

The Wyoming Tribune-Eagle

by Dave FEATHERLY

Rick Kaysen recently allowed someone from his campaign to write that I had an ongoing "feud" with the local daily paper.

Feud is defined: **Also called blood feud. a bitter, continuous hostility, esp. between two families, clans, etc., often lasting for many years or generations.**

There's no feud. I make fun of them and they take it. A long running television game show is called Family Feud and it's fun, non-hostile and no one gets hurt.

I'll deal with Rick after the votes are counted but the WT-E just invites ridicule with their pomposity, Gomer Pyle-like silliness, factual errors and incompetence.

Readers have begun to ask why I don't criticize their ineptness more often and I've responded that I'd have to dedicate all 12 pages of each issue of the Cheyenne Herald to that assignment and it's not much fun anymore - like stomping baby chicks. Easy to do but not very enjoyable. So I've let up for a long time.

It has taken all the patience I could muster to refrain from making fun of Reed and the Gang when a serious editorial column is taken up with writing about goats and a troll or something of that nature. That may have reached a new depth for them but that would be hard to say without extensive research. They've written a lot of stuff unworthy of the pages of a daily newspaper.

I was called recently by a guy who wanted to tell me about his experience with the WT-E interview conducted with candidates for offices here in the state, county and city. I hadn't noticed that one of the "citizen representatives" had been replaced and a retread had taken his place. It is obviously very difficult for the WT-E to find people willing to be linked with them and often, the "representatives" have to serve multiple times. When they named a member of their corporate board, Rick Kaysen, they did not inform readers of his connection to the WT-E.

The caller told me that for his interview Reed Eckhardt and Mike McCracken were absent. Scott Smith now works for the City so he wasn't there. And, while Bill Parker sat in on the interviews before the primary election, he has been replaced by Jim Applegate, a local attorney who has been recycled.

Applegate served as the interrogator in this hostile interview and the other two in attendance, advertising czar Scott Walker and reporter for seniors, Joanne Bowlby, assisted.

When it comes time to determine which candidate to endorse, the WT-E will have had two different bodies of interrogators for the two candidates. Not that it matters because Reed decides who gets endorsed and who doesn't and it has little to do with the interviews candidates

demeaned themselves to sit through. One might believe that all members of the "selection committee" watch tapes of the interviews they missed but I wouldn't believe that for a minute. I cannot sit all the way through an interview when I try, let alone a series of them. They are brutal. The inquisitors are either demure and deferential or belligerent and angry.

In today's (October 11) paper, Reed rags on incumbent LCSD1 members and says he won't vote for any of them but backs off saying they won't be endorsed by the paper because that is an "editorial board" decision. Horse feathers! Who does he think still believes him?

A couple days ago, the paper boasted about a number of national newspaper awards they had received. The story said for "papers of over 16,000 circulation" but the WT-E doesn't have that circulation. Maybe there aren't many dailies with less than the 16,000 circulation the WT-E really has so the competition is too tough and some of those that small won't pay the fees required to enter.

But what were they embarrassed about? Why did they wait until October 9th to announce awards they received in "late September"? The awards were presented in St. Paul on September 27, 2008. And why did they bury the announcement on pages A3 and A5 well inside the paper?

Was the embarrassment because most of the "awards" went to people no longer employed by the WT-E? And could they legitimately submit articles written anytime in their history? Jessica Lowell has been gone from the daily for a long time. She has been with the University of Wyoming since at least last summer, when her by-line first appeared in the *UWYO* magazine on the story "Not So Peaceable Kingdom." Jessica Lowell now serves as the Director of University Public Relations, she is not a reporter for the WT-E.

Still, in September of 2008, her writings for the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle are earnings awards for them? The awards are designated as 2008 awards, not 2007.

Reed himself was recognized for a story about the Wyoming state quarter. Any third grader at Hobbs Elementary could have written a story panning our goofy looking quarter. And that was worth an award? Please.

Some sort of unspecified editorial page writing award was given to Scott Smith. Wonder if they'll use that slug for a guy who now spins his tales at the City?

Okay, let's get specific here. The National Newspaper Association must be some kind of backwater organization or not highly respected by newspapers around the country. Their shindig in St. Paul attracted "Representatives from 50 newspapers and one press association ...". To put that in perspective, there are nearly that many newspapers in Wyoming - 43 I think it is. Those in attendance "received a total of 281 awards," according

to the NNA website. They have a Better Newspaper Contest (not a Best) and the website reads:

"Many state associations have better newspaper contests to recognize the outstanding work by papers in their states. NNA's Better Newspaper Contest is the premiere national competition recognizing the best in community journalism. The 2008 Better Newspaper Contest received 1,987 entries, representing member newspapers in 35 states and the District of Columbia. Of these entries, 501 were selected as winners."

More than 25% of the entries won awards. But 15 states were not represented. Of the better daily newspapers around here, the Casper Star-Tribune, Fort Collins Coloradoan, Laramie Boomerang, Gillette News-Record and Greeley News-Tribune did not enter. The list of winners is almost laughable. Few papers that readers would recognize were winners. The competition was very weak. If you can pay the admission price, chances are one in four you'll go home a winner. I wish the PowerBall had those odds.

It looked like the WT-E ownership did not want to spend the money to enter offerings from the Rawlins, Worland or Laramie newspapers, also owned by them. This is just to feed Reed's ego. By the way, the only other Wyoming papers to bite were the incomparable Jackson Hole News-Guide, and the Thermopolis and Cody papers. In Colorado, only the Glenwood Springs paper entered. How legitimate are awards when the vast majority of newspapers in the country don't enter?

The Cheyenne Herald shows you what we think of these awards at the lower left of this spread.

NNA awards are even bestowed for obits.

A couple days back, Reed used his column space to write about the folly of the city governing body's majority voting bloc to try to change the rules on consent agenda items. Consent agenda items are permissible under parliamentary procedure but they are not supposed to be used for controversial, major spending or items that should be openly discussed. The use has been abused by this mayor and his minions and the whole provision should be discarded.

List every item and move through as fast or as slow as is prudent. It is interesting that Reed only noticed the consent agenda abuse when his friends at the city wanted to take the abuse one more giant step. Openness in government will never be accomplished when you have a majority group that does not want to be challenged or discuss issues they consider unimportant. It is immaterial to them whether the general public may think a subject is important, their opinion is all that matters. So now they propose that removal of a consent agenda item would require a motion and a second,

then a majority vote in support. Obviously, that would eliminate ever removing a consent agenda item. Had the mayor and his allies wanted the item to be on the main agenda in the first place, they would have placed it there. There are so many worse and more flagrant abuses of the process and wasted time that this is a subject unworthy of debate. Eliminate the consent agenda and go back to what governing bodies in Cheyenne have done for the previous thirty years - have everything on one agenda. No combined voting. That is a way for members of the governing body to cover their ignorance of an issue. They cannot be questioned on an issue if it goes through with a number of others by consent.

Reed's editorial doesn't take a position on the unwise use of a consent agenda provision. He instead told his allies at City Hall that by changing the procedure, they will play into Pete Laybourn's hands by directing more support his way for the upcoming election. If Reed does not oppose the misuse of a consent agenda, why would he think that voters who agree with him would also agree with Pete?

In Reed's acceptance of the NNA awards that mark the McCracken paper as a special one, there is a typo in the paragraph where he tells readers what a great paper the WT-E is.

Thank God, another bank!

Just when it seemed like there may be some residents in Cheyenne that had to travel at least ten blocks to reach a bank, still another bank began to remodel a building formerly used for other purposes.

The one-time Mr. Steak restaurant on E. Lincolnway is being converted to house still another bank. Everywhere you look, every time you turn around, another bank or credit union is being built or opened. At a time when the financial industry is supposed to be in dire straits, is it really necessary - is it really wise - to have a place of deposit on every street corner and inside every retail operation and grocery store in Cheyenne?

Is it profitable to divide the same pie into more slices? When there are "x" dollars to be deposited in a community, adding a bank or eleven seems like it would just dilute the deposits of another location(s).

Nationally, maybe the best solution to the financial crisis would be to allow one in every five banks to fail and the other four might be able to make a buck. Didn't the oversaturation of banks result in their making poor loans and getting into the soup with massive unrecoverable debts?

How many banks are enough for Cheyenne? And when will some start to fall by the wayside? Maybe they can devise a way to send liquor bottles through those pneumatic tubes to salvage those drive-thru lanes for more liquor stores.