziemer at his funeral Saturday. Graham was the epitome of a newspaperman and a professional through and through.

And the late Clara Keenan, who took over the helm as publisher briefly after her husband's death will be enshrined – with others who have served the newspaper industry and passed away during the last year – at the Wisconsin Newspaper Association retreat at the

Trees for Tomorrow camp in Eagle River Friday. Ken and Clara Keenan preceded us as publishers; Ken ran the business for 24 years. Clara eventually sold it to us.

I consider each of the publishers simply caretakers of what belongs to you and our community.

So, I guess this is it. It's something like column Number 1,931. Thirty-seven years straight.

To celebrate, I think things will come full circle.

I'm going to head home soon and bake some chocolate chip cookies! And as I always do, despite the warnings, I plan to eat some of the dough.



Friday, May 10, 2019

A son, Huck Alan Stevenson, born to Kaci and Tyler Stevenson. Born at home, assisted by midwife Katie Breitenmoser, CPM, of Windy Hill Midwifery, at 9:28 p.m. He weighed 9 pounds, 4 ounces and was 21.5 inches long. Joins sister Hattie Lou Stevenson. Grandparents are Matt and Karen Stevenson; Jean Orcutt-Schulz; and Bruce and Kyle Gruenig.

**Ascension
Saint Clare's Hospital
Weston**

Friday, May 24, 2019

A son, Shea Martin Geraty, born to Amy Bruder and Daniel Geraty Jr., Wausau. He was born at 4:21 p.m., weighed 8 pounds, 12 ounces, and was 20.5 inches long.

Saturday, May 25, 2019

A son, Asher Jesse Calhoun, born to Jamie Koth and Jesse Calhoun, Tomahawk. He was born at 7:28 p.m., weighed 8 pounds, 15 ounces, and was 23 inches long. Grandparents are Kim Koth, Kevin Koth, Nancy and Kurt Bernarde; and Bob and Carrie Calhoun.

Tuesday's child

**LOOKING FOR A MENTOR
FOR THIS CHILD...**

Kinship of Tomahawk's popular adult-child mentoring program has **49** active members. But some **30** kids are patiently waiting for some adult/couple/family to befriend them. The commitment is just an hour a week. Won't you be **Kenny's** mentor?



Kenny is an 11-year-old boy who is endearing and curious. Kenny likes playing board games, sports, and working on math or science projects. Kenny also enjoys swimming and water skiing. Having a mentor would help Kenny learn some social skills and help him develop more friendships.

For details Call 715-453-1910 or visit
KinshipTomahawk.org

