

# Sometimes life throws you a high hard one

My wife and I were out of town on a vacation trip scheduled for January 9 - 15. We were to return to Cheyenne the afternoon of the 15th so I could finish this issue of the Cheyenne Herald and get it printed on Monday the 18th. The route of our return was one in which I would conduct an interview I thought would be interesting to readers of this publication.

My wife and I live a structured life. Not much is done on impulse or without thought and advance planning. This trip was no exception. When my schedule has a three week interval between issues, that provides an extra week to travel. We sometimes try to take advantage of that extended "break." It's a bit harder to travel very far during the normal two week intervals. So, we had driven to our chosen destination and were nearing the time to return to Cheyenne. One more night.

Late nights are part of the routine where we were and we had seemingly just gotten to sleep when my cell phone rang. Half asleep, I wasn't sure what I was being told by our older daughter who still lives in the Minnesota city from which we moved to Cheyenne. I asked her to repeat the reason for the 5:00 am call.

"Grandma died," she said. Knowing my wife would have more questions, I handed the phone to her and they spoke briefly. That was the first of several exchanged phone calls that morning. Even though my mother-in-law was 90 years old, we had no reason to believe the end was imminent. We would have never have taken that trip. My wife had spoken with her mother Sunday afternoon as we drove toward our destination. She was fine.

We were supposed to stay for another night and head back toward Cheyenne the next day, Thursday. We planned to stay overnight in the city of my interview and get back here Friday after lunch. Instead, I booked the first flight to the Twin Cities that I could for my wife and I departed directly back to Cheyenne from dropping her off at the airport - forsaking that interview for the time being. Twelve and a half hours, 850 miles and one UW women's BB game later, I was home.

But, the purpose of this recital is not to report on our trip. It is an opportunity to write a little about my mother-in-law.

From hearty European stock, her parents had immigrated to the United States from Luxembourg and the family eventually settled in northern Wisconsin. One of 12 children herself, she married and left the area for a time but returned and lived in the same house on a lake for six decades. At 90, she lived alone but had a devoted family that visited her often and someone called her almost every day.

She had seven children, my wife being the eldest. As large families go, this one was no different than most. The one thing they have in common has been their love for and devotion to their mother.

For those readers who have had the mother-in-law from hell, my condolences. Mine was the mother-in-law from heaven.

No person ever filled the role of mother-in-law better than she did. We never had a cross word. Never. And we had a lot of words. We would sit at her kitchen table late into the night, or early into the

following morning, and just talk. Nothing important. Noting profound. Not about politics. Just talk. I know she preferred Democrats but we never debated that mistake on her part. She was also the quintessential grandmother. She never missed a birthday for the many grandchildren and great-grandchildren that came along. Birthday cards (money for the kids) and Christmas gifts for each. She never missed my birthday. And always sent a Christmas gift.

"Grandma's by the Lake" her place was known. Our daughters and grandchildren loved to visit. Over the years, they fed tiny sunnies by Grandma's dock enough bread to stock a bakery. The amazing thing was that those little fish never got big and they ate like Roseanne Barr.

Even when we told her in advance we wanted to take her out to eat, she would just as likely have a ham or a roast cooking for us. We drank a lot of coffee, and even a bit of alcohol years back. She introduced my wife and me to the Southern Comfort Old Fashioned. That became and remains our favorite drink. We seldom drank alcohol in recent years. But a whole lot of coffee. Carafe after carafe.

She was proud that she lived a long life but protective of sharing her age. When we wanted to throw a party for her 75th birthday and would advertise locally to let people know, she allowed us to do it only if we called the party a "retirement party." She worked in a popular night club until she was 75 and later to help out.

Her home was the gathering place for scores of relatives on Christmas Eve and

her small house would be wall to wall family. Her home was her castle and she would not give it up. She would not consider moving into an apartment in town. "There would be no room for family," she admonished me. I wanted her to cash in her assets and enjoy the fruits of her labor. She wouldn't hear of it and I stopped suggesting. She was content. She had some concerns about falling and not being able to get back up and finally agreed to wear one of the life alert bracelets. A single concession to her advancing years.

Because of my driving back from vacation and the need to schedule funeral services sooner than I could get there, I could not attend her funeral. Churches and priests are harder to accommodate than a solitary son-in-law a thousand miles away with a responsibility to get a job done. I didn't like it but I accepted it.

As I regretted my absence, I reflected on her life. She understood responsibility. What greater responsibility could one face than raising six children alone, after her husband died in 1963 at the age of 50 of a cerebral hemorrhage. She did it. Alone. With courage, dignity, commitment and pride, she did it. She never once complained to me about her life - never once lamented how her life might have been had her husband not died so unexpectedly when they still had six children at home, one just a baby. She might complain about deer trampling her garden but not about her life. She was an ideal mother-in-law. She was in my life longer than my own mother, who died in 1971, and I so respected and admired her.

It will be an emptier world without her.

A Fundraising Event for the Cheyenne Boys and Girls Club

## Boys & Girls Club CHILI CHALLENGE

2nd Annual Chili Challenge  
Friday, January 29, 2010 -- 5 to 8 pm  
Holiday Inn on Fox Farm Road

\$10 for adults, \$5 for kids 6-12 -- under 5 FREE  
Admission includes chili, beverage and ice cream

Tickets can be purchased at the  
Boys & Girls Club, 1700 Snyder  
778-6674

## SELECTED FRAMES

FOR ONLY \$39.00

WITH PURCHASE OF LENSES

CHEYENNE'S ONLY FULL SERVICE OPTICAL WITH ONE HOUR SERVICE

In-Store Lab / Glasses made on Premises  
Certified Opticians on Staff!



## QUICK DRAW OPTICAL

1619 LOGAN AVENUE • 638-2298

Since 1981 ... Same Location

## NextMedia bankrupt

We no sooner let them run roughshod over our City Code regulating number and placement of new billboards and they up and file bankruptcy on us? That's a fine howdy-do. It's a good thing there was no monetary award to the neighbors who had to fight to bring down one of the illegally permitted and constructed billboards on Pershing Blvd.

In the news about the bankruptcy filing (in Delaware), excuses were made not only about the economy in general but about advertising revenue they lost in their radio and billboard businesses. I looked up the number of radio stations they operate and it was chump change.

According to a news report: *NextMedia filed for bankruptcy in Delaware with a prearranged plan that will hand over*

*control of the U.S. radio station operation and outdoor advertising company to certain creditors. ... The operator of 36 AM and FM radio stations listed total debt of \$100 million to \$500 million.*

*Greenwood Village, Colorado-based NextMedia also said its second-lien lender had agree to provide debtor-in-possession financing of \$20 million to continue operations while in bankruptcy.*

*Following the reorganization, the company expects to have total debt of about \$128 million.*

Debt from \$100 to \$500 million? That's a pretty wide range. Who will take over the Cheyenne market? Maybe Flack. That would be good news for Cheyenne. Nah, billboards are never good news.

**Come on by and weigh something.  
It doesn't cost much.**

**Freight, Military, Trailers & Trucks, Livestock, Salvage, Metal & More**  
UP TO 100,000 POUNDS -- 4' AND 70' SCALES -- GROSS & TARE WEIGHTS

## Cheyenne Public Scales

802 W. 21st St. (between Snyder and Reed Ave.)

307.634.2758

187+