

VIEWPOINTS

Life is good, albeit bittersweet at times

By David Lias

You've got to admit that, in general, life is good. Except for those times when it's not.

It's difficult for a lot of folks in Vermillion to not be touched by bittersweet emotions these days.

People whose contributions to the community, whose efforts helped make our town a better place to live, have been sadly shuffling off this mortal coil, leaving us to face the tumults and troubles of everyday life without them.

In the wake of these happenings are those who are left behind, trying their best to move on.

Funeral services were held Monday for Martin Weeks, who best can be described as a humble servant to the city, Clay County, to agriculture, to wildlife, to conservation, and all the good things that come when one is a steward to the land and to one's fellow man.

Our thoughts go out to the Hansen family, after the sudden loss of Brenda Hansen in Sioux

BETWEEN THE LINES



DAVID LIAS
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who was influenced by his four decades of work as a teacher, coach, and administrator, were saddened to learn this week that he passed away on Easter Sunday in Sioux City, IA.

He coached the 1978 Coyotes to the school's first North Central Conference championship in 27 years. Cooper stepped down after that season to serve full time as athletic director before serving in that capacity at Indiana State University. He was inducted into USD's Athletic Hall of Fame in 2008.

Falls – who was loved as a daughter, a sister, an aunt, and a co-worker.

Local sports fans, along with Bernard "Beanie" Cooper's family, friends, and no doubt anyone else

Nothing but pleasant memories surface when I think of Joann Willroth. The pain comes with the realization that memories will have to do for now. Joann, the long-time matriarch of The Broadcaster Press, passed away April 9.

She, along with her husband, William Willroth III (we simply call him Bill Sr.) moved to Vermillion in 1963 and owned and operated The Broadcaster Press from 1966 through 1984, when the business was purchased by their son, William Willroth IV (Bill Jr.) and a business partner.

Joann remained on board here at The Broadcaster, and the unique drive of the Willroth family built their printing and publication business, which later included The Plain Talk, into an entity that can't be described simply as a business.

The place seemed to have a life of its own when I began here in 1996. I soon learned, as I became acquainted with the staff working at the building here at that time, that many of them had been employed here for years.

Some had been here for

decades. I soon discovered why. They not only loved their work, they also loved the people they were working for. The Willroths were professionals, with high standards that everyone strived to meet.

At the same time, there was a unique humanity that wafted through the office building along with the smell of ink from the press, and Joann contributed a great deal to that. The place was a beehive of activity, but under the Willroths' influence, things would stop, for a just a moment, around 10 a.m. and everyone would gather around the round table in what fittingly is still called "the break room" to do just that – take a break.

Coffee would be poured, and informal chitchat would ensue. When something like this happens, co-workers can't help but get to know more and more about each other, to the point that a strong bond sets in.

We were family. That point was driven home near the end of my first year at The Broadcaster, when a long time staffer decided to take another job. Her last day

was marked by a celebration of coffee and cake, and if memory serves, going away presents.

What I clearly remember, though, were the tears that were shed as the celebration ended and the staffer walked toward the door to exit the building and, in effect, end her career here.

That's how strong the bonds knit by the Willroth family were. They were incredibly difficult to break, and even though the family no longer has ownership or oversight over the business, I can't help but feel those bonds are still helping keep this place together.

Those bonds have been tugging a bit lately, as I walk the halls at work and remember Joann's laugh, and her ability to laugh at herself, the stories we would tell about Andrea, her granddaughter, her sense of professionalism, and her ability to make sure that no one's birthday ever went unnoticed.

It is all bittersweet. Life is good, except for those times when it's not.

Capitol Notebook

A piece of soul is lost for a reporter

By Bob Mercer

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE – We have been together since April 3, 1995. There were some slick patches, sure. But nothing so bad I felt I had to leave.

There is a lot to be said for something so reliable, so constant, so always there.

That is, until a week ago. I started getting word from others. The trust had been broken.

I asked some folks what they would do. Their advice varied, a lot, from getting serious professional help, to not worrying about it.

Then came the second time. It was so flagrant. This was too much, I decided, this was it.

I have to close down my AOL account.

The only name I'd ever really had on the Internet, Bobmercer1@aol.com, would be history.

I signed up for a new e-mail service. Going forward I would be bobmercer2014@gmail.com.

Would this help end the spam attacks being inflicted from Bobmercer1 upon my entire AOL address book? Was it the Heartbleed virus or something else? I don't know.

But I was sick of it. Whether or not going Gmail was the right step. I felt I had to do something.

It was my way of responding to the embarrassment I felt. My name was being used, without my permission, to harass and potentially entrap other people whose e-mail addresses were in my AOL account data.

I truly was sorry and I still am. How do you answer, other than with an apology, the e-mails and text messages from friends and professional acquaintances and co-workers that I was spamming

them?

Shock went through me when I opened my AOL mail on Tuesday evening and saw screens full of "undelivered" messages for e-mails I hadn't sent.

America Online wasn't the first e-mail and Internet browser service we used in our house. But with AOL, we found an on-line home.

Those were the days of dial-up – as in telephone lines. You signed onto the AOL software on your PC and it dialed a phone number to connect to the Internet.

We had an IBM desktop for the family. It connected through our household line.

For my job as a reporter, I connected my laptop with the separate work-phone line at my desk at home.

Eventually we bought cable modem service for the house. But AOL dial-up remained a valuable tool for me as a reporter in those pre-wireless days.

Many times when I went to a meeting in another city, I needed to file my story from some government building or business.

With AOL's 800 number, if I could get the settings adjusted to reach an outside line, I could get my story out.

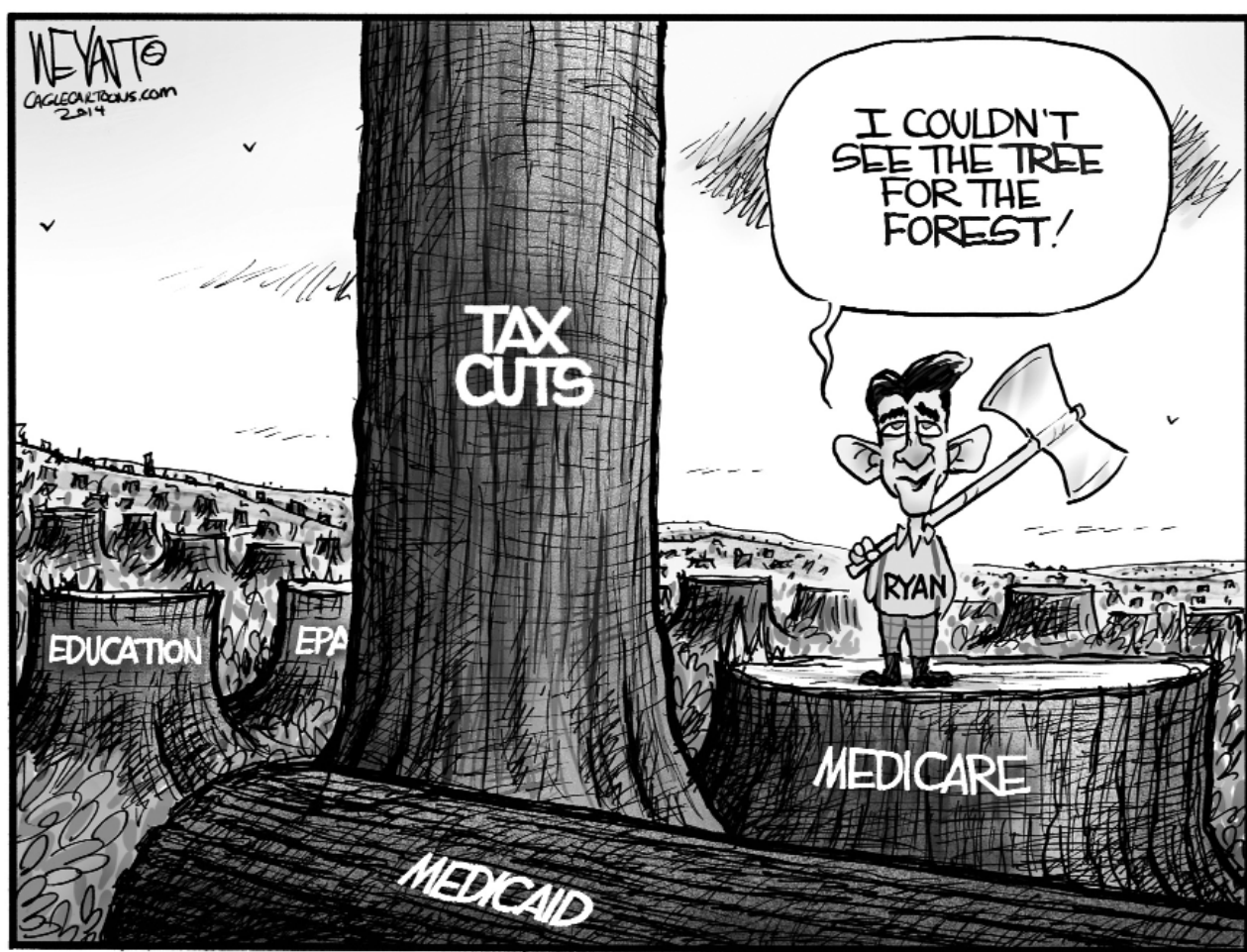
Now wi-fi is nearly everywhere.

And when it's not. I prowled slowly down a residential street or a downtown alley, with my laptop open on the truck seat next to me, watching the road while watching its screen for a signal.

I can't remember the last time I used AOL dial-up. My current laptop doesn't have a phone jack.

But I kept AOL. It was part of me. Bobmercer1 was my on-line identity.

Then came the spam. Dear AOL, I hope we can still be friends.



Nowhere to run - nowhere to hide

Note: All men are at risk of developing prostate cancer but the risk significantly increases as men grow older. According to ZeroCancer.org, 100 percent of men with prostate cancer have a five-year survival rate; 91 percent of men with the disease have a 10-year survival rate and 76 percent have a 15-year survival rate. Diet significantly helps to lower chances of prostate cancer. The U.S., a high-consumer of animal protein and dairy, has a prostate cancer mortality rate more than five times greater than South Central Asia. I invited a lifelong friend Ralph Webb, who is being treated for prostate cancer, to share his journey through the disease. He agreed with the hope of helping others. This is his second in a series of reflections.

One week after I spent half a day in the hospital for bone and full body scans, I met with my doctor to go over the results. He said the cancer had only affected about half of my prostate and had not spread (that was the good news!), but it was a more aggressive type of cancer (that was the bad news, or as the doctor would say, the not so good news).

He gave me a book on prostate cancer and said my options were surgery or radiation. Having never had cancer, I had no experience with treatment, so, I asked what he would do. His answer? He couldn't say because our ages and circumstances are different. Later, I asked another doctor the same question and got a similar response.

Not consulting others, I relied solely on my warrior mentality to rid my body of cancer. If that meant overkill, so be it. If there was

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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decided to have external radiation and then radioactive seeds implanted.

In late November 2013, I told the doctor my decision. He referred me to a radiation oncologist at the cancer center. After meeting with the oncologist and his nurse, I learned more about the radiation treatment process:

1. Go to the cancer center for simulated treatments and get marked with "tattoos" to effectively target the radiation. [I never thought I'd ever have a tattoo!]
2. Return to the cancer center Monday through Friday for 23 straight days of treatments.
3. Take a week off.
4. Finally, have the radiation seeds implanted.

They gave me bladder prep instructions and stressed the importance of following them before my treatments. They said something about a full bladder helps position the prostate ideally for radiation. For a person my age, having to wait 30 minutes with a full bladder concerned me.

The daily treatments started in January 2014, when, like a good soldier, I dutifully, showed up. They

cancer in me, I wanted it out and refused to live the rest of my life wondering. After reading the book, doing some research, evaluating side-effects and the effectiveness of treatment options, I

began with a hormone shot in my stomach to shrink my prostate, making the radiation more effective.

Let me tell you, hormone shots cause hot flashes. Who would have thought? Men aren't supposed to get hot flashes! Now, if you think you have some control over your life, try controlling hot flashes. (I heard Warren Buffett had this done, and I figured, if it worked for him, it could work for me. After all, he has succeeded at just about everything.)

As far as my daily treatments, I was at the cancer center for only about 30 minutes from start to finish – the treatments themselves only lasted 15 minutes. I tried to be cheerful and good natured. The radiation oncology staff may have gotten weary of my tired old jokes every day – and I mean EVERY day. They were good sports and laughed anyway. Was that for my benefit?

Looking around the waiting room, I felt sad for all of those cancer patients, who obviously were showing signs of physical distress caused by this dreadful disease. All of us were there for one reason. We were fighting the same enemy, making us vulnerable and bringing us closer together, even though we didn't know each other.

There is something to be said about the bonds among cancer patients. No masks to wear, no roles to play, no hideouts to run to – no faking it. No words need to be spoken. Yet, we are kindred spirits on this journey together.

End of Part II in a series to be continued next week.

Source: www.zerocancer.org, a national nonprofit organization with the mission to end prostate cancer.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Plain Talk encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the Plain Talk will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters to the Editor, 201 W. Cherry St., Vermillion, SD 57069, drop off at 201 W. Cherry in Vermillion, fax to 624-4696 or e-mail to david.lias@plaintalk.net.