

# This and That

By Janine L. Kock, Observer Editor and Publisher

PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 2012

June 4, 2012

That date is another one that will definitely be engraved in the memories of our family forever.

That was the date that my husband, having injured his hand badly enough over Memorial Weekend that he needed to visit the emergency room for stitches and a tetanus shot, visited the doctor's office to have the stitches removed. While there, he mentioned to Dr. Ervelli that he had been experiencing some "balance issues" -- that the bottoms of his feet were numb and he had had some problems in the past couple days walking in a straight line.

While Davey had failed to mention the balance problem to me, it immediately set in motion a series of events that continue today to get to the bottom of the problem. Dr. Ervelli immediately ordered a CAT scan of Davey's head at the Carroll hospital to rule out a brain tumor, and, with that problem checked off the list, a visit to a neurologist in Ames was set up.

After a consultation and a variety of tests, the doctors were a bit -- or a lot -- baffled. The symptoms, which continued to grow worse as June progressed, pointed toward a rare malady called Guillain-Barre Syndrome, although Davey wasn't a textbook case, especially since many patients suffering from the syndrome end up hospitalized and on a ventilator within a few days because the rapidly-progressing symptoms render the patients' respiratory systems and other bodily functions incapable of working on their own.

The balance issues continued to grow worse, the Parkinson's disease-like tremors were more severe, and other symptoms, such as dry eyes and dry mouth and memory loss became more prevalent. But, if GBS was the problem, the doctors said, it was definitely an "atypical" case, so, after four visits to the neurologist in Ames, it was recommended that we seek a second opinion at Mayo Clinic.

The only problem was that Mayo put us on their waiting list and said we could expect a call in September or October. Sorry, folks, that just wasn't quick enough for someone who could no longer use his computer, no longer sign his name, no longer drive a car, and no longer easily or effectively do the things he loves, like coach basketball, run a TV remote control or carry out jobs around the acreage that had always been relaxing ways to spend his spare time.

We took the advice of friends and relatives who said that we should travel to Rochester and report to the St. Mary's Hospital emergency room to be seen initially and, hopefully, referred to the Mayo Clinic for further examination. That's exactly what happened (a neurologist who saw us at the emergency room said that we couldn't afford to wait until September or October), and we spent five more days in the next week at Mayo undergoing a series of tests of all types.

The experts at Rochester disagreed with the neurologist in Ames, calling the problem not GBS but an auto-immune syndrome which was causing major problems with Davey's brain waves. An

EEG of his brain ended with “very abnormal” results, and tests continue to find out more about the connection between the brain activity and the various other problems and also about what triggered the problems to surface.

The balance issues have deteriorated to the point that a walker has replaced a cane for safe “motation,” and we’ve both taken time off of work as much as possible to make getting to the bottom of these health problems our top priority. The ladies and Jordan in the Manilla office have been forced to “fend for themselves” as of late and are doing a great job. And, words cannot express how smoothly Doreen, Myra, Jessie, Spencer, Kalley and Barb have kept things going in Westside. It has been great to use modern technology and work on writing and laying out pages on my computer in a Rochester hotel room, but the day-to-day office work has been in capable hands.

Anyone who has been to Mayo Clinic knows what a wonderful -- and huge -- place it is. We met other patients from all across the country who came to Rochester for help with their medical problems, and yet we had four “it’s a small world” moments during our time there that I’ll write about in a future column.

Our next appointment is subject to change but is currently set for September 7. Throughout this ordeal, prayers and words of encouragement arriving from near and far have been so gratifying and appreciated. I will keep you updated in these columns and look forward to the day when I can report that we are on the road to recovery, back in balance and with less trembling. Thanks to friends and family and to our readers for caring and joining the prayer chain!

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#### **PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 2012**

Another week finds another chapter added to the Kock family’s summer adventures. I wish I was writing about an exciting vacation trip to some exotic location, but instead, this summer’s travels have found us beating the highway to a neurologist’s office in Ames and now three times to Mayo Clinic in Rochester.

Since last week, we’ve started some physical therapy at St. Anthony hospital, and we were pleasantly surprised to be under the expert supervision of Karen Koster, daughter of Dan and Ruth Lally of Vail, a physical therapist there.

Since Davey’s neurological ordeal began in earnest in mid-June, he has put himself through a daily workout including pushups, sit-ups, and stretches. At first, he ran up and down the steps to our basement. When that became a bit dangerous because of his balance issues, he took to the gravel road outside our house, walking backwards up the 1/4-mile hill to the south and then going forward back down. Much to my dismay, with the very hot summer weather we have experienced, this gravel-road workout most times took place during the middle of the night. As of late, however, walking in the house has been enough of a challenge, so that part of the workout has been eliminated, and more stationary exercising is the extent of it. The visits to physical therapy will be good for him.

Our most exciting news of the week came in the form of a phone call Thursday afternoon from an auto-immune specialist at Mayo Clinic. The doctor called to say he had an opening for us at 3 p.m. Monday, August 13 – a much more desirable appointment time than the September 7 date we had previously been assigned. While the Monday appointment meant working throughout the weekend for the third time in four weeks to complete as much of this week’s Observer as possible, we weren’t going to complain. Our hope was that the auto-immune specialist could give us the

information and a treatment plan that we have been waiting for. Since we worked Saturday and Sunday, loyal readers waiting for news from Mayo will have to “tune in” next week or check out my personal Facebook page for a brief update.

The change of schedule at Mayo also meant the cancellation of our annual trip to the Iowa State Fair. We had tickets for Row 8 seats for Larry the Cable Guy’s show Saturday night and a list of things we wanted to do at the fairgrounds, using a wheelchair if we had to, including seeking out the Manilla Times’ cement ice cream cone as well as the cone from Buena Vista University, which featured the “ice cream dip” being transformed into a beaver sitting on top the cone. My sister and brother-in-law, Barb and Pat Wuestewald, were the lucky winners who were assigned to fill in for us in Des Moines. Watch for a report from them next week as well!

Last week I promised an explanation of our “small world” experiences at Mayo clinic. If you’ve never been to Mayo, it’s hard to believe what a huge place it is – 19 floors of various departments in addition to nearby Methodist Hospital and other buildings, all joined by underground “subway” passages. We spent most of our time on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of the Mayo and Gonda buildings, where the neurology department is located, but when we went to the cafeteria one day and were sitting down to eat our sandwiches, a green t-shirt caught my eye. Lo and behold, Manilla’s Janette Hansen was sitting at the table next to us, accompanying a family member on a visit to the clinic. Running into someone from “back home” once was coincidence enough, but the next week, as I was filling a prescription at the Mayo Pharmacy, we ran into them again, as they were passing by in the hallway following another appointment.

Another day, as we were sitting in a lounge area before another test, I looked across the waiting room, and what I thought was a familiar face caught my eye. I looked away, then took another glance, then whispered to Davey, “I think that’s Lisa over there.” Lisa, our next-door neighbor for five years in Newton, glanced my way at the same time and we headed across the room towards each other. We have kept in touch mostly via email over the nearly 25 years since we left Newton to move back to West Central Iowa. I had shared the news with her that Davey was having health problems, but hadn’t had time to tell her we were going to Mayo. So, I didn’t know she was going to be in Rochester with her dad for tests at the same time. We exchanged hugs and a few minutes of conversation before we were whisked away to our test.

An hour later, however, as we were heading back to our neurologist’s office, Davey stopped in a restroom and came out shaking his head. “Did you see that guy?” he asked as he approached where I sat waiting. “He’s from Dow City. We used to play basketball against each other in high school.” (I think his name was Mitchell.)

The next week, we arrived in yet another waiting room to await another consultation. There, as we walked in, was a guy with a grey and maroon Morningside t-shirt. We signed in at the desk, and then Davey went over to introduce himself as a M’ side alum and the dad of two graduates of the Sioux City school. Turns out the young man knew both Kellsey and Kendra and is now an assistant girls’ basketball coach at Heelan High School. Needless to say, the two coaches had no trouble making small talk for well over a half hour, and there was discussion of a scrimmage between the two teams in the future.

The coaching conversation was quite a godsend, as we had to wait over an hour for our appointment. I have a feeling if the patient hadn’t been engrossed in conversation about his favorite topic, he wouldn’t have been a very “patient patient” at all!

God seemed to be looking out for us that day all the way around. As we sat down in the huge

waiting room, my nerves were making me a bit nauseous, and, no matter how positive I tried to be about the outcome of our visit, I was downright scared. I settled in to my chair, got out my computer and entered the web address to Facebook to pass the time. Only then did I look up at the guy who was sitting straight in front of me, facing the front of the room as he awaited his own appointment. On the back of his t-shirt was a very important message for me. It said, "Psalm 56:4 — In God, whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid."

Ok, God, I get it... I'll try harder to put my trust in you and not be afraid, no matter what the future holds...

Well, folks, that's all for this week's report. For those of you who are more interested in trivia, jokes and "small talk" rather than updates on my family's "exciting" summer, hopefully soon we can go back to the funny stuff, and "no news" will be "good news" for the Kocks. In the meantime, keep the prayers and positive thoughts coming our way!

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#### **PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 2012**

The summer saga in which the main characters are testing out the section of the marriage vows that says "in sickness and in health," continued last week with a Monday trip to an auto-immune specialist at Mayo Clinic and the beginning of treatment which will hopefully put an end to this nightmare story. The specialist prescribed five consecutive days of steroid infusion therapy (the treatment takes 90 minutes each time) and then five more once-a-week infusions on Wednesdays (starting this week on August 22). After a couple weeks, some improvement in Davey's condition should be seen, he said, with the prognosis in his terms being "full recovery."

This might just be the longest two weeks in history for us, but you'll hear an echoing "hallelujah" when we think we've started on that return to health. In the meantime, thanks again to everyone for your prayers, your cards and gifts, and your Facebook messages. It has been truly humbling, and we both get quite emotional when we think about it.

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During our time at Mayo Clinic, we met a nurse whose husband had worked for Hormel, a packing plant company, for 40 years. Since Davey manages a co-op of hog producers who are part owners in Triumph Foods in St. Joseph, Mo., they struck up a conversation about packing plants. She shared that Hormel was celebrating the 75th anniversary of Spam, and all the workers at the Austin, Minn. plant had received special commemorative t-shirts that week.

I picked up a brochure for the Spam Museum, which is located close to the plant. It is described as "Amazing but True" and is open seven days a week, with free admission. There are many different displays about the "scrumptious" meat product, and you can find out more about it at [www.spam.com](http://www.spam.com).

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#### **PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, AUGUST 30, 2012**

Many years ago, my father-in-law gave me a wooden plaque which read, "Lord, grant me patience. But I want it NOW."

I think he was trying to tell me something and now, as we wait for some type of improvement in Davey's condition to become apparent, I know that he was right. I definitely am not the most

patient person in the world. I know that many times in day-to-day living, I have found it easier and much more efficient to do a task myself rather than delegate to someone else (If you want something done right, do it yourself, right?), but this time, there is nothing either of us can do other than pray and wait.

We have definitely been humbled by the many people all over the area and beyond who have sent cards, emails, Facebook messages and phone calls to tell us they have been praying for us and have activated prayer chains in their communities for us. We can be assured that the Big Guy has received the message and the chain of events which is happening is His will for us. We just have to be patient and wait until the future becomes apparent.

A conversation at a family reunion this weekend centered around the fact that sometimes bad things happen to good people, and it doesn't seem quite fair. We decided that in our daily lives we certainly need to live each day to the fullest and not take anything for granted. When a woman who has lost a husband, another who has lost a granddaughter to cancer and one whose husband's life has been turned upside down by a neurological syndrome see others treating each other badly or wasting precious time, it certainly is frustrating.

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So, what does one do when they are waiting for the Lord's plan to come together? They jump in a car and drive five hours to a Vikings football game!

Well, we admit that's probably not what most people would do, but with a sister and brother-in-law who enjoy following the Minneapolis-based team and the chance to buy some preseason tickets at a discounted price, why not get out of town for a day or two and have a little adventure?

Now, my husband the patient told us that the trip to see the Vikings was probably not in his treatment plan. After all, he has been encouraged over and over to maintain a positive attitude, and he was convinced that watching the Vikings probably would be a "downer."

Upon arriving at the game with Davey in a wheelchair for ease of transportation, we visited Fan Services to see where the best handicapped seating was available. We were greeted by a friendly guy whose response to our question was, "How would you like a treat?" Doreen and I looked at each other, shrugged our shoulders and said, "Sure."

We were directed to a suite near the end zone on the Vikings' side of the field, directly above the inflatable ship through which the team makes their appearance from the locker room before each game. The suite could easily seat 20 people comfortably and was complete with its own restroom and a kitchen area. There was also a little boy in a wheelchair and his family and a lady using a cane and her husband with us, and it appeared as if other suites on down the sideline were being used to give fans like us a "treat" as well.

It was certainly an enjoyable and stress-free place to watch the game, even though the offense for the first 58 minutes of the game consisted of three field goals for the Chargers and one field goal for the Vikings. At that point, with ISU alum Sage Rosenfels in at quarterback, the Vikings scored a touchdown to go ahead, 10-9, and all was good, even though I did make the comment, "There is still plenty of time for them to lose it."

And, lose it they did. The Chargers (with starting QB Philip Rivers in street clothes) moved down the field and kicked a field goal as the time ran off the clock, and the visitors won, 12-10.

A lot of "propaganda" was distributed about the Vikings' new \$975 million fixed-roof stadium, which is slated to open in 2016. The publicly-owned facility will be constructed on the current Metrodome site and is being built in hopes of keeping the Vikings in Minneapolis indefinitely



while also being able to host NCAA basketball (including the Final Four), amateur baseball, Major League soccer, concerts, conventions, and a myriad of other events. The 65,000-seat facility will be expandable to 72,000 seats to host the Super Bowl. It sounds like it will be a sight to see!

While we rode the hotel shuttle for the short drive to the game, we missed it after the game and walked the half-mile or so from the stadium to our accommodations afterwards. I'm sure we were a sight to see, the four of us in our Viking jerseys, pushing a 6-5 guy in a wheelchair and attempting not to dump him out on the sidewalk when we hit the bumps. Let's just say when we arrived at the hotel, we were glad the walk was over.

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#### **PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2012**

Our exercise in patience continues. Tuesday marked three months since Davey first mentioned the numbness on the bottoms of his feet and the balance issues he was experiencing because of it to the doctor. Since that time, our life has been an emotional roller coaster, and we now hope that our impression that some improvement, albeit very slight, has begun.

While our dreams find us waking up in the morning and being able to go back to our pre-June lifestyle, reality finds us dealing with the physical and psychological limitations that an auto-immune disorder which has attacked his brain has created. I find it hard to remember what life was like before my husband found that getting up out of a chair or walking across a room was a challenge, let alone showering, dressing, eating, or those more difficult features of life such as decision making or dealing with the tricks his brain is playing on him.

We are reminded that it took three months to get where we are today, so the road back to normalcy may take at least that long. Three more weekly steroid treatments remain, and two September appointments at Mayo will help us gauge our progress and the game plan for the future.

Meanwhile, we pray, and it is humbling to continue to hear of others near and far who pause each day to ask the Lord for healing on our behalf.

The highlight of the past week was the delivery to us of a prayer quilt made by the Presbyterian Church in Manning. Because my mom was a Manning native (Marilyn Schroeder), because my aunt Lila Schroeder is a member there, and because of Davey's basketball coaching in recent years, we know a lot of the members there or at least they know of us. However, we never expected anything as wonderful as that quilt.

The quilt is a part of the church's "Prayers and Squares" Ministry, and an explanatory sheet with it stated, "This prayer quilt was made by the Presbyterian Women of Manning, and tied by the members of the church. May the love of God surround you and your loved ones as God's healing power and love shine through. Our blessings to you and your family."

The sheet explained that the ministry began at the Hope Methodist Church in San Diego when a group of ladies who were quilting had a member whose grandson was in a coma and not expected to live. The group decided to make a quilt for him and pray for him as they worked. Each time a quilter would hand tie a knot, she would say a silent prayer. The quilt was taken to the hospital and given to the child. The family asked that the quilt stay with him so that he could be "covered with prayer." The child came out of the coma and the family rejoiced and thanked God for the quilters and the prayers.

One of those San Diego quilting ladies is quoted as saying, "Suddenly the group had a bigger

purpose than just the fun of quilting. The gift of a prayer quilt became a quiet affirmation of faith, each knot representing a prayer for the person in need, and we believed that God heard our prayers and that He had the power to comfort and heal.”

On their card, the Manning congregation said, “Each knot on this quilt represents a prayer that was said especially for you. We hope this quilt comforts you, both spiritually and physically...May this quilt bring you the comfort they have for so many others. Our prayers are with you.”

“A Prayer for the Quilts” which was written by the Rev. Cordell Smith, Mt. Liberty Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, Tenn., is one we all can repeat: “Father God, As we are bound together by the threads of this quilt, we are bound together by your love through Jesus Christ. Bless, we pray, each person represented, each individual congregation, and your church in the world. Where there is sickness, we pray for healing. Where there is distress, we pray for strength. Where there is sadness, we pray for comfort. Where there is injury, we pray for forgiveness. Hear this prayer and the individual prayers offered in our hearts. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

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#### **PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2012**

As you are reading this week’s paper on Thursday, we are due to be back at Mayo Clinic, desperately hoping for some answers. We had one appointment with a neurologist scheduled for Thursday since our visit in early August, but after a call to Rochester last week to report that we had seen no improvement in symptoms and, in fact, a continuous disintegration in Davey’s condition, we now will also be seeing the auto-immune specialist as well as another neurologist with whom the two doctors we have previously seen shared Davey’s file.

The three doctors will check him out, confer, and then decide what the next step in his treatment plan will be. After eight of ten steroid treatments were completed, the auto-immune specialist said he was canceling the final two until he could do another exam, so we are in need of our ever-growing army of friends and relatives to keep praying that they will find the answer and we will be able to finally turn the corner back to good health.

I say we are “due to be back” at Mayo because as of press time, Davey is spending some time in the Carroll hospital receiving some IV’s to re-hydrate him. In addition to the other maladies which have been plaguing him in recent weeks, he started to have some difficulty in swallowing along with some congestion, and ended up not taking in enough fluids. So, he was admitted late Monday afternoon to solve the dehydration problem before we were due to hit the road for Mayo. Dr. Ervelli thinks a day or two should be enough to do that, but only the Big Guy upstairs knows what waits in store for us now, so you’ll have to wait until next week for more of an update. Hopefully we’ll have some good news then.

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#### **PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2012**

Well, this is certainly a column I never once in a million years thought I would be writing. I won’t go into big detail, but perhaps it will be good therapy to write some about the events of the past week.

After we arrived at St. Mary’s Hospital in Rochester — transferred from St. Anthony’s on Tuesday last week — they did a few more tests and, combining those results with our ever-thickening file at Mayo Clinic, came up with another tentative diagnosis, one which was not favorable. In the

quiet of Davey's hospital room after the lights were out for the night, I Googled what are now the words which dominate my thoughts — Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease.

I had heard of it before and remembered reading something about it in the long list of questions when I donated blood, but the words jumped out at me from the websites and left me sick to my stomach — “degenerative neurological disorder,” “incurable,” “fatal.” I wanted to scream but I pinned my hopes on the one remaining test which would confirm their thoughts once and for all — an MRI of his brain which was scheduled for Thursday morning.

By Thursday afternoon we knew the worst was, indeed, reality, and, while still praying for a miracle, started asking questions, thinking about what we needed to do to prepare for the future, and making the raft of decisions which awaited us. It's a position I never pictured myself being in, and one which has made me, once again, so thankful for the prayers and support coming to us from every direction.

We have a tough road ahead of us, one that will, sooner or later, have an even tougher ending, but we will be forever grateful to everyone for all your kindnesses.

We can certainly tell that we live in a time of high technology and quick communication. After a few phone calls to family members, the Facebook posts and text messages began to flood in as the news of the diagnosis spread throughout the community. Privacy is a word of the past in this fast-moving society, but people remain as compassionate and caring as always.

Please feel free to Google those three words yourselves and get the facts. It's not pretty and, while we believe in the power of positive thinking and prayer, we are also being realistic and want to find out as much information as we can.

Anyone who knows Davey knows he's “one in a million,” although some people would have used a different choice of words at times to state that! However, upon reading on the CJD website, statistics show that approximately one in one million people are diagnosed with the disease every year. The folks at St. Mary's said they see five or six cases of CJD each year, coming from all over the United States and beyond, although different symptoms might manifest themselves in the different cases. The neurologists are learning right along with us, and hopefully something they see might help spare others from having to face this disease in the future.

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We have met so many wonderful people at St. Mary's Hospital. Along with the team of neurologists who pored through all the tests and documentation, there was a large staff of nurses, personal care assistants and others who made sure he (and his mom and I) were well cared-for during our time there.

To pass the time, we asked each one where they were from originally, where they lived now, and how long it took them to travel to work. That always led to a conversation about 1) if they were Vikings fans and, if they had any Iowa connections, 2) if they were Hawkeye or Cyclone fans or if they backed another team. We came across one nurse who was a Cedar Rapids native which gave her a natural inclination to back the Hawkeyes. We told her we had a relative (Jace Hawley) playing for the Cyclones and had enjoyed the ‘Clones’ 9-6 win a week earlier, so she told us a joke that went something like this:

“Two farmers lived on neighboring farms. One was an avid Hawk fan, while the other was a die-hard Cyclone supporter. The Hawk fan farmer sent his entire family to Iowa City for college, while the Cyclone-supporting farmer sent his kids to Ames.

“The feud went on for years and years. Finally, the Cyclone-fan farmer had had enough of the



fighting. He took a hand grenade and threw it over to the neighbor's property. The Hawkeye farmer picked up the hand grenade, pulled the pin and threw it back!"

(Get it? She thought the Cyclone fan wasn't smart enough to pull the pin when *he* threw the grenade the first time!)

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I am helping the staffs in Westside and Manilla finish the papers from Rochester this week. Please don't hesitate to bring your news items in to either office while I'm gone. It's not an inconvenience; in fact, it helps the pages be filled more quickly to have lots of good stuff to choose from. Thanks for your understanding!

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#### **PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2012**

Since writing last week's column, we have left St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester and have entered Carroll Health Center, where their mission has been to keep Davey comfortable until the end comes.

We have been told that might be in days or weeks, but I have taken advantage of the home's extra bed and stayed close "just in case" throughout the past five days. The nasty prions which have been attacking his brain for the past four months or more continue to ravage his body, taking away his ability to speak and now affecting his respiratory system.

We know our time with him is short and we've each spent some time alone with him to say a private good-bye. Now it's just a matter of waiting and, as I write in the middle of the night Monday, the sound of the computer keys in his room is accompanied by his labored breathing. All three kids and the girls' husbands are sharing the room with me tonight, and we are all apprehensive about what the morning light will bring.

The new details of our saga will stop there for this week, and we'll wait along with you to see if the tale has ended before next week's edition goes to press. However, there are a few other reflections I'd like to record related to this experience...

No matter what your age, don't take life for granted. If we had known that the tingling in his feet that he felt in early June would end in this nursing home room, we may have done things a bit differently. Kids, hug your parents, and parents, hug your kids. Don't make "I love you" something you reserve for special occasions.

Like the email story which circulates periodically says, don't wait until a special occasion to wear that frilly nightgown or use the good china. Don't turn down the offer to go to lunch with a friend because you are having a busy day at work, and don't hesitate to have company over because your house simply isn't clean enough. Enjoy each and every day as if there isn't going to be a tomorrow.

I'm reprinting again the editorial I wrote several years ago about the Tim McGraw song, "Live Like You Were Dyin'" on the editorial page this week. The song is one of my favorites, and its message is one that can't miss.

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# An Observer Editorial

## *Live Like You Were Dyin'*

**By Janine Kock, Observer Editor and Publisher**

A few years ago I read the first book in the “Mitford Years” series, books about the life of a small-town priest. The first one is called *At Home in Mitford*. It’s a nice book, easy reading, and, although it’s not “rip-roaring excitement,” a book that keeps you wanting to read more.

One story line revolves around a character named Olivia Davenport, who had recently moved to Mitford and who “knocks the socks off” the rector with the news that she is dying.

“I’m asking you to help me find something to make the rest of my life worth living,” Olivia says. She relates that she is well-off financially and could spend the rest of her days “being quite idle and carefree,” but adds, “I came to Mitford to do something that will make a difference.”

She tells Father Tim that she doesn’t know exactly what that something should be, but the rector knows immediately what project he has for her – reading to patients at Mitford Hospital in the mornings.

“In the space of precisely seven minutes, he had been told a terrible truth, discovered an answer to prayer, helped someone find a ministry, and been unutterably refreshed in his own spirit,” the rector reflects. “Perhaps we all should live as if we’re dying.”

My first thought upon reading that section of the book was, “Now there’s the basis for an editorial to start people thinking.”

My second thought as a Tim McGraw fan was that his song by the same name as this opinion piece would also serve as a great illustration. The song tells of a man in his early forties who finds out that he is dying.

After the news sank in, the man did a lot of things he should have or could have done earlier in life — sky diving, mountain climbing, bull riding, for example. He also said he loved deeper, spoke sweeter, and gave forgiveness he’d been denying. He “was finally the husband that most the time I wasn’t,” the lyrics continue, “and I became a friend a friend would like to have.” He also went fishing, started reading the Bible and “took a good long hard look at what I’d do if I could do it all again.”

It’s a great song with a good message for us all.

Are you living like you’re going to live forever? How would your life change if you found out you had a terminal illness?

There’s an e-mail that has circulated telling about a woman who died unexpectedly. The negligee she was saving for a special time with her husband was found covered with tissue in a drawer. Friends said they had always intended to take her out for lunch, but she was always too busy – cleaning house, raking the leaves or doing other tasks that she thought were important. “Maybe next week,” she would answer.

The family had never gone on that vacation they had always talked about. The money was never quite there – and her kids didn’t know what it was like for Mom to read them a bedtime story... she was always too busy with an important TV show or one of her community tasks to tuck them in.

Sound familiar? Imagine how things for that woman would have been different if she had known today would be her last day.

What can you do differently? Wear that sexy nightgown. Take that trip you might not be able to

quite afford. Take long walks. Go out for lunch with a friend. Read your kids a bedtime story every night. Forget about cleaning the house, and shut off the TV.

Quoting Tim McGraw one more time, “Like tomorrow was a gift and you’ve got eternity to think about what you do with it... What could you do with it? What can I do with it? What would I do with it? Someday I hope you get the chance to live like you were dyin’.”

*This editorial has run previously but is being reprinted in honor of Publisher Janine Kock’s husband, Davey.*

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“The days of our lives, for all of us, are numbered...We know that. And yes, there are certainly times when we aren’t able to muster as much strength and patience as we would like. It’s called being human. But I have found that in the simple act of living with hope, and in the daily effort to have a positive impact in the world, the days I do have are made all the more meaningful and precious. And for that I am grateful.” ~ Elizabeth Edwards.

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#### **PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2012**

Continuing from the point where I left off in last week’s column, you all know how last Monday night ended. I dozed off shortly after finishing “This and That” at a little after 3 a.m. Tuesday, a few minutes after the nurse reported that Davey’s oxygen levels were down to 45 instead of in the 80s or the 90s where they are supposed to be, even with the assistance of the oxygen which had been hooked up that afternoon.

An hour later I woke up, and the room was silent. The labored breathing we had become accustomed to over the past two days had stopped, signifying that the battle was over. I woke up the kids, and we all sat quietly for a few minutes with him before informing the nurse and starting a whirlwind of activities which culminated with visitation Friday night and a funeral service Saturday. As he would have wished, Davey was whisked off in the meantime for a trip back to Mayo Clinic, where his brain was taken for a biopsy to confirm the Creutzfeldt-Jakob diagnosis and also to be used for education and research in hopes other families can be spared from enduring this horrible disease.

Several times during the week I had the feeling that planning a funeral was much like planning a wedding, with so many details to attend to, only with much different emotions to contend with.

As I contemplate what to write this week, my mind keeps going back to a few observations from the five days of funeral preparations and also to some of the events which have occurred since Davey’s symptoms first occurred in early June. I’ll share those now and save a “thank you” for next week.

-- Throughout the days between Davey’s passing and the funeral (and continuing into this week as well), lots and lots of good food has been enjoyed by our family. I have never been one to bring food in to a friend or relative who has had a death in the family (Betty Homemaker I’m not), but one doesn’t know how much comfort that food brings until you’re going through it. From bottled water and pop to casseroles of all kinds and lots of lasagna, from breakfast rolls to cookies and candy, we are all in need of a diet after being fed so well. Not having to think about the meals during the week was wonderful.

-- I will never again doubt the importance of sending a card to someone who is experiencing an illness or a death in the family. The box of cards we have accumulated throughout this summer and since last week will be read and re-read many times. While I resent the card companies' inflationary prices, each card's message brought comfort, and those with personal messages written in by the sender doubled in value. From hundreds of Facebook messages and emails from all over the country to homemade cards printed on a friend's computer, from the finest embossed creation to a message scratched on notebook paper, each one will be treasured.

-- We were truly overwhelmed by the memorials, flowers, stones and other items we received. While we had included "in lieu of flowers" in Davey's obituary (the "thrifty" guy he was, he never was one to buy bouquets of flowers... silk was more his style, as they will last forever!), over 80 items were delivered, and reading the cards on those deliveries took our breath away. Friends and relatives from near and far, basketball teams, and business acquaintances from his pork industry job were all among those who sent flowers and other remembrances. Seeing a beautiful bouquet from Martensdale-St. Mary's, the team which defeated AWW in the 2011 state championship game, was a demonstration that there is much more to basketball than who wins or loses on the scoreboard.

-- Davey's obituary on page 5 was a work of love by me as I tried to capture every aspect of his life in telling "his story" as concisely as possible. Kellsey designed the funeral program, and the kids and Nick and Doreen worked diligently on a 45-minute slide show which was shown at the visitation and the funeral. That was good "therapy," as they laughed and cried and "oohed" and "aahed" over the photos which demonstrated his life from infancy to the state tournament. We will enjoy watching that show for years to come.

-- One of the biggest lessons our family learned during the nearly four months in which Davey battled what was diagnosed as "CJD" just 12 days before his death was just how un-handicapped accessible our world is. One doesn't realize how narrow a doorway is or how small a bathroom stall is until you try to maneuver a walker or a wheelchair. Handicapped parking spots abutting a six-inch high curb are a nightmare to someone trying to maneuver with a walker or a cane. Want to try a balancing act like no other? Try to find a graceful way to help someone with a walker in a heavy door with no automatic entry button. Everyone should take a look at our world through the eyes of a handicapped person for a few weeks, as it is eye-opening indeed.

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The following poem was received by email last week and was a perfect addition to Davey's funeral program...

We can shed tears that he has gone, or we can smile that he lived.

We can close our eyes and pray that he will come back,  
or we can open our eyes and see all the good he has left us.

Our hearts can be empty because we cannot see him,  
or our hearts can be full with the love that we've shared.

We can turn our backs on tomorrow and live yesterday,  
or we can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

We can remember him and only that he has gone,  
or we can cherish his memory and let it live on.

We can cry and close our minds, be empty and turn our backs,  
or we can do what he would have wanted:  
smile, open our eyes, love, and go on.

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So, this week we are attempting to return to “normal,” or whatever the new normal might be. That is still to be determined. After me not working a full week since the third week of July, we at The Observer have found that we can do pretty much anything we set our minds to.

We’ve had numerous people tell us we should just skip a week and “not worry” about the paper. However, we decided that is not an option, and we were able to complete a weekly edition with emails going back and forth from a hotel room, from a hospital room, from a nursing home, and on the day we lost a family member. Anything is possible, and with that attitude, we’ll go on.

We certainly appreciate all the offers of help, and anyone who feels so inclined is more than welcome to start writing! As I said before, if everyone who has offered would write one paragraph, we’d have enough “news” to fill several editions, and that is much appreciated!

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## Obituary

Davey L. Kock

*Funeral services for 53-year-old Davey Kock were held at the upper gym at Ar-We-Va High School in Westside on Saturday, September 29, 2012. Pastor Richard Francis of the United Church Westside officiated at the 2 p.m. service, which was followed by interment in the Westside Cemetery and a lunch and fellowship time at the Westside Community Building served by the United Church Women.*

*Music for the service was provided by Rosemary Cameron and Laura Wilken, accompanying soloist Sue Rosener singing “All Good Gifts,” and the congregation singing “How Great Thou Art.” Rick Powell of Logan was eulogist.*

*Pallbearers were Tim Austin, Tom Berg, Tom Cameron, Russ Hawley, Theodore Hawley, Tom Hawley, Allan Kock, Gerry Kock, Jeff Luetje, Gary Mendlik and Jary Quandt. Honorary pallbearers were the past and present Ar-We-Va girls’ basketball players along with assistant coaches Larry Siebert and James Anderson.*

*The Huebner Funeral Home of Westside was in charge of arrangements. Visitation and a prayer service were held at the United Church Westside Friday, September 28. Kock passed away early Tuesday morning, September 25, 2012, at the Carroll Health Center due to Creutzfeldt - Jakob disease, which he had been fighting since June but which had been diagnosed just 12 days earlier.*

*Kock was born in Carroll on November 16, 1958, to Kenneth and Joyce (Aylward) Kock. He was baptized and confirmed at the United Presbyterian Church, Westside, which later became the United Church.*

*He attended the Ar-We-Va Community Schools, where he participated in football, basketball, track and baseball. He was all-conference in football and basketball and qualified for both the state track meet and the Drake Relays in the discus.*

*He earned a football scholarship to Morningside College, where he graduated with a degree in agri-business in 1981.*





*He worked in the pork industry his entire career; first with DeKalb Swine Breeders and then in the Livestock Production division of Farmland Industries. In 2000, he was hired by Allied Producers Cooperative to raise funds and solicit members, and the group eventually invested into the newest packing plant in the country, Triumph Foods in St. Joseph, Mo. As general manager, he has been instrumental in the co-op's success, and he enjoyed the friendship of the people he met all over the Midwest because of his work.*

*He enjoyed his full-time job greatly, but his greatest passion was basketball. He coached teams over the past 15 years ranging from 4th graders in Future Rocket Basketball to the Ar-We-Va varsity, including seven seasons as Ar-We-Va's girls' head coach. He accumulated a 136-32 record and his last two seasons ended at the Iowa Girls' State Basketball Tournament, finishing as runners-up in 2011. He also coached two other teams to the Regional Finals and two to the Regional Semi-Finals, and he was named the Class 1A Coach of the Year for the West Central District in both 2008 and 2011.*

*He was a dedicated coach, spending countless hours watching game films, designing plays, planning practices, scouting, and analyzing statistics. However, when anyone commented about his teams' success, his standard answer was, "The girls played well." The theme of his coaching career was, "If It Is To Be, It's Up to WE."*

*On April 24, 1982, he was united in marriage to Janine Jons at the United Church Westside. They lived in Northeast Iowa and in Indiana for eight months each before settling in Newton for five years and returning home to West Central Iowa in 1988. They welcomed daughter Kellsey in 1984, Kendra in 1987 and Jared in 1991, and he was his children's biggest supporter in their activities throughout their high school and college careers.*

*He also enjoyed spending his spare time hunting. Also, for many years he had a cow/calf operation, enjoying caring for the livestock as well as gates and fences at the various pastures he maintained.*

*He was past-president of the Westside Economic Development Organization and the Vail Swimming Pool Association, a board member of the Crawford County Foundation, and an elder at the United Church Westside.*

*Kock was preceded in death by his maternal grandparents, Leonard and Jessie Aylward; maternal great-grandparents, Pete and Emma Bell; paternal grandparents, Leonard and Edna Kock; and paternal great-grandparents, Bill and Bena Kock.*

*Survivors include his wife, Janine of Westside; two daughters: Kellsey and her husband, Wade Morrison, of Dakota Dunes, S.D.; and Kendra and her husband, Trent Fredericksen, of Bennington, Neb.; son, Jared Kock, of Ankeny; parents, Kenny and Joyce Kock of Vail; one brother, Dan Kock, of Westside and his children, Jocelyn, Danielle, and Alex.*

*Also, he is survived by his in-laws, Dale and Marilyn Jons of Westside; two sisters-in-law: Barb and her husband Pat Wuestewald of Manilla; and Doreen and her husband, Nicholas Hansen, of Westside; brother-in-law, Steve Jons, of Des Moines; one nephew Adam Wuestewald, his wife, Stephanie, and son, Austin, of Norwalk; two nieces: Meghan and her husband, Jeff Wilson, and their daughters, Chloe and Julia of Elk Horn, Neb. and Molly Wuestewald of Omaha; many other relatives and friends.*

*Kock's brain was donated to Mayo Clinic for education and research of CJD.*

*Memorials may be designated to a scholarship fund in Davey's honor, to the United Church of Westside, or to the Ar-We-Va Education Foundation.*



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**PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2012**

We had intended to have a thank-you ad written for this week's Observer and Manilla Times, but each day's mail continues to bring more cards and notes, so we decided to wait another week. We continue to be overwhelmed by the number of people who have remembered us, and the cards' imprinted verses and especially the hand-written notes will be read and re-read many times.

Don't ever let anyone tell you that "nobody reads those cards anyway," because it's not true, at least in our case. We've read every one and have gone back and re-read them, and the cards have been great conversation starters as we reminisce about Davey's good times with friends, relatives and business acquaintances.

As I said last week, it will be a long time until I know what the new "normal" will be for my life, but the past two weeks have been a combination of busy-ness and sadness...filled with duties that have to be done to get my life in order, jobs that have to be done for the newspapers, and other miscellaneous activities in this always-busy time of year. I appreciate everyone's concern and best wishes. Don't worry about me. When I start feeling sad, I picture my husband of 30 years telling me to quit moping around and get busy living life!

He wouldn't want people feeling sad for him. And, I don't. He's in a wonderful place now and no longer has the tremors, the "balance issues" and all the other maladies that attacked him in his last couple weeks with us. In case you haven't read the book, now's a good time -- *Heaven Is for Real*.

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*Friends are angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly.*

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**PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2012**

As you can see on page 5, we have completed the difficult job of compiling a thank you ad to show our appreciation to everyone who has supported our family in any way during Davey's illness and since his passing. What a task!

First, we had to decide if this was the route we were going to go to show our thankfulness. Taking into consideration donations for medical expenses, flowers, food, and contributions to the various memorial funds, we have received one or more of those things from nearly 550 different people to whom we wanted to make sure we showed how excessively thankful we were. But, when we sat down and studied the spreadsheet that I had compiled as I opened the mail each day over the past month, I didn't know where to start.

Seeing me sitting at the kitchen table in front of the computer trying to make a plan, it took my 20-year-old son to put everything into perspective. "Mom," he said in a gruff tone I think he inherited from his dad, "you own two newspapers! Use your resources!"

OK, OK. So, we went to work to make up a thank you ad in which we tried to say it all, ending up with a pretty sizable creation but with the consolation that we would get the "owners' discount" on the ad rate in both The Observer and the Manilla Times!

We'll still send quite a few thank you's to those at a distance -- it *is* good therapy to write about his relationship with the various gift-givers -- but we hope no one is offended if you don't get a handwritten note. *Please* believe the message in the ad. We have been so overwhelmed and are very, very appreciative of every act of kindness.

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This weekend, Kendra and I were going through some of her dad's basketball stuff, as Kendra wanted to find his coaching notebook from her senior year, 2005-2006 -- his first year as the AWW head coach. She found it but also found on the same shelf a datebook in which he had written some notes about car mileage he could use in filing our taxes. However, what caught her eye was that every right-hand page had a motivational quotation in the upper right corner.

As we flipped through the pages, we could see some of them were circled, and several of those circled ones were quotes his family and his basketball girls had seen elsewhere over the years. We laughed when we saw a circle around a quote by Thomas Alva Edison which is now famous in Ar-We-Va basketball lore. You see, one day last season, in order to prove a point he thought needed to be made, he went to practice dressed in overalls. He passed out an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet with Edison's quote printed in large letters: "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

Yep, he was a bit "dorky" at times, but he was passionate about his task as a coach, and that passion carried over to other facets of his life as well.

For the record, here are some of the other quotes which were circled in that planner. They are ones many people should take to heart:

- Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it. ~ Henry David Thoreau
- Never discourage anyone who continually makes progress, no matter how slow. ~ Plato
- A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable but more useful than a life spent doing nothing. ~ George Bernard Shaw
- Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance. ~ Samuel Johnson
- Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself. ~ George Bernard Shaw
- If a man does his best, what else is there? ~ General George S. Patton
- Your rewards in life are always in direct proportion to your contribution.
- Whether you think you can, or can't, you are usually right. ~ Henry Ford
- It is not your aptitude, but your attitude, that determines your altitude. ~ Zig Ziglar
- Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction. ~ John F. Kennedy
- The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty. ~ Sir Winston Churchill
- Tell me and I forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand. ~ Chinese proverb

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#### **PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2012**

The most popular question among my friends and acquaintances is still "How are you doing?" Now, some people are sincerely interested in what I am thinking and feeling as the days and weeks speed by but the nights and early mornings drag. I've learned, however, that others are just asking the question because they think they have to ask in order to be caring and compassionate, and those people don't really have a desire to hear the answer. It's not hard to tell, and I wish people didn't feel that they have to ask.

That's just one of the things I've learned in the past 30-some days since I became a widow. Wow. That's something I never thought I'd be at the age of 53. However, for those of you who really do want to know, I can still honestly say, "I'm OK." Even when friends raise their eyebrows

at me and ask, “How are you *really* doing?”, I can say again, “I’m *really* OK!”

I’ve learned that it’s OK to cry, regroup and go on. It’s also OK to cuss at him or God or whoever else I want to cuss at because this happened to us. Then I regroup and go on. I’ve learned that I can wish there were things we had done but instead it’s better to celebrate the things that we did and the many wonderful memories that we have.

The other things I’ve learned include that I am very, very glad that I was always the one who paid the bills and balanced the checkbook and filed away papers (or put them in piles that I’d file “someday”). I can’t imagine being a wife who knew nothing about the financial goings-on in a household and then suddenly being a widow instead of a wife. This is stressful enough without floundering around trying to figure out the ins and outs of the various financial dealings which go along with being a 30-year married couple with three kids.

I’ve also learned that I’m glad that when we lit the unity candle at our marriage ceremony 30 1/2 years ago, we left those two outside candles burning. Yes, we were best friends and had been a “couple” since I was 15 and he was 16. But, we were also individuals. We each had things we liked to do and things we didn’t. We each knew our strengths and weaknesses, things we knew we should do together and things we were content to do on our own. Our two flames had burned as one for a long, long time, but we were both individuals, too, and because of that I can survive on my own.

I’ve also learned that the stuff they say about grieving making you tired is really true. Maybe it’s because I’m not sleeping the best or maybe it’s because missing him takes a lot of energy, but most days I could sure use an afternoon nap! I’m lucky I don’t need a lot of sleep and I’m also lucky that “my boss” can’t fire me for sleeping on the job if I happen to doze off in front of my computer!

I was emailed the following selection, and it seemed like a great one as I reflect back on 30 years of marriage!

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### **The Greatest Is LOVE: A Different Perspective on I Corinthians 13**

(Author Unknown)

I can read bedtime stories till the cow jumps over the moon and sing “Ten Little Monkeys” until I want to call the doctor—but if I don’t have love, I’m as annoying as a ringing phone.

I can chase a naked toddler through the house while cooking dinner and listening to voice mail, I can fix the best cookies and Kool-Aid in the neighborhood, and I can tell a sick child’s temperature with one touch of my finger, but if I don’t have love, I am nothing.

Love is patient while watching and praying by the front window when it’s 30 minutes past curfew. Love is kind when my teen says, “I hate you!” It does not envy the neighbors’ swimming pool or their brand-new mini van, but trusts the Lord to provide every need. Love does not brag when other parents share their disappointments and insecurities, and love rejoices when other families succeed. It doesn’t boast, even when I’ve multi-tasked all day long and my husband can’t do more than one thing at a time.

Love is not rude when my spouse innocently asks, “What have you done today?”

It does not immediately seek after glory when we see talent in our children, but encourages them to get training and make wise choices.

It is not easily angered, even when my 15-year-old acts like the world revolves around her.

It does not delight in evil (is not self-righteous) when I remind my 17-year-old that he’s going 83 in a 55-mph zone, but rejoices in the truth.

Love does not give up hope. It always protects our children’s self-esteem and spirit, even while

doling out discipline.

It always trusts God to protect our children when we cannot. It always perseveres, through blue nail polish, burps and other bodily functions, rolled eyes and crossed arms, messy rooms and sleep overs.

Love never fails. But where there are memories of thousands of diaper changes and painful labor(s), they will fade away. Where there is talking back, it will (eventually) cease.....Please, Lord?

Where there is a teenager who thinks she knows everything, there will one day be an adult who knows you did your best.

For we know we fail our children, and we pray they don't end up in therapy, but when we get to heaven, our imperfect parenting will disappear. (Thank you, God!)

When we were children, we needed a parent to love and protect us. Now that we're parents ourselves, we have a heavenly Father who adores, shelters us and holds us when we need to cry.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

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#### **PAGE 4 -- THE OBSERVER -- THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2012**

We can all debate what heaven is like (or, for some, if heaven even exists at all). Do those who have passed float around up in the sky with angel wings and halos, or is heaven a reflection of life on earth, with houses and buildings and "normal-looking" people wearing clothes like what they would have worn on Earth? Do people "up there" really look down on us and watch what their friends and relatives who are still living are doing?

In recent years, I've read two great books which address what heaven is like and which, for me, offer great consolation about the "future" for those who have passed. First, I read *90 Minutes in Heaven* by Don Piper (Revell, 2004). It is an autobiographical book, written by a minister whose car collided with a semi and who was pronounced dead at the scene of the accident. For the next 90 minutes, he experienced heaven but then was miraculously brought back to life, where he faced the prospect of a very long and painful recovery. During his long hospital stay, he was very angry and prayed to return to heaven to continue the beautiful experience he had during this time there.

Then, there was *Heaven is for Real*, (Thomas Nelson Inc., 2010) a book written by Todd Burpo, a small-town Nebraska pastor whose four-year-old son, unbeknownst to his family, had entered heaven during an emergency surgery. He survived and later began sharing his experiences with his family -- things like looking down on the doctor operating on him and on his dad praying in the waiting room. He also told of meeting his miscarried sister, whom no one had told him about, and his grandfather, who had died 30 years before he was born.

Such books might still leave us asking "Is it *really* for real?" but if we have faith and if we believe what the many, many people who have had "life after death" experiences have written, we can feel good that those who have gone before us are truly at peace, pain and disease free. This has been a great comfort in my own life both in the death of my good friend Pastor Virginia Stiles two years ago and as we faced Davey's death this fall. As he struggled his last few days, I said more than once that I was not sad for him, as he was going to a wonderful place...I was just sad for me because I had to wait for us to be reunited.

The week Pastor Virginia, a huge ISU Cyclone fan, passed away, the Cyclones, always underdogs, won a huge football game, and we said she surely was up in heaven rooting enthusiastically and probably jumping up and down, now that she could do it without any pain. And, with girls'

basketball practices beginning across the state Monday, there were, no doubt, a lot of people who could picture Davey looking down on “his girls” and “Coach Larry” getting down to work in the Ar-We-Va gym.

The scene up there may have changed slightly this weekend, however, as we received word of another acquaintance’s death. Some of you may be familiar with Christensen Farms, the nation’s largest pork production company, headquartered in the Sleepy Eye, Minn., area. Davey knew the company’s founder, Bob Christensen, well, as Christensen was one of the owners of Triumph Foods, the packing plant in St. Joseph, Mo., the plant in which the co-op Davey managed was also an owner.

Christensen got started in the hog business in 1974 when a neighbor gave him and his brother two bred gilts. A pork publication told of Christensen and his visionary ability and passion to promote the pork industry, especially in Minnesota and Iowa.

Well, Christensen, age 51, was hunting deer in Missouri this past Saturday, when he died of an apparent heart attack. A friend of ours emailed with the news on Sunday and said, “I guess Davey needed him. Bob will be starting some large swine operation soon, and this time Davey will be the boss.”

Mmmm.... another question to contemplate. Pigs in heaven?

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I guess I’ve blown out of the water the advice I’ve read for grieving spouses that one shouldn’t make any big decisions too quickly after losing a loved one. Well, in six weeks’ time, I’ve sold our acreage and bought a new place in town, and the packing has begun. Think I overdid?

We actually had discussed selling our acreage this past summer before Davey’s illness advanced too far, so that wasn’t as big of a decision as it might have been, and the purchase of the new place was just a natural follow-up to that occurrence because the right place happened to come along at the right time. Living alone “in the middle of nowhere” in the home we had shared for the past 23 years wasn’t a thought I relished, so I am happy that the plan came together and the box-packing has begun.

We certainly had accumulated a lot of “good stuff” in the 30 years of our marriage, and sorting through it, deciding what to keep and what to pitch, is a big job. And, it has brought back lots of memories. I have a problem -- I think it’s a hereditary one passed down from my mom, as my sisters seem to have the same problem -- with not being able to throw things away, so what was supposed to be a linen closet near the upstairs bathroom actually held almost 50 scrapbooks and photo albums filled with memories.

Kellsey and Kendra had fun this past weekend looking through their boxes of art projects and other goodies which were salvaged from their preschool and kindergarten days. (For some reason not so many of the third child’s mementos were kept?) Kendra came downstairs one time Sunday afternoon and showed us a paper on which she had written, “When I grow up, I want to be a cheerleader because I like to wear short skirts.”

Who knows what other treasures we will find in the next few weeks!

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Two of the scrapbooks I found were filled with photos, newspaper clippings and other “tidbits” I collected as a high school and college student. I’ll be sharing some of those here when I have space to fill.

### **I Try**

I try so hard, Lord, you know that I do.  
To keep you in my everything, I’ll always need you.  
So, day by day when I get sidetracked and don’t hear your call,  
Remember I’m so sorry and I want to be your all.  
Although I need to try harder, I always want to be true.  
Lord, I realize that you can never try too hard; so I keep trying  
a little harder each day.  
Because, Lord, I want to do things your way.  
So, Lord, remember, I’m trying my best  
And I’ll leave it up to you to do the rest.

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DAVEY L. KOCK  
1958 - 2012

*Perhaps you sent  
a lovely card  
or helped some  
thoughtful way.*

*Perhaps you sent  
those flowers  
lending beauty  
to the day.*

*Perhaps you came  
and spoke the  
kindest, helpful  
words.*

*Or perhaps you  
could not be there,  
but remembered  
us that day.*

*Whatever you did  
to comfort, our  
hearts were deeply  
touched;*

*Your "presence"  
is remembered  
because it meant  
so much.*

# Thank You...

The family of Davey Kock has been humbled and overwhelmed by everyone who has supported us in any way since the onset of his illness this summer and who has paid tribute to his life in the past three weeks. The support of friends and relatives near and far, basketball teams all over Iowa and hog industry acquaintances all over the Midwest has demonstrated what a special guy he was and the impact he had on so many.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to Dr. Ervelli and his staff; Dr. Kitchell and his staff at McFarland Clinic in Ames; the Infusion Center, Physical Therapy, and nursing staff at St. Anthony Hospital; the neurologists and staff at Mayo Clinic and St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester; and the staff at Carroll Health Center for their wonderful care.

Thanks also to Huebner Funeral Home for their compassionate service and to Pastor Richard Francis, Rick Powell, Rosemary Cameron, Laura Simons, and Sue Rosener, along with the friends and cousins who served as pallbearers and the past and present basketball girls and coaches, for making his funeral service a very memorable one. Thanks to the United Church Women and all the other friends from throughout the community who helped serve the funeral luncheon.

We are using this means of communication to express our appreciation in lieu of sending local thank you cards for the over 80 floral arrangements and memorial gifts; the abundance of food brought to our homes, the office and to the funeral luncheon; and the hundreds of monetary contributions of varying sizes. The money we would have spent on postage will be added to the contributions we will be making in Davey's memory to groups which were important to him, including the Ar-We-Va Education Foundation, the Ar-We-Va Playground Committee, the Ar-We-Va Rocket Booster Club, the United Church Westside, the Vail Swimming Pool Association, and the Westside Economic Development Organization. A scholarship fund has also been established in his name, and the first awards will be made at Ar-We-Va's commencement exercises in May.

*Whether in basketball or in life, Davey's theme rings true*

**"If It Is To Be, It's Up To WE"**

## *The Family of Davey Kock*

- Janine Kock
- Kellsey and Wade Morrison
- Kendra and Trent Fredericksen
- Jared Kock
- Kenny and Joyce Kock
- Dan Kock, Jocelyn, Danielle and Alex
- Dale and Marilyn, Jons and family



Published Sep 27, 2012

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## Attention to detail was calling card for Kock

By [Kevin White](#) / World-Herald staff writer



MARK DAVIS/THE WORLD-HERALD

Dave Kock compiled a 136-32 record in seven seasons as the girls basketball coach for Ar-We-Va. He died Tuesday at the age of 53 due to a rare degenerative brain disorder.

When Davey Kock took over the Ar-We-Va girls basketball program in 2005, he vowed to do everything in his power to help his girls be successful.

He scouted opponents thoroughly and produced detailed scouting reports on all of them. He watched hours upon hours of game film. He left no stone unturned on the practice floor.

“Every ‘T’ was crossed, every ‘I’ was dotted,” assistant coach Larry Siebert said. “He was all about the kids, and he just totally loved it.”

Kock, 53, died Tuesday at the Carroll Health Center due to Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a rare degenerative brain disorder characterized by sudden development of rapidly progressive neurological and neuromuscular symptoms. Kock fell ill in June, and had been diagnosed with CJD less than two weeks before his death.

Visitation with the family will be Friday from 4 to 8 p.m. at the United Church in Westside. Funeral service will be at 2 p.m. Saturday at Ar-We-Va High School in Westside.

Kock graduated in 1977 from Ar-We-Va, where he was a multi-sport standout. He attended Morningside College on a football scholarship, graduating in 1981 with a degree in agri-business.

He worked in the pork industry and married Ar-We-Va graduate Janine Jons in 1982. After several moves, they returned home in 1988.

Kock spent 15 years coaching girls basketball in the community, from fourth grade through high school. In seven years as varsity head coach, he compiled a 136-32 (.810) record. The Rockets reached the state tournament the past two seasons, finishing second in Class 1-A in 2011.

“He had a good rapport with the girls,” said Tim Bell, the school's activities director and boys basketball coach. “Davey was always a quiet individual. You never saw him get upset on the court. If he needed to say something, he'd pull all the girls together, or pull one girl aside and talk to her individually. They respected him.”

Siebert said he'll cherish the simple times, like the 45 minutes to an hour after practice they'd commonly spend discussing how to get the most out of their players. The Ar-We-Va assistant said Kock understood the importance of making every team member feel important.

“If we had 15 girls on our team, he got everybody involved in everything,” he said.

Survivors include his wife, Janine of Westside; two daughters, Kellsey and her husband, Wade Morrison, of Dakota Dunes, S.D.; and Kendra and her husband, Trent Fredericksen, of Bennington, Neb.; son, Jared Kock of Ankeny; parents, Kenny and Joyce Kock of Vail; one brother, Dan Kock of Westside and his children Jocelyn, Danielle and Alex.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be designated to a scholarship fund in Kock's honor, to the United Church of Westside or to the Ar-We-Va Education Foundation.



Players remember  
Ar-We-Va coach as

# 'Biggest Fan'

By **ASHLEY SCHABLE**  
Times Herald Sports Editor

Davey Kock was just getting started. He led the Ar-We-Va girls' basketball team to an astonishing record of 136-32 in his seven years as their leader. His team made back-to-back appearances in the Class 1A State Tournament in the past two years and narrowly missed the championship in 2011. He never gave up on his girls.

But his body gave up on him. Kock, 53, died Tuesday morning after a brief battle with Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, a rare neurodegenerative disorder that stole his ability to move, eat and breathe.

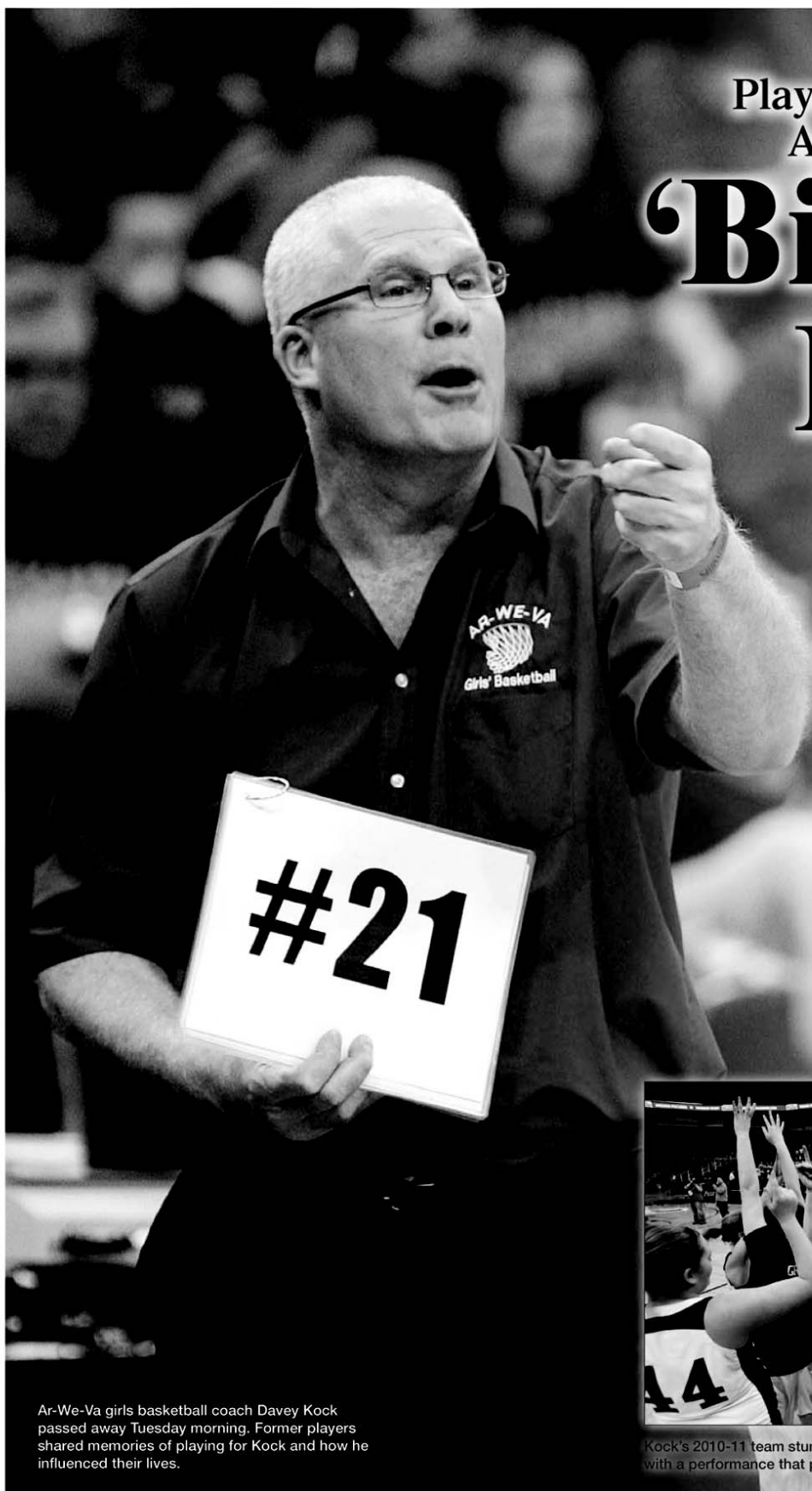
This week, his former players and area coaches grieved and remembered the man in interviews with the Daily Times Herald.

"What are you doing?!" Erica Luetje, a shooting guard who scored more than 1,000 points in her prep career at Ar-We-Va, will always remember her coach's shouts from near the bench at games.

"It makes me laugh thinking about how many times those words have come out of his mouth," Luetje recalled. "There are so many memories that will stick with me for the rest of my life. Davey formed me into the best basketball player that I could become and continued to support me when I played college basketball. I could not thank him enough for the impact that he has made on my life, and he will be missed by many, both as a coach and a friend."

Kock pulled basketball people together because of

See **KOCK** on Page 12



Ar-We-Va girls basketball coach Davey Kock passed away Tuesday morning. Former players shared memories of playing for Kock and how he influenced their lives.



Daily Times Herald photo archives  
Kock's 2010-11 team stunned the Class 1A field at the state basketball tournament with a performance that put the Rockets in the title game.



◆ **Kock**

Continued From Page 11

his passion, competitiveness and love for the game, his players said.

"He showed us how much hard work pays off and always made sure we reached for our dreams," said former player Cokie Quandt. "Davey was not only our coach, but also one of our biggest fans."

Like many coaches, Kock subscribed to the theory that the next opponent is the most difficult. If an upcoming opponent was bad, he wanted his players to stay focused.

"Each time we played, we

never looked past anyone and tried not to celebrate too much, knowing we still had work to do," Melissa Greve said. "When we won to go to state, we all finally got to see coach celebrate a win, which made the trip to Des Moines even that much better."

Kock loved basketball and the process of building a team and fine-tuning each team and its players' skills. The father of three - two daughters and a son - saw the uniqueness of each player and took pride in the part he played in helping players reach their potential.

"He was the type of coach that would do anything for his players," former player Heath-

er Hansman said. "Sure he yelled at us. Sure we got mad at him. That's the nature of playing sports. All of the blood and sweat put in on both sides helped develop us into the young ladies we are today."

One of those young ladies who played for Kock also happened to be his niece Jocelyn Kock.

"I consider myself incredibly blessed to have had my uncle as my coach," she said. "I have so many memories that wouldn't have been possible without Davey's love for basketball and for the Ar-We-Va girls' team."

Davey Kock always made it fun. One practice he blared music over the speakers and danced around singing on the stage trying to fire up his team.

"That performance by our coach is one that I know none of the players that season will ever forget," Luetje said.

Melissa Greve will never forget a practice where her coach threw the ball into the face of her teammate. Kock was trying to show the guards how to be ready for the outlet pass.

"He was in the post position and rebounded the ball to throw it to the guard, but instead of turning around to throw the pass, he threw it pretty hard over his head and it ended up hitting one of the guards in the face," Greve recalled. "Everyone instantly cracked up, and we could all tell he felt really bad."

Kock's contributions to the game stretched beyond the Ar-We-Va gym. Over the years the Rockets have battled in a friendly rivalry with IKM-Manning.

"There have been lots of memorable games when we competed against each other," IKM-Manning girls coach Gene Rasmussen said. "I always knew that we would get Ar-We-Va's best effort every time we played. Davey did an excellent job getting his teams ready to play and play hard."

When he wasn't competing against Rasmussen, who has his share of state tournament clubs, he was willing to help his friend.

"He was always willing to help out if we were playing someone that they had played and would give a scouting report," Rasmussen said. "I will miss coaching against him. I have a lot of respect for him as a person and a coach. He will truly be missed."

Larry Siebert, a six-year assistant girls' basketball coach at Ar-We-Va, said Kock taught him how to study the game.

"He spent so much time on the game," Siebert said of Kock. "He just loved basketball. Before he passed, before he re-



Over seven seasons Davey Kock compiled a 136-32 record and took back-to-back teams to the Class 1A state tournament in 2011 and 2012. Kock also had three other teams reach the regional finals.



IKM-Manning coach Gene Rasmussen (left) and Ar-We-Va coach Davey Kock shake hands following a game in January, 2011. "I always knew that we would get Ar-We-Va's best effort every time we played," Rasmussen said.

ally got sick we talked about defense. He wanted to run full-court pressure. I have all the books here of stats and scouting reports, and it's unreal."

Siebert said the one thing he admired most about Kock was his love for the kids and his desire for them to succeed.

"The one thing about Dave was that it was all about the kids, never about him," Siebert said. "He just wasn't that way."

Siebert recalled when the Rockets lost to Newell-Fonda in the regional final played in Denison a few years back.

"We go in and talk to the girls after the game, and I come out and Dave is crying," Siebert said. "He just wished there was something else he could have done."

Ar-We-Va school board president Todd Danner said Kock once told him: "You play 32 minutes to create a lifetime of memories."

Danner's daughter Paige has played on two state tournament teams under Kock's direction.

"A lot of good memories," said Danner, who is a longtime sports editor for the Denison Bulletin Review newspaper. "I think I can speak for the entire Ar-We-Va family when I say that we're all deeply saddened by the loss of Dave Kock."

The memories of the games that Kock coached and the positive impact he had on the lives of his players will remain forever. No replacement head coach has yet been named.

Siebert said the Rockets will dedicate the upcoming season to Kock, and as they walk onto the court this season they will remember their coach saying, "If it is to be, it's up to we."



Davey Kock talks with Ar-We-Va players during a time out in the 2008 season. Assistant coach Larry Siebert (left) said that one of the things he admired most about Kock was his love for the kids and his desire for them to succeed.



During an interview with Denison-Schleswig sports writer Todd Danner, Davey Kock told him, "You play 32 minutes to create a lifetime of memories."

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