

When Oprah goes, so go I.

I've never really given much thought to how this thing would end. How the Cheyenne Herald would bid adieu.

And, I'm not going to do a Tonight Show announcement like when NBC told Jay Leno five years ahead of his replacement that Conan O'Brien would take over the show five years hence.

I don't plan that far ahead. I've never been one for Five Year Plans or Ten Year Plans. I always thought they were One Year Plans with annual changes.

But, when Oprah Winfrey recently announced that her very popular television show would end in late 2011, it got me to thinking that maybe I should start to look down the road. Many don't take Oprah at her word but she's a pretty focused and determined lady. She is establishing a cable network with Discovery and some believe she will take her talk show there. She says no and she may mean it.

When I publish the last issue of the Cheyenne Herald, it won't go on-line or elsewhere if there is new technology by then. It will go away. Because this publication is such a personal undertaking, it can't be passed along to someone else. Someone else can start their own alternative newspaper. It's been done in the past. But, I am told, never in this way for this long.

For good reason.

If you don't have enough experience around government to know where the bodies are buried and how to circumvent stonewalling, you won't get stories. If you can't build enough trust, tips won't come your way and the good stuff that comes from those inside sources will dry up. I won't go into the financial end of this endeavor but suffice it to say that if there weren't a handful of people who wanted this independent voice to survive, the Cheyenne Herald would have been short-lived.

The issue that comes out December 29, 2009 will be the 185th issue of the Cheyenne Herald. This publication has been produced continuously, at that point, for eight years. Almost all of the words on these pages have been written by me. Sometimes stories take a lot of research and eat up a lot of time. Some are just personal reflections that can be banged out pretty effortlessly and quickly. Being able to type over 80 wpm helps. A lot.

An average page in any Cheyenne Herald probably contains 1200-1500 words, even with ads on that page. Twelve page issues would have, then, somewhere between 14,400 and 18,000 original words. Issues during political campaign windows have less because there is considerably more advertising, thank you very much. At minimum, though, it is likely that over 2.6 million words have appeared on these pages, most of them written personally.

I'm not out of words or even close to that. I tell people that at one point in my career, I was Vice President of Merchandising for a NYSE company in New York

City and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania and part of my job was writing much of the copy that went into our 480 page, full color, original art, catalog. Copy to sell product had to be brief. Describing a Sunbeam iron in 35 words required brevity. So, from that experience, I have a lot of words stored up for use.

Occasionally, a reader has told me that the stories are too long. This one will probably generate those comments. Most readers, though, appreciate the detail, complexity and length of stories because they are starved for information and want to know more, not less, about issues of importance in our town.

Anyway, I decided to adopt Oprah's end as my own. Maybe. With that in mind, the last issue of the Cheyenne Herald will roll off the presses at the end of 2011.

Possibly.

That would give me two more years to tell all the stories I wanted to and to continue to shine a spotlight on many who wish they could operate in the dark or without scrutiny. That includes the daily newspaper in this town. I could produce a 12 page issue of the Cheyenne Herald bi-weekly using only the fodder provided by the WTE. But I try not to give their problems and their mistakes and their shortcomings too much of my space. Some. But not too much.

At the end of 2011, I will have published the Cheyenne Herald for ten years. That would be a record I doubt anyone will touch here in Cheyenne. Ever. Definitely not in my stay here. At the end of 2011, I will have been in Cheyenne 25 years.

The stories won't dry up. Trust me on that. When I started preparing for the first Cheyenne Herald in 2001 and spoke with others about such an undertaking, I was often asked, "Do you think you'll run out of stories?" I knew that would never happen and history has proven me right.

At the end of 2011, I will be 106 years old and will have done everything in my life from stacking hay bales on a ranch in Montana for three summers to falling trees in the woods of northern Wisconsin and central Montana to spending four years in the Navy (yes, OUR Navy) to having a marriage in which my wife has inexplicably stayed by my side for nearly 95 years (not quite) and I have two daughters who still speak to me and five nearly perfect grandchildren.

My business career has been more than hay and trees. This barefoot boy from Wisconsin did live and work in Manhattan. That's New York City, not the Manhattan in Montana. The Montana Manhattan also provides me a great memory. Our high school basketball team, a winning team but not a state tournament team, was the only team other than the eventual Montana state champions that defeated that Manhattan in my junior year of high school. And, yes, I had my share of points. And assists.

I adopted a basic principle for playing basketball. You don't get as much attention for playing defense well as scoring and blind passes to open teammates for easy baskets. My teammates played defense. Thankfully,



To stand out, you have to stand up. This publication has allowed me an opportunity after I could play basketball to stand up. And I took it.

Am I tired? No.

Am I bored? No.

Do I have something else in mind to do? No. At least not at this time.

But that could change in the blink of an eye. Do bear in mind, though, that not a lot of opportunities come the way of a 106 year old man. Not many at all.

Remember, I didn't say absolutely that the end of 2011 will be the end. Just possibly. A target in the future. I'm pretty decisive but that decision could easily be revisited before that time comes.

I don't solicit advertising and only seek subscriptions or donations by pointing out on these pages that money does make the world go 'round. Maybe if my world were spinning faster, continuing this publication until I drop face first onto the computer keyboard would be preferable than retiring to Oprah's island paradise with her and Gayle. She'll have made a clean break from Stedman and her love affair for Barack Obama will feel his betrayal before we sail away. Me and my wife.

Readers may be surprised to learn that the Cheyenne Herald may not be around forever. Not as surprised as my daughters, though. I can see their eyes open wide in shock, wondering, "My God, he doesn't plan to come live with us, does he? Mom would be all right but having him around 24/7 would be intolerable."

What goes 'round, comes 'round, girls.

As I write this, I'm beginning to feel a lot like Oral Roberts. Remember when he told his parishioners that God had told him he needed to raise \$8 million by a date certain or he'd be "called home?"

I don't need \$8 million.

This publication was designed as a free one so I can't complain about not seeing more revenue. Had that been a factor in my decision to produce the Cheyenne Herald, I would have sold the paper, not given it away. And solicited advertising.

So, bottom line, Oprah's plans gave me pause and made me think of my own future and the future of the Cheyenne Herald. Because her leaving will generate such attention, it will be easy to remember when I should fold this tent. Maybe.

Perhaps.

On the other hand, this announcement may be like Cher's "First Farewell Tour." At the end of each year, I will decide whether I want to extend the end for yet another year. If I were a betting man, I'd bet the end of the Cheyenne Herald will come when I fall face first onto the keyboard. But, perhaps it will end before.

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