

“Make it one for my baby...



*The Wordchipper*SM

by Larry Gauper · #308

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...AND ONE MORE FOR THE ROAD.” But if you’re sitting across from a bartender trying to sound like Frank Sinatra, you need to have a designated driver handy. That great old saloon song was also sung by Bette Midler as a farewell to the late Johnny Carson on his last *Tonight Show*. And it comes to mind now as I write my last Wordchipper column for this newspaper.

This weekly essay has been my “baby” for over six years and 308 attempts at putting together a piece that, hopefully, you found entertaining, informative and sometimes useful. I’ve enjoyed this exercise ever since the paper’s founder and now former publisher, John Kolness, asked me to give it a go. Our mutual friend and colleague, Soo Asheim, provided encouragement along the way, and endured my occasional rants about something or other. While his brother, Donovan, taught me a lot about graphics and layout work when we were both employed by the late Harold E. Flint in his advertising agency, I learned a thing or two about publications from John. In many ways, this experience was a learning exercise for me. It remained instructive to the end.

So why am I bringing down the curtain on this act? Because it’s time.

It’s certainly not for lack of something to say. As my dear wife and my friends will attest, expressing myself on any subject — often times at great length — is not a problem for me. After spending an hour as a guest lecturer in Al Aamodt’s media class at Minnesota State University, Moorhead, one student accurately referred to me as the “*Wordy* Wordchipper.” So true. By the way, everyone should experience talking to a group of bright, young college students and then have them write a paper on their impressions of your talk. Thanks for inviting me, Al. I always learn more from the students than they do from me.

But while yakking away about something is one thing, writing about it for a printed publication is quite another. As much fun as it is to “have written,” writing is work. To most people, and especially to professional writers, that’s not a news flash. And it’s not just the composing, it’s the research, accuracy and use of language. I humbly thank the high priests of computers for the delete key, the “copy and paste” function and, of course, the Internet. I remember a world where the best tool a writer had was a portable Underwood or Smith-Corona. Even with all the magical capabilities and conveniences we have today, writing hundreds of words to meet a weekly deadline is a challenge. And the weeks go by faster and faster. Just as Johnny Carson left the stage when he might have stayed longer, it’s time for me to give somebody else a chance.

This publication is well-poised to go through a metamorphosis. Its new owner, New Century Press Publications, is making some smart moves, not the least of which is their appointment of Gerry Gilmour as editor. As many in this region know, Gerry is a highly experienced journalist with particular expertise in business and agricultural reporting. I worked with him when he was with *The Forum* and I was on the other side of the desk in corporate communications. I have the greatest respect for his professionalism, fairness and skill. And, as this newspaper evolves, you may occasionally see my byline as a contributor. Working again with Gerry is certainly an attraction for me. In fact, that’s part of the wisdom behind his appointment by the publisher of *The Extra*: Gerry will attract new and excellent talent to these pages.

Although I’m retired after a 50-year career in media, advertising and corporate public relations, I still have a number of projects I’m involved with, including my personal blog, at www.Wordchipper.com. Stop by sometime. Meanwhile, I’ll close with a line from comedienne Carol Burnett, part of a song she sang at the end of every show: “I’m so glad we had this time together ...” That’s been true for me and I hope it was for you.