

# Thanks for the opportunity to serve

Over the better part of the past 40 years, Tuesday's deadlines seemed like a never ending stream of words, a pouring out of ideas that would contribute to a product that was called our own.

Like my father and mother before me, and my brother Joe with me, we toiled as a team, aiming always to give our communities the best darned weekly newspaper products we could pull our resources together to produce.

This week has been marked by an emotional milestone, as this writer closed a significant chapter on that history.

Legendary folk songwriter Pete Seeger once reshaped the words of Ecclesiastes, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." They became a well known rock and roll hit by the Byrds in the 60's, and they apply today.

For this past weekend, I bode my farewell to the season of ownership of this newspaper, and the wider business entities we call Delta Publications and Delta Digital Strategies.

Ownership is something of a misnomer here, because it seems more appropriate to think of our time here as a season of stewardship.

As a caretaker of this community institution for the past 39 years, it has been my distinct privilege to serve the communities so dear to our readers, our advertisers, our friends and neighbors. And, as I pass the baton in this stewardship relay, I can only express gratitude for the opportunity to serve.

Like the servants to whom the master gave talents (coins), I hope that we have invested ourselves wisely, growing the value of this institution for its constituents.

No season lasts forever, not even the season of a newspaper publisher. We either exit gracefully, or they carry us out in a pine box. Sometimes, we get to choose.

I feel blessed in knowing that I am handing the reins to a great team that will continue to manage this community resource for the good of all.

It has been my great fortune to work for the past 35 years with my brother Joe, who will take on the managerial reins of Delta Publications/Digital Strategies. Joe's gifts as a sales person and digital entrepreneur have been a key to

our success, and it will be great to see him carry on the family name on the business masthead. He will be joined by Jim O'Rourke, another family publisher, who has a wealth of experience in the industry.

To be able to hand the business off to a pair of seasoned veterans, who understand the changing times, is a great comfort. I know that our communities will continue to be well served.

At the same time, I am thrilled that our team will stay intact. The team members have been the key to our ability to serve well in our role as a community information business. I consider myself fortunate to



## Through the Viewfinder

By Mike Mathes



# Viewfinder

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have been part of such a gifted group.

Our editor Mark Sherry, a partner for a quarter century, continues to lend his gifts to editing our weekly publication and special sections. Klaudia Schnell, a talented graphic designer and technology resource, has been part of our team going on 34 years. She has proved invaluable in serving our customers. Sharon Schjoth, our business/office manager continues to wrestle with all the nitty gritty of fulfillment, and also offers her hand on the sales side.

Pam Mathes has given us a great professional boost as our sales manager, always seeking ways to grow the business. She is joined by Diane Fett and Candy TeBeest in serving our customer base. Those who follow high school sports know that Craig Hoffman covers his beat with great dedication. Kelly Kloehn and Paula Gilsdorf are relative newcomers, who are already adding great capabilities to the team.

We have so many others that con-

tribute as drivers, carriers and support staff. They are all valuable for their contributions.

I am humbled and grateful for the connection to these dedicated team members who have all been with us for more than 20 years. Likewise, I am thankful for the many people who have been team members for just a stretch of time during the past four decades.

We are only as good as the people who surround us, and I have been fortunate to know these people not just as employees but as family. Our Delta Publications family has played and will continue to play that role in our communities as well.

Whether you hail from Chilton, New Holstein, Kiel, Quinney, St. Cloud or School Hill, this team will strive to keep treating you as family. Community is that important to them.

Personally, I can not begin to thank all of you enough for the past 39 years granted to me in this role as a community newspaper publisher.

Just like family, through the workings of our publications and digital products we have laughed together...wept together...celebrated together...struggled together. We have complimented each other...called each other on the carpet...loathed and loved each other. Yes, each in their own moments. And, through the journey we all grow together.

I can't thank the people of our communities enough....everyone who has touched this business in any way enough, for the opportunity who helped shape my growth as a publisher and neighbor. Of course, it's more like growing experience rather than growing up—something I'm still waiting for.

Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't hold out my largest thanks for my family—from my own parents, “Oily” and Betty, who welcomed my return to the paper, to my loving wife, Ann, who has endured all these years as a supporting publisher's spouse, and

to my children, Rebecca and Rachel, who had to watch their dad leave the house way too many times to do “newspaper work.”

Without their support, the journey would have been shallow and meaningless.

It's been a great ride, but I am not exactly ready to saddle up and head for the sunset. You can expect me some contributions here and there in retirement.

It is my hope to have left this post to better hands, stronger hearts and greater gifts.

As I fondly look back on the years, I can't help but remember a few other words from the book of Ecclesiastes.

The author wrote, “.....there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot.”

Indeed, my heart is overflowing, for I have been given the opportunity to live out that joy.

Thanks for a lifetime of memories. See you around the corner.