

Remembering Jack Pollock

Jack Pollock, longtime publisher of the Keith County News in Ogallala, died Feb. 20 at age 77.

He earned a bachelor's in journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1958. He joined the Keith County News in 1960 as news editor. He and his wife, Beverly Buck Pollock, also a UNL journalism grad, bought the Ogallala-based paper in 1966. They sold it to employees in 2000.

Pollock was a member of the Nebraska Journalism Hall of Fame and had won the Nebraska Press Association's Master Editor-Publisher award. Andy Pollock gave this eulogy at his father's Feb. 25 funeral.

Dad said he wanted an “upbeat and positive” funeral service, so hopefully you’ll all be OK with my saying, in the legendary words of Lyle Bremser: “Holy moly! Man, woman and child! Did that put ‘em in the aisles!”

Dad would be honored to know that this famous call from Husker football lore, from the Game of the Century that he attended (really), might apply to his life. Not just a juking, blazing punt return for a touchdown; not just a hard-fought 60-minute game; but a long life well lived. Thank you for letting Dad’s life put you in these aisles.

On behalf of Dad’s family, I want to thank you all so much for being here to celebrate the life Dad lived so well. One of the many verses Dad and I read in his last weeks was Ephesians 2:8-11, and it reads: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Dad truly and humbly walked in the works that God prepared for him. Dad was a good and faithful servant to his family — always putting us first.

Dad was a good and faithful servant to his friends. As one of them said in an e-mail he sent on Monday: “Jack had the ability to mix with everyone no matter their politics, religion, ethnic background or economic status in life.” Dad loved you all and would be honored, tremendously honored, to see so many of his good friends here. I am sure, in fact, he is honored.

Dad was a good and faithful servant to his community — to Ogallala — to Lake McConaughy — to all of Keith County. If you look around, you will see so many sites that draw people to this place, and you will find the fingerprints of Dad’s creativity, tenacity, dedication and his love of this place. Look at Ash Hollow’s visitor center, look at Front Street, look at the Lake’s visitor center, the petrified wood museum — so many things. Look at the cowboys’ resting place, Boot Hill. Dad knew these things would draw people to this place and would help sustain and grow it.

Dad was a good and faithful servant to his state. He was active in many, many organizations that sought to promote Nebraska. Everywhere I go, I run into people who ask about Dad. It got to the point where I had to write down their names to remember them all.

Dad was a good and faithful and patriotic servant to his country. Dad was a good and faithful servant in this church. And in his last months, those hard months, he drew great comfort and grew more deeply in his love for his Lord. Dad grew in that intimacy with Christ that we all long for. He liked it when we read the Word of the Lord to him.

One of the verses we read was Revelation 21:4, and there’s a song by Jeremy Camp based on that verse. The chorus goes like this:

*“There will be a day
With no more tears,*

*No more pain,
No more fears.*

*There will be a day
When the burdens of this place
Will be no more.
We’ll see Jesus face to face”*

Dad’s burden was his cancer and the staph infection and then the cancer again and more than three long months in a hospital bed. But now Dad’s burden has been lifted, and we rejoice that he is smiling, seeing Jesus face to face.

One day in December, when Dad was still suffering from the staph, we prayed together, and I said, “Dad, you know, Jesus is right there with you.”

Dad didn’t say anything. He just smiled — a big joyous, knowing, trusting smile. I can see the smile on his face as he lay in his bed. And I can see the smile on his face now. That smile told me everything I wanted to know.

We all know that Dad had a unique and tremendous sense of humor. He loved to make us laugh. He was quick with a pun — though they weren’t always good. And he loved his one-liners. I remember at the bachelor party for Larry, my brother-in-law, Dad stood up at dinner and told one-liner after one-liner to a group of young men, most of whom he didn’t know. He told so many one-liners you could almost have put them together and made a joke out of it.

A few years later, Dad told Larry’s brother Mike, shortly before Mike got married, “Michael, a man is not complete until he gets married, because once you get married, you are finished.”

The last joke I heard Dad tell was when Pastor Phil Ewert and I were with him one evening. We talked about some heavy stuff, and we prayed together, and when we were done, Phil graciously said, “Jack, if there’s anything I can do — anything at all — you just call — any time.”

My dad smiled, and replied in his weak, raspy voice, “I just hope I don’t call two days too late!”

Dad burst out laughing with all the energy he had left.

That was the last joke I heard Dad tell before he died, but I think Dad’s humor even showed up the day after he died. On Saturday, Jerry Draucker, who is in charge of these funeral arrangements, was showing Mom, Allison and me urns for Dad’s cremated remains. Among the larger urns were several tiny ones, for family members to keep. Jerry explained that he’d seen these urns being made by hand when he was in China, and he said, “I don’t know what it is about these little urns, but the Asians are just dying for them.”

Allison, always quicker than the rest of us in finding humor, immediately picked up on the unintended pun. And Allison also pointed out that our naughty Dad was probably speaking through the very stoic and gentlemanly funeral director, which just added to the humor of the moment.

Thank you, Dad, for your laughter. We will miss it but always remember it.

Thank you for the life you gave us. Thank you for the legacy you left us.

Thank you for the community you helped make for us. Thank you for the love you showed us. Thank you for filling these aisles.

We will miss you, Dad. We will miss you so much.

Journalism grad fought adversity to make a difference

Barbara Burbach died in her Lincoln home March 27

By ROB DUMP

Publisher, *Cedar County News*, Hartington

LINCOLN — It may be a little more difficult for northeast Nebraska residents to understand the bills and new laws coming out of the Legislature from now on.

Long-time *Cedar County News* legislative reporter and columnist Barb Burbach died Friday, March 27, in Lincoln.

Burbach, 46, covered the Legislature for the *Cedar County News* since 1997. She worked for the *News* right up to her death.

Her efforts were appreciated by both local residents and state lawmakers.

"Barbara had a genuine interest in the legislative process and especially issues affecting agriculture and northeast Nebraska," said former Dist. 40 Sen. Doug Cunningham. "She loved the community she worked for. She loved Wynot, agriculture and small farms. She cared about these issues and asked questions and reported on issues that the big papers didn't seem to care about."

Current Dist. 40 Sen. Cap Dierks said Burbach had an obvious desire to help Cedar County and its people.

"She really did have a passion for the rural part of our state. She was especially fond of Cedar County and all the people in that county," Dierks said.

Hartington economic development coordinator Carla Becker said Burbach always went out of her way to make people feel comfortable.

"She was a person you'll never forget," Becker said. "She had a way of touching your heart. Not only did she always greet Hartington people with warm smiles and kind words for everyone, she sincerely loved to be with us. She may have lived in Lincoln, but it was obvious she loved her home roots of Wynot and the Hartington area. Not only was she extremely knowledgeable in knowing the Unicameral and state senators, but more than that she was just one of a kind ... honest, loving, and very dedicated to her work."

Few of the people who read Burbach's articles understood the struggle she went through to bring this information to the public.

She suffered a near life-ending accident in 1990 when the New York City taxi cab she was riding in ran a red light.

The accident caused severe spinal and brain injuries. She spent 18 months bouncing from hospital to hospital in New York.

"First they did not know if she would live; then they said she would never walk again. At one point she couldn't even speak," said her brother, Larry Burbach, Mission Viejo, Calif. "Everything the doctors said she would never do again — she did. She had to re-learn her whole life. She conquered everything. The only thing she did not get back was the complete use of her left arm."

After she was finally well enough to leave the New York hospitals, she moved back to Nebraska to be with family and undergo more rehabilitation.

She eventually went back to school at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to add a master's degree in journalism to her law degree.



UNL College of Journalism Dean Will Norton, Jr., said Burbach was a very special person.

"She had an incredible mind. You ask yourself how does God let something like this happen, where there is a person with so much terrific talent, and it is trapped in a body because someone did not follow the law and had an accident where she got injured," Norton said.

"How tragic that the world did not have the benefit of this person for decades more!"

After the accident, Burbach fought to regain her strength and attempted to live a normal life once again — a task that was not always easy.

"I cannot even begin to imagine how difficult life was for her, but she didn't let that stand in her way," Norton said. "When you consider how much pain she was in, and just the aches and pains of having her spinal chord all messed up, [it's amazing that] you never heard her complain, not once."

Nebraska Press Association executive director Allen Beermann also had a great deal of respect and admiration for Burbach.

"She was an extremely gifted person. Her hardships never curtailed her zest for life and living and perhaps even enhanced her journalistic abilities," Beermann said.

Burbach became an advocate for the handicapped and began to use her forum to promote the issues she felt passionately about — the creation of seat belt laws, abolition of abortion and the death penalty and the support for rural Nebraskans and for living wills.

She also worked very hard to make sure her northeast Nebraska readers understood any laws being considered by the Legislature that would have an impact on their lives.

"She was a marvelous student of the law," Beermann said. "She added luster to the journalism community. She was always careful and considerate with her writing."

Sen. Dierks agreed. "She would often times ride the bus down from her house and sit in those hearing rooms all afternoon taking notes. Then she'd call me later to ask me questions. She was always careful to make sure she understood the issues. She definitely had a great understanding of the process."

Dierks said Burbach made an impression on him the first time they met.

"When she first came to our office I was so taken with her," Dierks said. "She obviously had her own difficulties, but she never let that stop her. She always remained focused on trying to understand the issues at hand."

Her ability to explain the intricate workings of the Unicameral to normal everyday working people in northeast Nebraska will be missed. "She will definitely leave a void," Sen. Dierks said. "She was a very good person who cared deeply for the people around her." ■