

# *Roy Says...*



*By Roy Letellier*

Welcome to Roy Says... I've written this book primarily for the benefit of my children, grandchildren, great grand children and their families. In this narrative you will learn how a ranch boy from South Dakota's life became entwined with the daughter of immigrants from rural Michigan. You are welcome to download this tale at no cost. The book is dedicated to the memory of Kathie Letellier. I hope you enjoy our story as told in ***"Roy Says"***.

Part of Kathie's legacy is the Christian school that she founded in 1992. Today it is located in Spearfish South Dakota and is known as Black Hills Christian Academy. Following Kathie's death in 2024 the school established the ***"Legacy of the Lion Scholarship"*** in memory of Kathie Letellier. This scholarship is provided to students who might not otherwise be able to attend a Christian school. I invite you to join me in investing in the lives of young people by clicking on the MEMORIAL tab below. There you will find a description and history of the scholarship along with a donation tab. All proceeds go directly to the Kathie Letellier Memorial Scholarship fund.

**Roy Letellier**

# ***Roy Says...***

*The heartfelt story of the life and times of a baby boomer*

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## The Author



Roy Letellier has had a lifetime of rich experience and colorful stories, from his childhood as the youngest of six on a South Dakota cattle ranch, to a successful business career, and the halls of the South Dakota State Capitol and beyond.

Roy and Kathie married in 1972, creating one of the truly great partnerships that are so rare. They were both very active in various church, civic and charitable service organizations, often serving as a catalyst for remarkable growth and/or change. The combination of Roy's drive and Kathie's charm was pretty much unstoppable. Together they raised two daughters Kaitey Zollinger and Mandi Vandusseldorp. In addition, they count Jessica Mertz as a bonus daughter.

Roy spent many years in the car business, starting at the very bottom as a wash boy, next a mechanic, then in sales and management, finally as owner of new car dealerships in Belle Fourche SD, and later as an Arizona wholesale dealer sourcing pre-owned cars and trucks for dealers throughout the Midwest. He eventually retired entirely from the automobile industry and went into business as a handyman and a contractor, drawing on his lifelong love of building and fixing

things.

## Acknowledgements

It's a fair question to ask... "What makes you think your life is so special that it merits a memoir?" The answer is simple, "nothing." However, as one reaches the age of Social Security and Medicare you begin to reminisce, and more often than not there are major gaps in your memory. My family has been blessed by family members who have taken the time to preserve their life's story and I have come to greatly appreciate the history they preserved.

Michael Waldeck was Kathie's grandfather. In his handwritten manuscript he recounts his service in the Hungarian army and being taken captive by the Russians in 1915. His story of survival is heart wrenching.

I remember as a small boy spending time with Grandpa Marousek and listening to stories of his homesteading days in rural Meade county South Dakota. My mother Esther Marousek Letellier penned "*The Man Who Works...*" its pages chronicle the lives of my grandparents. Her second work "*Homesteader's Daughter*" gives us a glimpse into the lives of a rural South Dakota ranch family from 1940 onward.

My Brother-in-Law Fred Peterson shares his life's work with us in "*NOT FOR PROFIT*".

These works inspired me to put some of my stories down on paper in hopes that my children, grand children and great grandchildren will someday find them interesting and of some value.

## Title and Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late wife, Kathleen Ruth Marks Letellier. The title came from her. She loved to play games and she usually kept score; after tallying the score if a player was leading early her comment would be, "You know what **Roy says, 'Early ripe early rotten'**". And when someone was in last place she would announce, "You know what **Roy says, 'You're sucking hind tit'**". She actually made a list of sayings attributed to me. However, after reviewing them I decided most were too colorful or politically incorrect to include.

In reading this story you will soon realize that absent Kathie there would be no story. The trajectory of my life changed when I met her. She believed in me to a fault, I think she actually believed I could do anything and that confidence built me up to believe in myself. She fully supported me in every venture and graciously overlooked my failures. She brought out the best in everyone, but most of all me. Her own words say it well.

July 17, 1993

Dear Roy,

Well, today you are 40 years old. You have spent more of your life married to me than not. I think that's pretty special and hope you do, too.

But, then, I think you are pretty special. Forty is supposed to be somewhat of a milestone in life, but it probably isn't for you. You have accomplished more than most men your age and did it some time ago. Hopefully, that means we can avoid the mid-life crisis. Or is that what you went through when you sold the dealership?

At any rate, I'd like to thank you for what you have meant to me in the nearly 22 years that I have known you. You believed in yourself and helped me to believe in myself. Your love and encouragement have given me the confidence to stretch my abilities and grow and learn in the process. You have put up with my shortcomings, usually without comment, and loved me without condition. You have shown Christ-like love to me. Thank you.

Our marriage is a source of true joy in my life. You have been a more excellent husband and lover than I ever dreamed you would be. You have been a loving and supportive father to Kaitey and Mandy. I have told them often to look for a man like their dad to marry. I pray that they are so fortunate.

Thank you for sharing your life and your love with me. May the future hold many more satisfying, contented, joy-filled years for us. Happy Birthday!!

With all the love my heart can hold,

*Kathie*

# Chapter 1

## A Date That Will Live In Infamy

*"The crash"*

I wrote the following piece for the ADOBE Ledger in 2001, following the 9/11 attacks.

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### MESSAGE FROM THE LEDGER MANAGEMENT

"A date that will live in infamy." A phrase coined by President Roosevelt following the fateful attack on Pearl Harbor. Any American alive on that day can tell you what they were doing when they heard the dreadful news of that day. November 22, 1963, the day that President Kennedy was killed, is another date that is etched in the memories of those of us living then. I clearly remember our school principal telling us the sad news: seeing the flag outside our school at half staff. I recall that I didn't understand why the flag was only part-way up the pole. In the days that followed, I remember how the predominately Republican members of our tiny Protestant country church gathered for a memorial service to grieve the loss of our President. Political and religious differences were set aside as we all recognized the tragedy that we witnessed over and over again on our black and white television sets. April 19, 1993, is another date that will forever live in my memory. Actually, it was a date of double tragedy. It was the day of the firestorm of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, and it was also the day South Dakota Governor George Mickelson and seven others were killed in a terrible plane crash. At that time I had just completed my first year as a member of the South Dakota Legislature. I remember getting a call from a colleague telling me that the Governor's plane had gone down and the shock and grief that we all experienced. Now we have another date that will forever be etched in our minds. A date along with the horrific television images that many at first thought could only be special effects from a Hollywood movie. As we struggle to come to grips with this attack on our country, we see a wave of patriotism and a rebirth of spirituality unrivaled in my lifetime. We've all seen extraordinary acts of kindness among people, the shortage of American flags, and church services filled to overflowing. As I observe this burst of patriotism, kindness and sudden interest in God, I have to wonder how long it will last. Is this nothing more than a superficial reaction to a national tragedy that will soon pass? I, for one, sincerely hope not. My hope is that out of this "day of infamy" will come a humbling of our nation that causes us to rely on our Creator as our source of strength and greatness, both as individuals and as a country.

May God truly bless America.



Roy Letellier  
Managing Director  
*The Gold Canyon Ledger*

Everyone that was living at the time remembers where they were and what they were doing when they heard of the Kennedy assassination and the 9/11 attacks. We also have dates of personal events that are forever fixed within our soul. There are the obvious: birthdays, anniversaries, maybe a first job, and so on.

March 29, 2022 is the day my life changed forever.

We left Mesa, AZ about 2:00 PM. We had celebrated our friend Randy Hansen's birthday the evening before and we were the first houseguests in their new home Kathie had helped them buy. Shirley and Kathie went shopping that morning and brought lunch to the house for Randy and me. I remember leaving the Hansen's home; it was a cloudy and somewhat dark afternoon, uncharacteristic for the Phoenix valley in March. The next thing I recall is our car hydroplaning into the oncoming lane of traffic. The image of an approaching silver Ram pick-up is seared in my memory. As I stood on the brakes and cranked the steering wheel to the right my thought was: "This is going to be a hard hit!" Thankfully, I have no recollection of the actual impact. I don't believe either of us lost consciousness. Kathie was in a lot of pain and was crying out "Dear God, Dear God". I asked her what hurt and she said her chest, I told her she was going to be ok, that the pain was from the airbag. In that moment I remembered what a co-worker had shared with me about 50 years earlier. Don was the wrecker operator at the dealership where we both worked as well as a volunteer fireman. He said, "If they're hollering they will be alright if they're quiet that's when you have to worry." Well, Kathie was hollering pretty good so I assured her confidently that she was going to be fine. Within a very short time a passer-by came to my shattered window and let us know that emergency personnel had been summoned. In a few more minutes a lady who identified herself as a physician opened Kathie's door and brought a blanket and instructed us how to breathe. During this time, as we waited for the EMT's, I experienced remarkable mental clarity. I was able to get my phone and wallet from my pockets and helped Kathie find her phone. We put everything in her purse and I told her not to let it out of her sight. After the State Trooper arrived I was able to tell him how to find the phone numbers of Mandi, and Judy Sink. By this time it was raining and hailing pretty hard and the Trooper assured us that it was best for us to remain in the car until we could be moved right into the ambulance. The left side of the cars' front end took the brunt of the impact, the right door still functioned and they were able to administer pain meds to Kathie while she was still in the car. I found out later that she had an exposed fracture of her right ankle. Many weeks later we discovered that her left ankle had been broken as well. While we waited for the ambulance she had been able to remove her shoe and that relieved some of the pain. The driver's door had to be cut open in order to get me out. While we waited for that to be completed, I was experiencing what felt like an extremely severe cramp in my left leg. I recall thinking that if I could just straighten my leg that would make it all better. Amazingly, I reached the power seat control and the seat moved all the way back. Unfortunately, it didn't make it all better, as my left tibia was fractured, thanks to the knee airbag.

We were transported together by ambulance to Superior, AZ. By that time the pain meds had kicked in and my memories are spotty. Although I was strapped securely on the

gurney, I was pretty sure they were going to roll me off onto the ground. That was very scary. We were transported in separate helicopters from the football field in Superior to Chandler Regional Medical Center. I remember the take off, being unloaded and again being afraid they were going to dump me from the gurney. The next thing I recall is being in a hospital room and that it was dark outside. Mandi tells me that we talked by phone while we were in the ER but I don't remember that conversation. Kathie's sister, Judy Sink, came to the hospital from her home in Chandler. Our Grandson Tabor and his fiancé Bekka who were students at GCU in Phoenix also came. Son-in-law Gabe was in Las Vegas, and he got on the first flight after he heard and arrived that evening. Mandi arrived sometime the next morning.

As the news of our accident spread through our circle of friends and family our phones began to ring continually; none of us had the strength physically or emotionally to respond to all of the calls and texts. Someone suggested that we start a Caring Bridge page. Daughter Kaitey did so, and it proved to be a Godsend. We were able to keep friends and family updated for the next 23 months.

What follows here are the actual Caring Bridge posts. I will add comments when I think it's appropriate.

**April 3, 2022**

Hello loved ones,

Roy and Kathie were in a severe car accident on March 29th-- a head-on collision near Globe, AZ. Bad weather and road conditions caused the accident. They are currently at Chandler Regional Hospital, receiving treatment for their injuries. They have many broken bones, but no internal damage, which is a blessing.

Kathie has had surgery to repair a badly broken ankle, and another for a broken collarbone. She is in a back brace for damage to her spine, broken ribs, sternum and collarbone, and a halo brace keeping her ankle in place. She will likely need at least one more surgery on her ankle. Please pray that the surgeries can be kept to a minimum, as she has struggled with recovering from long term effects of anesthesia in the past. Also please pray that her pain can be managed well with the resources available. Staffing shortages at the hospital mean that pain meds are not always given in time to spare a lot of unnecessary suffering. Her mood is fairly upbeat, but she's not getting a lot of rest.

Roy has a broken sternum, broken ribs, a broken tibia and damaged rotator cuff, and a lot of glass in his hands and arms. He had surgery on his leg yesterday and came through it well, but his pain levels are not well managed and he does not react well to strong narcotics, so even with the drugs he's pretty miserable. He says he can't understand why anyone would use morphine for fun. The hospital wanted to transfer him to a rehab facility soon, but we are appealing that since his pain is not well managed at this point. Please pray for his pain level and that he is able to rest and heal.



Please pray for my sister Mandi as she is the point person at the hospital right now, advocating for both parents and feeling the stress of this tough time. We are all struggling to understand why this happened, at the same time as we are grateful, knowing it could have been so much worse.

Thank you all for the love you've shown, and for past and future prayers. Mom says she's amazed at how many people love them!

Yours in Faith,

Kaitey

## April 4, 2022

Update for today: both Roy and Kathie are doing well enough after their surgeries to be moved to a Dignity Rehabilitation Center of the East Valley in the next couple of days. They have been well enough to see each other and are very happy about that. Thank you all so much for your support and prayers. The outpouring of love has been incredible.

## April 5, 2022

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 5, 2022





## April 5, 2022

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 5, 2022

Roy and Kathie were moved to Dignity Rehabilitation Center of the East Valley last night and are doing well.

The next challenge will be physical therapy, which may be a long and painful process. Please pray for encouragement and optimism as they fight to get back to normal. As always, thank you for your continue support, prayers and all the love! We appreciate you so much.

Today was a good day, as both Roy and Kathie made good progress in Physical Therapy and we're very encouraged by it. We are thankful for their physical therapists, who are so sweet and understanding, and really have some much needed encouragement and motivation. Thank you all for your prayers, as the day started out a bit rough but really took a positive turn.

## April 6, 2022

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 6, 2022





*Roy says: When I look at these images I always wonder why God spared us. Neither of us sustained life threatening injuries. However, they were numerous and painful. Kathie suffered nine broken ribs, a broken sternum, broken collarbone that required surgery, an exposed fracture of her right ankle that endured three surgical procedures, her fractured left ankle wasn't discovered until it had healed on its own, and two crushed vertebrae that were repaired with a procedure called Kyphoplasty. I remember telling a nurse that the last time I had been hospitalized was 60 years ago, following an earlier vehicle incident. I ended up with a fractured tibia plateau that was repaired with an "L" shaped plate held in place with 5 screws, I also had a broken collarbone, sternum, one rib, a dislocated right index finger, a near complete tear of the left rotator cuff which evolved into "frozen shoulder" and embedded glass and debris in my right wrist that continues to find its way out to this day.*

## April 6, 2022

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 6, 2022

Last night was rough for both Roy and Kathie. While we are generally pleased with the rehab center, it is a less intensive level of care than at the hospital, so it is easy for things to slip. For instance, unlike in a hospital setting, no specific nurse is assigned to each patient. This can make it hard to advocate for them, as the person dealing with their care may not be fully aware of all the details.

Roy's pain levels are not being managed, again, and it's a struggle to find anything that works. Please pray for wisdom and understanding for the staff at the rehab center as they try to get his pain under control.

Mom was not put back on supplemental oxygen when she was returned to her room after physical therapy, despite Mandi mentioning it to the nurse. By the time the next round of vitals was taken, her blood oxygen was in the 70's. Anything below the 90's can mean the body starts to shunt blood away from the extremities to focus on providing oxygen to the organs, which can cause permanent damage. Fortunately it was a relatively short time, but potentially very dangerous, so please pray that proper care is taken to keep her oxygen levels up from now on.

Despite these setbacks, they are striving to keep a positive outlook. Seeing the love and support from all of you, and having you holding them up in prayer, means so much. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts.

**April 7, 2022**

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 7, 2022





*Roy says: This arrangement arrived while we were in the trauma center. I wept uncontrollably.*



**April 8, 2022**

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 8, 2022





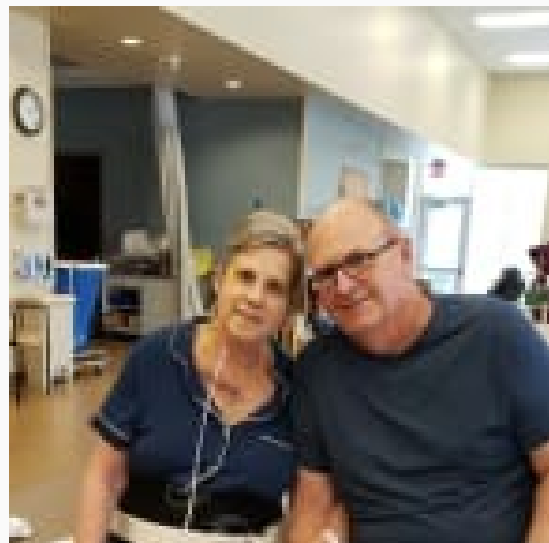
***Roy says: Kristie Fiegen, a former legislative colleague dropped everything to come and help. That's a real true friend. I recall saying that besides my family she was the first person I wanted to be there with us. The birthday decorations were for Mandi's birthday.***



Yesterday got off to a rough start for Kathie, with nausea and vomiting, but she was well enough by dinner time to enjoy the chicken marsala prepared by the facility cook, who she has had a great time chatting with. Trust my mother to find a way into the kitchen anywhere she goes! She did really well at physical therapy, and is comfortable enough to start getting in good frequent naps, which she had been struggling with from early on; She had her first shower in ten days, and said it made her feel like the richest woman in the world! Roy got a haircut from Mandi yesterday, and was able to spend some time sitting outside in the shade, which he says felt mighty fine indeed. His pain is well controlled now, having come to understand that for the time being he needs to take pain meds every time they're offered so as to stay ahead of the pain. Weaning off meds is a challenge for the future. We are so thankful for Kristy Fiegen, who spent this last week helping to care for both Roy and Kathie, and who was wonderfully assertive as an advocate in their behalf; all in addition to being a great friend and bringing in an upbeat mood and optimistic spirit. She is on the way to more people she can help to help, but we are so grateful for her time with Roy and Kathie. Please lift up Mandi in prayer as she will be on her own for a couple days. I fly in late Sunday night, so until Monday morning

it will be just Mandi bouncing between two rooms on two different floors. She says it is the hardest thing she's ever done, physically and emotionally, and we are all proud of how well she has managed it all. The notes, gifts, and most of all prayers are such a blessing. It is amazing to see how every little bit of love and support uplifts Roy and Kathie and reminds them of how many people their lives have touched. Dad and I were talking this morning and he said it would have been an awfully convenient time for the Lord to take them Home, but seeing the proof of the impact their lives have had thus far just proves to him that there is more to do. In the hard times, when learning to walk again, or feeling low from being stuck in bed, absolutely every message from you all makes SUCH a difference. Who could give up with such an absolute mountain of support behind them? For people who want to send something, the address of the rehab facility is: Dignity Health Rehabilitation Hospital, 1515 W Chandler Blvd, Chandler, AZ 85224  
Yours in Faith,  
Kaitey

**April 9, 2022**



## April 9, 2022

Kathie and Roy are both healing well and making progress in physical therapy. Roy is even able to get around a lot with the walker. His leg is healing nicely, and doesn't look too gruesome. He doesn't need a cast or brace because there is a metal plate screwed into the bone, holding everything in place.

Special prayer requests for Kathie today: first that the swelling in her leg and ankle will go down. Until this happens, she will be unable to have the second surgery on her ankle, and will have to continue with the halo brace, which is pretty gruesome. Also prayers that the facility will be able to work with her dietary restrictions--they are having some trouble cobbling together meals that are gluten and dairy free for her.

They had a nice visit today--Mom says the photo of them together is the closest they've been to each other in eleven days.

I fly in late tomorrow night and am looking forward to the four of us being together again.

As always, thank you for the love and prayers, and please keep them coming.

## April 11, 2022

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 11, 2022



Kathie and Roy both had rough nights but are feeling better today. It was wonderful to have the four of us all together.

Kathie has the second surgery on her ankle scheduled for this Thursday. Much depends on how the surgery goes, and how her healing progresses, so please keep that in your prayers. She will go back to Chandler Regional for the surgery and initial recovery, and then come back to the rehab center when she is ready for physical therapy to start again.

Roy is scheduled to be discharged from the rehab facility this Friday, to continue his recovery in-home. He'll be staying in East Mesa, near to quality medical care and to Kathie as she continues her care at facilities in Chandler. Please pray for them both during this separation. They won't be able to visit each other until Kathie is ready to be



discharged, and at this point there is no way to know how long that will be. Kathie says "You wouldn't think you could be any more in love after fifty years, but we just ARE." They certainly are, and it's so sweet to see them holding hands and grinning at each other like teenagers. May God grant us all so much joy!

## **April 12, 2022**

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 12, 2022

Urgent prayer request this morning: Roy is really struggling with a LOT of pain right now. It sounds like he must have overdone it a bit in physical therapy. It's hard to get back on top of the pain once it's out of control, and it's hugely exhausting. Please pray for relief and encouragement. Love, and many thanks to you all.

Yours in Faith

## **April 12, 2022**

Roy is definitely improved since this morning, although he still has a lot of pain in the shoulder on the side he's supposed to be allowed to rest weight on. It sounds like tomorrow they're going to do some imaging to see exactly what the injury is. He says it feels just like a damaged rotator cuff he had a couple years ago. There is a lot of confusion about how he is allowed to function in physical therapy....he has an injured finger that was dislocated and maybe more during the accident, but medical orders from his hospital stay either ignore it completely or forbid bearing any weight on that arm. Adding to the complications, nowhere in hospital records is there the name of the doctor who treated the hand and issued orders, so there is no way to follow up. It's fairly maddening. He took it quite a bit easier in PT today, but please pray that we'll be able to untangle the knot of conflicting medical advice and get him treated appropriately.

Kathie performed like a champ in physical therapy today! She is working SO hard to be ready to go into in-home care as soon as possible after her surgery. She's got a serious shortage of weights bearing limbs available, so it's a tricky business. Her mood may ebb and flow, but her determination is ironclad.

Mandi and I will need to be choosing companies for in home therapy and other assistance. We will also be taking on the main job of not just assisting our parents with basic needs, but of helping them move in and out of wheelchairs and beds. We have a lot of skills to hone in a short time, so please pray for our physical and mental strength.

Your messages, cards, gifts, and most of all your prayers lift us all up on a daily basis. We are endlessly grateful for your support.

## April 14, 2022

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 14, 2022



Kathie has been transported this morning to Chandler Regional Hospital for the second surgery on her right ankle. She is in good spirits and very ready to be done with surgery and rehab so she can be transferred to in-home care along with Roy. She is working very, very hard in physical therapy and occupational therapy to make this happen just as quickly as possible. Roy and Kathie had a sweet goodbye and both Mandi and I were a bit choked up. It is so wonderful to see just how much they adore each other, and even a short separation is going to be hard.

Roy is now scheduled to be released to in-home care on Saturday. He is really moving around well considering his injuries, and is excited to have his "fall risk" bracelet removed so he's allowed to transfer himself in and out of the wheelchair.

We have been loaned a wonderful home in East Mesa for as long as their recovery takes. A million thanks to the wonderful friends who made this possible.

Mandi's husband Gabe and daughter Anna will be on their way here starting this evening. Gabe will be helping to do the little that is needed to make sure the house is perfectly set up for Roy and Kathie to come home to. The last owner of the house had polio, so it is very handicapped accessible, and really an ideal place to heal. We are so very fortunate, and grateful, to have it available.

Prayer requests for Kathie today, as surgery is always a danger, especially that she will recover well from anesthesia, and then heal quickly and become strong enough and mobile enough to be released to in-home care soon.

## April 14, 2022

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 14, 2022

Special prayer request for Kathie--she is still waiting to go into surgery, as of 4 pm, and she got some very discouraging news. The doctor there estimates that she'll need six weeks of skilled nursing after surgery. She is really frustrated and tearful, because those will not only be days of struggling to regain her health, but days she will be entirely separated from Roy, since he moves to in-home care this weekend.

Pray for courage and strength, that the surgery goes well, and that she is able to keep her spirits up. Mandi and I will be here, of course, and one of us will be with her all the hours allowed, but being away from Dad is going to be a terrible strain for her.

We love and appreciate you all. Kathie was just saying this morning that the really exceptional rate of their healing and improved brain level are certainly due to the prayers lifting her up.



Mom went into surgery at about 5 pm.

## April 15, 2022

Kathie came out of surgery last night and is doing well. She was a bit fuzzy after surgery, of course but she suggested that we get a billboard thanking the Lord and Chandler Regional Hospital for getting her through. The anesthesiologist said her surgeon is "the Picasso of orthopedic surgery" so we know she was in good hands. Mandi and I spent the night and she did well. Her pain is mostly under control. The dressing and splint on her right leg are very heavy, and she has to keep them for at least five days, so we will see how PT has her deal with that.

Yours in Faith,

Kaitey...

## April 15, 2022

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 15, 2022

Urgent request:

We have just been told that Medicare is refusing to cover ANY medical equipment of any kind because their injuries were caused by a car crash....?

So we need one wheelchair by about 10 am tomorrow, and because Mom is now possibly being sent home as soon as two days from now, we need another wheelchair and a hospital bed by then. We have really minimal free time so any outsourcing this wonderful network of friends can do would be a huge blessing.

## April 16, 2022

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — April 16, 2022

Huge praise report! We have been given two wheelchairs, we were able to buy a brand new hospital bed at a very reasonable price, and we found a home health aide that will take Medicare!

Roy is home and doing absolutely fantastic. He's off pain meds and thrilled to be able to have a beer!

Kathie is being discharged to in-home care on Sunday night or Monday morning. She is THRILLED, despite the fact that medically, she's probably not ready. Pray that Mandi and I will excel at caring for her here at home.

Friday was a dark day, but Sunday is coming! The symbolism of the Easter holidays lining up with our experience here is such an additional blessing. We feel the Lord smiling on us even in these dark days. God is good, all the time!

## April 17, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 17, 2022



Bonnie & Bernie sent this delightful fruit gift! Thank you. ♥



Tabor's girlfriend, Rebekah,  
my dear



Roy is relaxing on the beautiful patio at Randy & Shirley's.



I'm wrapped in the lovely blue  
kashmina sent by

Pinetop friend, Chris.

## April 17, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 17, 2022

Hello Friends and Family. This is Kathie. I feel well enough now to help Kaitey with keeping you all up to date on this journey.

It's been an unusual Easter Sunday, but I still rejoice in our Risen Lord. Many friends have called or texted with their wishes for this Holy Day. Thank you to so many who have reached out to touch our lives these past weeks. Tuesday will be 3 weeks since 'The Accident.'

So much time, but it has passed quickly, in retrospect. Your outpouring of love has encouraged and sustained us! Thank you all!

Roy was released from the rehabilitation hospital yesterday. He is so very happy to be in a home setting and we both are looking forward to my joining him there before long. Mandi and Gabe have been busy getting the house organized, rearranging furniture, picking up furniture and making plans for the next 2 to 3 months. We do not plan to return to our Pinetop home until we have completed the myriad of follow up appointments and procedures still ahead of us. We are so thankful to our dear friends, Randy and Shirley, who have so lovingly given their home to us, lock, stock and barrel, for the duration of our healing time. Our friend, John Callow, rearranged his schedule to arrive at the house just seconds behind Roy yesterday. He was bringing a wheelchair, walker, and various household and personal items from our home in Pinetop. A bit later, Belinda and Judy, from Tucson arrived to deliver another wheel/transfer chair. Tomorrow, a fairly new and instantly dear friend, Eric, will be coming with another wheelchair. With such a varied inventory we will surely be able to find a good fit for each of us. Thank you all!

Gina and Brandon, our dear Lakeside friends, have made 2 trips to bring items to us along with some lovingly-prepared and delicious dishes. Today, our Gilbert friends, Ron & Jill brought Easter dinner to us. What a special treat!! Mandi brought dinner to Kaitey and me.

What's next? Well, we are waiting for my release from the rehab hospital so I can be with Roy. This should happen within the next few days.

Thank you for your continued prayers and presence in our minds and hearts!!

**April 19, 2022**

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 19, 2022



This special quote is such an encouragement.



My sister, Judy Sink, who lives here in Chandler, AZ, was the first by our sides on the day of the accident and continues to visit and encourage us frequently





Our faithful caregivers, Kaitey & Mandi



Janie and Lonnie of Spearfish, South Dakota, have been among the many welcome visitors to our hospital rooms. Thank you to all who have come to brighten our days.



We have been cheered by so many beautiful flower arrangements. Each one has been an encouragement to us and reminded us of the special relationships we are blessed with.

***Roy says: Mandi wrote down some of our "Morphine Quotes".***  
***Roy... "Ralph Mader died, but I don't even know who that is."***  
***Kathie... "If that idiot took my oat milk coffee, I'm going to kill him."***  
***Roy... "Why is Ivan taking my socks to Australia?"***  
***Kathie... "If it helps me get better I'll eat these damn eggs."***  
***Kathie... "Give me my phone, you little shit."***

## April 19, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 19, 2022

Good Morning. ☺ Today is a special day as Kaitey and Mandi will come for family training and tomorrow I get to go HOME!! It will be so good to be all together in one place, able to care for and encourage each other as we need to. You might think Roy and I can't care for each other, but we can just by being together, praying together, and basking in the love of our daughters' care.

Since my second ankle surgery last Thursday, I have greatly increased my independence by demonstrating the ability to do so much more for myself. I still cannot put any weight on my right leg and have very minimal use of the right arm, but the therapists at Dignity Rehabilitation Hospital have provided me with tools and techniques to help with self-care and dressing. Oh my, the daily activities we take for granted until they are snatched from us! One of my greatest concerns has been how I will get in and out of a car to go home and to continue to travel to appointments in the coming months. Yesterday, I practiced with the little training car in the gym and was pleased to find it very manageable. Today, Kaitey will bring the car we will be using and the therapists will teach both of us how to transfer safely.

Roy is struggling with debilitating pain in his shoulder, so will have an MRI soon to explore cause and treatment options. He was able to visit me yesterday after his Ortho appointment and that was an encouragement to both of us.

We both want to use minimal meds for pain, but it's a bit of a tightrope to walk.

Thank you all for the continued encouragement and love. We are so blessed!

## April 21, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 21, 2022



We had many amazing caregivers at Dignity Rehabilitation Hospital. Jamie, a beautiful Chinese woman, was among my favorites. She was my nurse many days and always made a special point of stopping in to say goodbye before she left even if her shift was extended



Learning to transfer from wheelchair to car can be difficult with just one arm to use. The PT's taught us well and we are successful!!





One of the dearest sights in my life was Roy in the driveway to greet me!♥



We were able to align our wheelchairs for a reunion kiss



I've waited more than 3 weeks to enjoy morning coffee with Roy. The lovely patio at this beautiful home was the perfect place.  
Thank you, Randy & Shirley!

## April 23, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 23, 2022

I know we were silent yesterday, so I want to be sure to touch base with all you dear friends before today ends. It was my home-going day and ended up pretty much 'knocking the stuffing out of me'. In addition to my first trip in a car in more than three weeks, my brother and his wife from North Carolina came especially to visit us. This is such a generous and special gesture on their parts. ♥ He also installed a grab bar to provide easier and safer trips to the 'facilities' for me.

We are both doing pretty well. I am quite pain-free and Roy is improving. He was able to visit our primary care provider today, so that's one more checkmark on the list of things to do. He is still somewhat limited in movement, but is more mobile than I am. It will be another 3 weeks until I can support my weight or do more than light, simple tasks with my right hand. I must give the myriad of broken core bones time to knit together without interruption. I am not able to put any weight on my right foot/leg until the end of May

following my second ankle surgery a week ago. That seems like a long time, but we have learned to be content with where we are right now.

It was such a special start to the day for me as I was able to sit on the very beautiful patio here and enjoy my morning coffee with Roy and the girls. Oh, how we take the little pleasures of life for granted! While we relaxed there our friend, Ron, arrived with a little transition ramp he had built just to make our exit and entry easier. We are so blessed!

We, as many of you, have been granted a long life on this earth already. We have been blessed with two beautiful daughters, Kaitey, nearly 45, and Mandi, 43. We spent 25 joyful years together in Nebraska and in the Black Hills of South Dakota. It was, for the most part, a storybook family adventure. However, we never knew until these weeks, how perfectly our daughters were designed to complement each other in this task. Most amazing of all, they each consider it a privilege to care for us and their husbands and children have given full support to this extended time of separation for them. Again, blessings just flow our way and we are all embracing this time to be a family of 4, again, though with a significant role reversal.

Thank you, again, to all for your extraordinary support from cards and phone calls, offers and acts of assistance, fun and special gifts, visits and food. Wow!! God bless each of you. ♥

## April 23, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 23, 2022



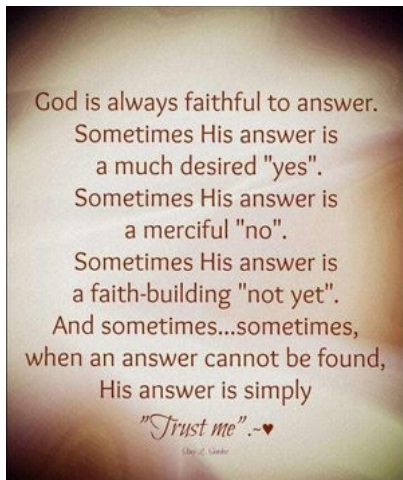
So nice to have a cosmetologist on 'our staff'. ♥ Thank you, Mandi!



Thank you, Reinie and Dee, for traveling from North Carolina to love and encourage us.



What a beautiful and delicious gift from Dave & Kathy Thank you!!



Words of encouragement from brother-in-law, Fred. ♥



Visits from friends like Jay and Dolores are so special

## April 23, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 23, 2022

It's a gorgeous day in the Valley of the Sun. It's a fairly quiet day for the four of us here at the Hansen Healing Hacienda in Mesa, Arizona.

Roy and Mandi are off for a little trip in the golf cart after bringing in the mail. Kaitey is resting and I have decided it's time for us to reach out, again, to our wonderful family and friends.

My brother, Reinie, and his wife, Dee, have returned to their lovely log home in the mountains of North Carolina. Yesterday, our dear friends, Dolores and Jay, joined us. She was with me at their home last fall, so it was a fun reunion.

Today is a much better day for Roy. Yesterday was definitely a low point. It wasn't just the pain, but a profound and hopeless depression that attacked him. We sure didn't expect that, but we now know that PTSD is not uncommon, at all, following such a traumatic experience. Through prayer and a plan for therapy, he is working through it. Then I woke



this morning with tears streaming down my face. Well, we will learn to deal with this, too. We have come too far to even consider giving up now.

And the uplifting moments continue. Dear Gina and Brandon from Lakeside arrived this morning bringing my little red recliner that is a perfect fit. Now, thanks to a very comfortable loaner from Dick & Diane, we each have comfy, easily accessible, and supportive chairs in the living room.

Our friends also brought lots of food from our freezer, my stock of supplements, and Roy's favorite pillows. 😊

Cards, letters and gifts continue to arrive daily. Each brings a special smile to us. Thank you.

Our heartfelt gratitude with much love to each of you today

## April 26, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 26, 2022



Central Christian pastors Cal and Paul came for a Monday afternoon visit. It was truly a special time. They were relieved to see us looking better than they expected. Nice to exceed their expectation! 😊



Dear Gold Canyon friends, Ron & Paddy, came to toast our recovery and treated us all to a delicious Southwest Chicken Salad for Sunday evening dinner.



Such a delightful Sunday visit with Pinetop friends, Angela and Willy, who came on an errand of mercy, bringing items we wanted from our home. Thanks so much!



A beautiful evening on the patio for Family Game Night!!

## April 28, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 29, 2022



I'm writing this update on my laptop, while I've done all the others on my phone. Being technically challenged, I can't figure out how to add text to the photos below. So... Photo 1 shows our dear Spearfish, SD friends, Janie and Lonnie who brought a delicious Lemon Chicken dinner. Last night's dinner turned out to be a bonus with two couples showing up. Eric & Karen met Tim & Liz!! We watched a new friendship develop between dear friends of ours! We're planning get-togethers when we are all on the mountain later this summer. Photo 4 is how Roy and I look when our batteries start to run low during the days. Finally a photo of wild mustard, picked by Kaitey to remind us that having faith just the size of a grain of mustard seed is very powerful. Blessings abound!



It seems odd that the days go by fairly quickly when Roy and I are so limited in our movement. It seems there is always one more appointment to schedule, one more friend to greet, one more card to open, one more text or phone call to answer. We love them all and thank each of you. I'm sure Kaitey and Mandi wish there wasn't so much to do each day, but they continue to care for us lovingly and patiently.

Home Health hasn't really kicked in for me, but Roy has had a number of sessions and I just keep doing the exercises they taught me at the Rehab hospital. Roy is scheduled for an MRI tomorrow to explore the continuing pain in his shoulder, so we hope that will be helpful. I visited our Primary Care office today and feel good about getting that accomplished. Tomorrow I visit the Ortho surgeon's office for follow up on my ankle surgery. I am really looking forward to having the very bulky splint and bandage removed. I will be fitted with a removable boot. Can hardly wait!!

My anxiety when traveling in a car is lessening. The girls are good and careful drivers and we allow more than enough time to reach any destination. Roy has a plan to deal with his PTSD and depression. It's a good plan overall.

Again, your thoughtful cards, calls and gifts cheer us each day. Your prayers sustain our bodies and our souls. Thank you so much!! Several friends have come by with dinner and others have sent baskets of fruits, nuts, and all sorts of tasty treats. I seem to be regaining my appetite, so that's a bonus. Thanks for walking this path with us.

Lovingly,

from Roy & Kathie.





Ready to say 'Farewell' to the splint and bandages.



The unveiling



My new look. I don't love it, but one more step on the healing journey.



Grandson, Tabor, helping me assemble the 'Lego' flowers sent by Jack & Sheryl. Thanks!! 😊



This gorgeous bouquet was sent just yesterday by my college roommate, Judy, and her daughter and son-in-law, Joia & Philip. It's definitely the most historic relationship represented on the journey other than our siblings and a few childhood friends. So precious to my heart!! Thank you. ❤️

## April 30, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — April 26, 2022

Good Saturday Morning, Family and Friends! More than a month since 'The Crash', we count you among our most treasured blessings. ♥ Thank you for staying connected to us. Yesterday, I had the splint and bulky bandages removed from my right leg. I anticipated freedom!! Well, the new boot is even larger and only slightly less heavy. 😊 However, it is removable for showers and PT, so that is a pleasure and will allow my leg to 'breathe' for a short time each day. 😊 So thankful! My good news is that I am now able to use my right arm to support my weight 'as tolerated'. That allows me to transfer myself which is a great new freedom for me and gives the girls a little bit less to do. So thankful! However, they still hover like Mother Hens!! However did we get so lucky? ♥ I also had my first real OT and PT visits here yesterday. It is so good to be able to continue on the healing path with professional help.

Roy had an MRI on his shoulder yesterday and we are hopeful that it will provide clues, early next week, to lessen the pain for him. He is continuing with regular PT sessions and is a Rockstar!! He and Mandi enjoy daily trips to the mailbox, which always has a card or two and, frequently, a surprise from many of you! They get out and about in the golf cart often, as well. I hope to make that trip soon.

We are looking forward to a fairly quiet Saturday. However, a Belle Fourche friend, DeEtte, will stop by this morning. It turns out that she is in the same community as we are now and has not, yet, returned to SD for the summer. What are the chances of that? Life is full of fun and unexpected surprises. Count your blessings along with us and have a great weekend!



Our daughters, Kaitey and Mandi, continue to be our Angels of Mercy, working together tirelessly to care for pretty much everything. In spite of the circumstances, this is a special time most parents do not get, once their children are grown. ♥ Today is 4 weeks since 'The Crash!' In retrospect, the time has passed fairly quickly, but it seems as if the road ahead is still very long. We have both started in-home PT and are pleased with the level of attention and care. Friends continue to visit and the time with



them is very special. We appreciate each comment here, each phone call and each text. We covet each prayer and healing thought sent our way.

We both have off-site appointments at the end of the week, so are especially thankful for 2 daughters and 2 vehicles at the ready.

We've enjoyed time on the patio during these relatively cool days, as we know the temps will continue to rise and keep us inside most of the time. Last evening Roy enjoyed the Diamondbacks game out there.

I continue to heal with relatively little pain. Though my injuries are more extensive, Roy has had to deal with much more pain. On the other hand, despite not being able to support his weight with either leg or arm on the left side, he is able to transfer from bed to wheelchair and navigate around the house, plus do self-care such as showering, etc. He is thankful for this freedom of movement. I am not able to use my right leg or arm, yet, so am completely dependent on the girls for any movement from place to place. The long rehabilitation process brings moments of frustration, but we have come too far not to keep 'pushing these rocks up the hill.' We feel your love, care and prayers as if you are part of our Team. Thank you so much! ♥

Please enjoy the photos to see some special moments in our days.

## May 01, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 1, 2022



Marci, Linda and Norm came by for a delightful visit. She is gluten-free, too, so brought the perfect jar full of gf treats and a delightful candle. Thank you!! ♥



This 'Lego' flower project was way above my skill level!! Thankfully, Grandson Tabor grew up with Legos covering his bedroom floor and was a great helper.



The finished project!! Thank you, Jack & Sheryl. ♥

## May 04, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 4, 2022

I've never been so happy to be wrong!! We fully expected shoulder surgery to be the solution to Roy's severe pain, but 3 months of PT is the recommendation. We will begin to set that up tomorrow, though we aren't sure quite how it will all play out as we hope to get back to Pinetop in July or sooner. Hopefully, insurance and 'the plan' will allow a smooth course of treatment.

I continue to improve day by day. It is so good to be able to help the girls with simple tasks I can do from my wheelchair. And I hope that within 3 weeks I will be able to begin weight bearing on my right leg/ankle and begin learning to walk, again.

I did travel to Simon Med for a bone density scan today. After all the preliminaries and waiting, we were turned away as they had not told me to discontinue taking calcium for 24 hours prior. We rescheduled for Friday.

We continue to enjoy visits from friends who often bring meals. That is really nice for the girls as it frees up some time for all the other tasks they must accomplish each day. And we keep getting fun gifts delivered to us. Yesterday, we received a cuddly lap blanket - Thanks, Jess and a couple of very clever T-shirts. I will post photos soon, but please tell us who the giver was of such a clever surprise.

More later. Right now I desperately need a nap; with much love and gratefulness to all of you.

## May 04, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 4, 2022



We are so fortunate to enjoy coffee on the patio every morning. And happy that May temps have remained moderate enough to accommodate our 'dates'. (Thank you, Belinda for the comfy pj's.)



Jay and Dolores came to celebrate an early Cinco de Mayo, bringing a delicious Green Chile Pork dinner. Good friends make the journey easier.



Mandi decided to make her dad an apple pie. No rolling pin? A big glass bottle works quite well.



I got to finish the edges of the crust!!





Watering plants from the transfer chair. (Thank you, Judy and Belinda!) is one of my morning duties. Every day we find something else we can do once more, it seems. Each new success is one more step on our journey to healing. We are so thankful for your encouragement in so many ways. ♥😊♥

**May 07, 2022**

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 7, 2022



Dear friends from Lakeside, Gina & Brandon, have driven 'down the hill' 3 times, bringing all sorts of things we needed from the Pinetop house!! They even brought my dear little red recliner for my comfort!! ♥ They've treated us to all sorts of homemade dishes and treats and been the best of friends!!



Our neighborhood friends, Chris & Danny, have sent several boxes of all sorts of gf treats, teas, cheese spreads, salami, even delicious shortbreads. So many friends are so very kind and we appreciate each of you!! ♥



New seasonal neighbors in Pinetop, Kevin & Pam, thank. came last night bringing a taco bar dinner, delectable cookies and chocolates. What a treat!! 😊❤️😊 Thank you.



These t-shirts are so much fun!! But we don't know who to



Between our orders - and the girls' purchases - and surprise gifts from so many friends, this is the scene many days as Kaitey gathers up the Amazon packages. We so appreciate each thoughtful gift and gesture. 😊

Our days have pretty much settled into routines 5 1/2 weeks into this journey; various medical appointments, home health therapy visits and the dear times with friends who come by to see us help the time to pass fairly quickly. Kaitey and Mandi have settled into their routines of caring for us and keeping up with all the daily household tasks. They are amazing!!

About a year ago, I joined a group, The Pinetop Walkers, started by my friend, Bernie. These dear women have joined our journey by staying connected and offering support. Jerri showed up at the hospital in just a day or two with gf donuts and a timely devotional book. Angela and her husband were couriers of Pinetop items and have been a great resource for our medical questions. Kitty came for a visit, bringing dinner. Then, just yesterday, Kim made a Sprouts run and stayed to chat and help me get caught up on the friends in Pinetop. So, new friendships and relationships that have endured for as long as a half century continue to encourage and sustain us. Thank you EVERYONE!!

## May 09, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 9, 2022



Happy Birthday, Kaitey!! 🎂 Mandi planned - and prepared - a special dinner for her and Aunt Judy joined us for the festivities



The girls prepared a delicious brunch to celebrate Mother's Day.

They gave me lovely and thoughtful gifts including this snuggly blanket bearing a special message



Kaitey's birthday cake which Mandi baked



Mandi couldn't leave her dad out, so he received one, too. There were plenty of happy tears all around. ♥



My request for Mother's Day dinner was a home-grilled burger and it was delicious as well as piled high with wonderful toppings!! Roy helped as he is our grill-master and even, Tabor, Mandi's son joined in the project. Such fun!!

We had such a special weekend celebrating Kaitey's birthday and Mother's Day. This unexpected time together has allowed us to spend both girls' birthdays as well as a special Mom's day together in the past month. We can't remember the last time that happened!! What a treat!!

We would like the days to pass more quickly, but each day is one closer to healing and fully-functional lives, again!! We can hardly wait! However, we know we have to do the work!! Again, we are so thankful to each of you who keep us in your thoughts and prayers and reach out with calls, messages, cards, gifts and encouragement. Each 'touch' is another little bit of healing. Thank you!!! ♥

## May 12, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 12, 2022



Our exercising has to be done from a sitting position, for the most part. Kind of fun to do it together sometimes. 😊





Here I am with Paula, a particularly caring and fun OT. I 'graduate' next week with high marks. Of course, I've had quite awhile to build my skills.



Ron & Paddy, our dear Gold Canyon/Olympia, WA friends came with a delicious spaghetti dinner on Tuesday night. Then the piece de resistance were delicious chocolate-dipped strawberries. A feast for the eyes as well as the palate.



My dear sister-in-law, Dee, sent this daily devotional that I enhance with coloring. I like it!!  
♥ Thanks, Dee.





Gabe's parents sent this yummy fruit bouquet today. What a treat!! Thank you,

Hi, Friends & Family -

It's time for an update on this very pleasant Thursday in the Valley of the Sun. A friend in Pinetop said it was just 33\* there this morning which is why it's so nice here. We'll take it!!

Roy is finally off to PT at a nearby facility after it became apparent that Home Health wasn't going to be sufficient. It should work very well until we are able to return to Pinetop and continue treatment there. He likes the therapist and will go 3 or 4 times a week.

I saw an Ortho doctor on Tuesday whom both Mandi and I really like. However, I was a bit discouraged to be put back in the upper body brace for 8 more weeks with no BLT's. (Bending, lifting, or twisting.) Also less use of the right arm, again, until the clavicle is totally healed. Seems like a long road, but we've come this far and will stay on the path to total healing.

This quote was sent by my Pinetop neighbor and friend, Chris. Here's the quote....

'One day you will tell your story of how you overcame what you went through and it will be someone else's survival guide.'

Brene Brown

I sure hope we can live out this mission. 🙏

We continue to have visits from friends that are always an encouragement. And a surprise arrives most days; fun for us and so generous of you all. ♥ Continued loving thoughts to you all.

## May 14, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 14, 2022



A sweet and simple photo of Roy handing me a tiny flower in a lighthearted morning moment. We hope to remember the joys in these days.



Here I am at work. Technology is a huge bonus for me right now. Thanks, too, to Lisa, Nicole, and Jared for filling in where I cannot be physically quite yet. 🙏



Josh arrived from Ohio last night to join his Grandmother's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration. What a treat for Kaitey and for us to have him here!



What a fun gift from my Pinetop friend, Sandy! These sweet hummers will light up our patio here and our Pinetop porch soon!!



And it could be sooner than you think!!

Just another day at the Healing Hacienda; a special treat is the arrival of Kaitey's husband, Josh, for a couple of days. And Mandi's Gabe will be here next weekend; we are so happy for them and will be ever grateful for the sacrifice these two dear couples - and their children - are making for us.

I know you can imagine that the days get a bit long and, somewhat, boring, even with tv, books, games, visitors, naps, PT, mail delivery, and a surprise or two most days. We are feeling better, but need to feel productive....at least, a bit. So I'm happy to have the opportunity to do some real estate business, already - with help from Pinetop friends and really great clients. And Roy has a plan to fill some days once he is able to walk. He should get clearance for that next week. We are truly thankful for each day of healing, and your love and prayers that fuel the effort. Thank you!!

Tonight we will enjoy Pizza and Wings, thanks to UberEats from Pinetop friends. Thank you, Angela and Willie. It's so nice for Mandi to have the evening off from kitchen chores.

Weekend blessings to you all. ♥

## May 18, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 18, 2022



It was such a treat to have Kaitey's husband, Josh, here for a couple of days. He indulged the 'girls' by playing card games with us. 😊



Mandi and I were out on a few errands yesterday and decided that Roy needed a cherry pie. We stopped at PIEfection, a Mesa shop that bakes just like Mama does! 🍒

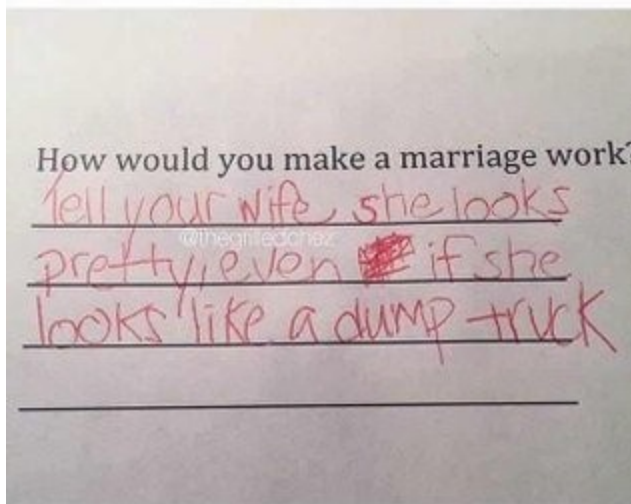


We couldn't manage without this calendar that Mandi manages. She is small, but mighty in organizing our schedules.





This 'blast from the past' shows us all 20 years ago at my 50th birthday party.



This kid is going places 🤔🤔🤔

Just a little humor for your day; I feel like this describes Roy, who remains positive and loving, in spite of my physical state.

Good morning! ☺ At 7 weeks and 1 day into this journey, we are both weary and hopeful. We wake fairly early each day and enjoy coffee together on the sunny patio before the heat of the day sets in. Often, one of us reads from the 'Book of Healing', a devotional book sent by our dear Jess. Today's reading focused on Luke 5:17, and Jesus' healing of the sick while the Pharisees stood by to criticize and run interference. The physician author speculated, 'These days, it seems all the Pharisees work for the insurance companies.' Funny, but not funny!

Insurance companies do complicate the process, but we are very thankful for that benefit since we can't imagine the cost of our treatment without assistance.

As a side note, my brother, Bob, is facing open-heart surgery tomorrow, and I would appreciate prayers for him. Unlike us, he does not have a spouse (His wife died in September 2021.) or children to support him. It's hard for me to be here, unable to



physically help, so I am thankful for 2 brothers who can be there part of the time and the couple from whom he rents an apartment. They are truly a blessing to him!

Today is a bit structured with off-site PT for Roy and an on-line real estate class for me. We are both VERY hopeful of being able to begin to use our 'bad' legs soon and gaining a bit more independence.

We continue to be encouraged by your calls, messages, cards, gifts, prayers and love.

Thank you! ♥

**May 19, 2022**

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 19, 2022



Doug & Diane, friends from Central Christian for more than 23 years, came to visit yesterday, bringing a delicious dinner for all of us to enjoy together. Such a special evening for us! Thank you. ♥



Roy is looking pretty good as he is heading to today's appointment with his Ortho surgeon.



And here he is just a short time later without that wheel chair!!



This is a win for both of us to have him in charge of my wheelchair while he gets a bit of support while pushing me. So good to be gaining in ability and strength!



Just a little outing to the mailbox is a bright spot in our days!!

Oh, Happy Day!!! Roy was able to start walking today!! 😊 I'm not sure we will ever take that simple act of movement for granted, again. After more than 7 weeks of being very restricted in his movement, taking those first few steps was so freeing. Now I'm very hopeful I will have the same experience next week. 🙏 I definitely have the will and the physical energy! I just need to show enough healing on the x-rays to get the 'thumbs up' from my surgeon.

I'm happy to report that my brother, Bob, came through his heart surgery well. Thank you to all who prayed for him. 5 1/2 hours of surgery and 4 bypasses later, he was resting comfortably. I hope to be able to talk with him tomorrow.

I 'graduated' from OT today and 'likely, have just a few sessions of in-home PT as I am able to do all of the exercises independently. Mandi says she has much less work to do to care for us, as well, and that makes us happy.

As always, we cherish you as part of our 'healing team'. Thank you for continuing to encourage us in so many ways. 💖

## May 22, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 22, 2022

Happy Sunday! It's a gorgeous 78 degrees on the patio at 8 a.m. So thankful for beautiful Valley mornings in late May. 😊

Our lives continue slowly on this path to healing and I'll admit it is sometimes discouraging. 🙄 However.... Roy is bravely continuing offsite PT, which will be 5 days

a week for awhile now. I hope to join him and leave Homecare PT behind as soon as I get the OK from my Ortho surgeon. Watching Roy reminds me that it will be 'work' to walk, again, but I'm ready. 🙏

Friday was a bittersweet day as Kaitey went home to Ohio on Saturday morning. We are so thankful for all her love, kindness, and grace to us these past weeks. 💞 We made the most of it with lots of 'together time' and a 'Celebrate Kaitey' dinner including delicious steaks, gifted to us by our dear Montana friends, Tom & Jody. Thank you!

Then Gabe, Mandi's husband, arrived late that evening to join us for a few days. He will treat Roy to some 'guy talk' and all of us with his special skills at smoking and grilling meats for dinners.

Wishing you all a wonderful week ahead. Take time to appreciate and care for the special people in your lives. ❤️

Such precious days with our girls and a true demonstration of their love for us. We've laughed hilariously, cried together, at times, reminisced about their childhood, and talked about the future. In spite of the circumstances, these weeks have been a special gift to us.



Kaitey and Mandi indulged me by learning to play Mahjong. They are naturals!! 😊



Pinetop Neighbor's, Bob and Joann, tied yellow ribbons around our trees to show we are missed. What a special gesture! Thank you.



Gabe, our son-in-law showed up to spend a few days. What a treat for all of us!

I made a huge  
to do list today.  
I just can't figure  
out who's going  
to do it.

Looking forward to the day when I will be able to tackle those chore lists, again. 😊

## May 29, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — May 29, 2022

Good Sunday morning to you all. Celebrate freedom all this long weekend and be thankful for those who have sacrificed for us. US

Well, I did start to walk on Thursday, but it was a hobble, at best. Nothing like Roy's instant stroll and I should never have expected it considering the difference in our injuries. That ankle is not interested in bending and the foot is quite swollen. Those are conditions I will just have to deal with for some time. So... Mandi took me to the 'Swap Meet' early on Friday and I bought a pair of 'Crocs' two sizes larger than I wear. I am able to wear that right shoe and it helps quite a bit. I am able to get around with the walker quite well until I get too tired and resort to the wheelchair, again.

Roy is doing fairly well with his index finger therapy and continues working on his left shoulder. We both know it's a long journey. Thank you for walking alongside us in so many ways.

I am able to do a few household chores now and look forward to even more soon.

I have some photos to share, but will send those in my next post.

## May 29, 2022





Longtime friends, Steve and Sharon, came to visit bringing these lovely and fragrant hyacinths as well as a delightful pot of basil. Thank you for both and a lovely catch-up visit.



My friend, Bernie, is an avid crafter and crochet-genius. She gifted me with this and is waiting to see my first afghan. Thanks, dear friend.

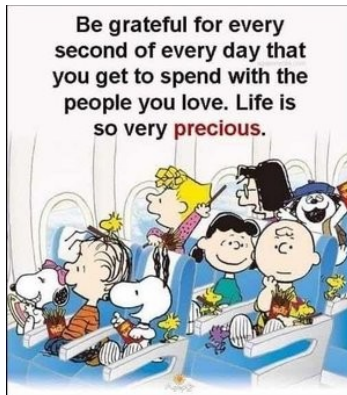


This fireplace is a lovely focal feature of the amazing backyard patio at our Healing Hacienda. Though we aren't putting any 'logs on the fire' these days, we enjoy it when evenings cool a bit and the many solar lights glow.





Mandi, Gabe, Roy, and some guests have enjoyed using the wonderful outdoor kitchen to prepare tasty treats.



us ♥ us ♥ us ♥ us

Just a few special things to share with you. ♥

## June 01, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — June 1, 2022

9 weeks + 1 day and counting!! Surgeons tell us that it will take a full year to heal and I'm so thankful we didn't hear that the first week. It would have been so discouraging!! Now we know we will heal and we compel ourselves to remember that during the 'down' moments.

Roy's PT is going well. He is thankful for an excellent facility and therapist very close to our Mesa home. I was able to go with him today and watch his therapy and exercise routine. And I started working with a therapist who will help me gain flexibility and mobility in my right ankle and foot to enable me to walk, again. A blessing, for sure, as I am struggling right now.

We decided to try a test run to Pinetop on Sunday and Monday. We tolerated the 3+ hour trip well and Roy drove from Payson to Pinetop. We had set a goal of going on Sunday to join our friend and neighbor, John Callow, who was hosting a barbecue to remember our dear Leslie and celebrate their anniversary. I'm very glad we were able to join a small gathering and see dear and friendly faces. There are so many friends and neighbors we couldn't see in that short time as we purposely stayed 'under the radar', having no idea how we would weather the trip. We did pretty well, though I'm not ready to give up my hospital bed quite yet, and must be able to walk before I can manage full-time mountain living. Roy did much better and I'm so thankful to have his help and support. And, when we return later this month, we look forward to seeing all our mountain friends and neighbors. ♥

In closing, please pray for our dear Mandi as she has been ‘laid low’ by a nasty virus. Roy drove all the way back to Mesa while she slept, and though she managed to help him unload the car, she went to bed shortly after we arrived home. She is finally able to keep Gatorade down and is feeling a bit better, but is still very weak and sleeping almost all of the time. On a positive note, Roy and I are learning that we can manage on our own. It’s slow, sometimes painful, and not easy, but we can do it! So, again, we count each of you as a blessing. You are our encouragers and prayer warriors! You are our inspiration!! Thank you!!! ♥

## June 04, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — June 4, 2022

Today I am 70 years old. This is not how I expected to spend such a milestone day, but I AM here to celebrate. 😊 I caught the flu that Mandi has, so no birthday cake or celebratory meal today. I’m learning to be patient and will enjoy those things when the time is right.

I wasn’t able to go to PT yesterday because of this nasty virus, but I am continuing the exercises at home and was able to take quite a few unaided steps on Thursday evening and yesterday morning. I do the best when I have been in the hot tub and we are so thankful for that luxury on the back patio. I commented that my steps weren’t very pretty. Roy responded, ‘No, but they are beautiful.’ ♥

Roy uses the hot tub twice a day as therapy for his shoulder and now I am, finally, able to join him.

Roy continues to improve slowly, but steadily and we have to credit his PT for much of that. They have done some dry needling and cupping on his most recent visits with good results. It’s quite amazing to me!!

I’m going to sign off for now, but will post some photos later.

Thanks to so many of you for the birthday cards and Facebook messages and your continued prayers for our healing. I am blessed! We are blessed!!

## June 07, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — June 7, 2022



Mandi gave me Birthday flowers, along with a little crown to wear. It made a hard day just a bit more cheerful. ♥



Gifts and cards from friends were special blessings. 🙏 Thank you.



This very fun package of vintage candies is so special. You may recognize some things from your childhood!!



Here I am walking!!! 😊



Twice daily soaks in the hot tub are good therapy.

Today is the 10 week mark since we began our journey of healing. We have good news and bad. First the good news.....I am really improving in walking, though you might not think so if you saw me. I still use a walker or, occasionally, the transfer chair, but manage with a cane much of the time. It is somewhat painful, but manageable until I get very fatigued. Then I rest!

Today I was able to work on kitchen and cooking chores for several hours, with only occasional breaks. Often I perch on my walker while chopping vegetables or doing dishes. Again, I am humbled by the realization that I have taken all these simple movements for granted for so many years. Now I appreciate each small task for the big improvement it represents to me.

Roy also takes more small steps toward healing each day and manages a few 'honey do' tasks from time to time. He is anxious to be more active and able to accomplish more in a

day. He is driving very comfortably and is working on replacing my car soon. Since we hope to head back to Pinetop in a couple of weeks that is a priority.

The bad news is that the flu we had turned out to be Covid. 😞 Mandi had tested a week ago with a negative result, so she and I assumed we had a serious case of the flu and thought we would soon be through the miserable days and nights with a litany of symptoms. However, by Sunday, her fatigue was especially severe, her headaches relentless, and Roy began to feel ill. I suggested she take another Covid test. Positive! I then took one. Positive!! Oh, no!!!

By Monday, Roy was quite ill. We were able to get a small amount of Ivermectin for him and, after just 12 hours, he had dramatic improvement. We now have obtained more of the medication and are all using it. Mandi's improvement in just a few hours after being miserably sick for more than a week is remarkable!! And I've enjoyed my most active and productive day since the accident. We are very thankful.

Because we are all doing quite well, literally overnight, Mandi, now testing negative, will join Gabe in California tomorrow for a much needed 2-night break and leave the 'kids' home alone. 😊 It will be a good test of our ability to manage by ourselves and prepare us for her return to South Dakota.

So 'Good Night' to all with thankfulness for your companionship and continued prayers on this journey. ♥

## June 14, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — June 14, 2022



Birthday dinner with friends, Karen and Eric. 🙏 Thank you!!





Mandi says Gabe is a natural in the kitchen!



A shout out to my Pinetop Walker friends who have been so supportive to us.



Thankful for my sister, Judy, who continues to encourage and help us.  
Today is her late husband's birthday, so I'm thinking especially of her this morning.



## June 17, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — June 17, 2022

Roy pointed out that it has been a long time since I've posted and he is right. I suggested he post, but you can imagine how that went. 🙄 Seems like our days are much the same as we move slowly along the path to healing.

We are finally feeling quite well and over Covid!! It seems rampant right now as so many are ill. Though feeling quite well, Roy still tested positive on Friday morning. Mandi & Gabe were flying in from LA and planned to stay with us. However, Gabe opted to not take a chance of picking up the virus, so they went to Pinetop instead. While there they cooked up a storm and put 17 meals in the freezer for us!! We are all set for weeks!!

Could we have better kids?!? Thanks to the neighbors who stopped to greet them and to Cher for taking dinner and dessert to them. ♥

Roy and I managed quite well on our own, preparing simple meals and doing the clean up plus several loads of laundry. We wear out quickly, but get in a nap and start another task. It's so good to be at a point in our healing that promises independence is on the way!

I was able to finish my final continuing ed courses for renewing my real estate license, as well. It's good to have another task accomplished.

We finally enjoyed dinner out to celebrate my birthday last night. It was my hope to enjoy a final meal at House of Tricks in Tempe (before they close), but with 107 degrees at 6:00 and only outdoor dining available we changed plans. Right now we are missing Pinetop a lot!!

Physical Therapy is going well now that we are able to be back there, though my treatment has been a bit limited. I finally was able to get X-rays of my left ankle which has continued to be quite painful with use. It had to bear all my weight for the first 8 weeks following the accident and now shares the job with my healing right ankle. 10+ weeks into this journey, we learned it is fractured, as well. I'm not sure how that was missed and am a bit frustrated. I see the Ortho surgeon this morning and will learn what can be done so late in the game.

Wishing you all a good day with many special moments. ♥ Thanks for your encouragement in so many ways.



Mandi and I enjoyed our girls' getaway to the theater.



It is so good to be mobile enough to

do a little patio cleanup.



My sister, Judy, visited for a late birthday celebration, gifting me with the second book in a favorite series and a beautifully hand-decorated insulated tumbler. 🥰



Thanks to all of you!! 💖

Tomorrow we will head to Pinetop and that is a day-brightener, for sure!! We have managed the Valley heat quite well, but are so looking forward to being HOME!! There will still be several trips back down for appointments over the next month, but we feel the end is in sight.

Gabe arrived last night, so he and Mandi - and Roy - have been busy tearing down hospital beds and doing much of the work for our move to the mountain. They will head to their South Dakota home on Sunday and that will be such a bittersweet time. We are going to miss her terribly, but it is time for her to get back to her own life and family. And it's time for us to move on in our journey.

Speaking of moving on, I set a goal of being able to walk with nothing more than a cane by today. The really good news is that I can walk even without a cane! It's not pretty and I can't go very far, but it's so good to achieve a bit more independence.

The worst news this week is that my left ankle fracture, which went undetected for nearly 11 weeks, will limit my ability to walk well. I could have surgery to repair it, but that would put me back in the non-weight bearing situation for another 6 weeks and I just

can't face that right now. The surgeon says it would make no difference if I had the surgery now or in a year, so I'm going to see how well I heal for awhile.

We enjoyed a few 'firsts' since the accident this week including going to the home of our friends, Jay and Dolores, for dinner, I went with Mandi to a theater to see 'Downton Abbey', and I grocery shopped by walking through Trader Joe's and Sprouts. Though tiring, all of these activities give us hope that life will be back to normal before too long.

Thank you, as always, for continuing to encourage us, to pray for us, to reach out with messages that remind us of how fortunate we are.

## June 21, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — June 17, 2022

From Mandi:

*Twelve weeks ago today I received the type of phone call that no one wants to get. My parents had been in a head on collision and were being air lifted to the nearest trauma hospital. It's hard to put into words what the last twelve weeks have been like. It's been an emotional roller coaster no doubt, but God. He always works in mysterious ways. The time I had with my family, even in the midst of intense anxiety and exhaustion and frustration, brought joy that cannot be explained. It was a privilege and honor to care for you Mom and Dad. I will always treasure this time. I love you more than you will ever know!*

*I can't begin to express enough gratitude to all the friends and family that reached out with texts, calls, cards, gifts (so many gifts) visits and most of all prayers! You all are truly WONDERFUL!! We could not have walked this journey without you all!! Thank you from the bottom of my heart!!!*

*Thank you to my amazing family, especially to my ever supportive husband for the kindness, love, and patience. He stepped up in the most incredible ways and I could not be more grateful. I love you Gabe.*

*Thank you for being the best husband and friend I could ever have. And thank you to my kids who sacrificed so much while I was away. I know it was difficult, but you rose to the occasion and I think you both matured through this process. I'm so proud of you both and love you immensely!!*

## July 12, 2022

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — July 12, 2022



Sunday morning breakfast enjoying Breakfast Burritos by Gabe!! ♥



Church at the Grill on Sunday mornings. We love this time of gathering with neighbors.



Roy's sister, Dorothy, and brother-in-law, Fred, came from MN to help us for a week. ♡ We enjoyed BBQ at Adrian's in Springerville. (BTW, Mahjong friends, this is the 'Fred' who fills the empty seat at a table.)





Look at these cherries grown right here in Pinetop Lakes!



Mandi found this sign at a gift shop in the Black Hills. All of you who met her or spoke with her during the past months understand that this is quite appropriate. Kaitey, fortunately, is a bit more like her Dad.

Good morning, Friends and Family. It's been a long time since my last update and even since I shared Mandi's amazing journal. ♡ There isn't a whole lot of news, but we LOVE being back in the cool mountains and are managing life 'Home Alone' quite well. I tend to overdo and end up with pain and too much swelling, so I rested and elevated all day yesterday. What a difference that makes!! I know I need to be patient, but it is so very hard.

Roy, too, will sometimes tackle a bit too much for too long and he is learning to back off. So what if all the chores don't get done?? We have had to make adjustments to our expectations and remind ourselves that this is a season, not a lifestyle.

Roy is a 'Rockstar' with exercise and at-home therapy. He is walking a half mile each morning - and catching up with the neighbors 😊 - plus stationery biking and all the various exercises prescribed by his physical therapists. We are finding it quite easy to follow their prescribed regimens and know that is a key to healing. I have a twice-daily

alarm set on my phone to remind me that it's time to set aside whatever is occupying me and go through the sets of exercises. It doesn't take long and makes a considerable difference in my mobility.

I did visit the ankle surgeon last week and was both encouraged and disappointed by his comments. It really will, likely, be a full year or more before I can expect to walk any distance, of consequence. But I am walking!! And there are no plans for surgery on the left ankle, at this time, thank goodness!! Six more weeks of non-weight bearing life would be so hard right now; and he is hopeful that functional healing will take place within the year. 🙏

This week I will visit the Ortho doc regarding my back vertebrae and hope to get a good report from last week's MRI.

Mostly, we are thankful that life is getting back to 'normal'. Roy is able to do light outside and shop chores and help me with household tasks. We have been able to enjoy dinners at friends' homes (Thank you, Roger & Ramona.) and restaurants. (Thank you Fred & Dorothy, Eric & Karen, Brandon & Gina.) I make trips to grocery stores, enjoyed a mani/pedi, and have played cards with the Fun & Games Gals once. Obviously, I'm driving, though not too far or long. I hosted a Mahjong table here on Saturday and even baked pies from Eric & Karen's gorgeous cherries, harvested and pitted by Joelle. Friends come by to visit, sometimes with food, flowers (Thanks, Chris, Kris, Adam, and Susan.) or encouraging gifts (Thanks Chris and Bonnie), even wine and appetizers. (Thanks, Catherine & Mike.)

My sister and our friends, Ron & Jill came for the weekend, as well. After all that, I needed a day off yesterday. 😊 But thanks to Judy and Jill for all of the help with meals, dishes, sheets & towels. And to Roy and Ron for manning the grill. All of these are uplifting blessings. Thank you!!

The main task we still have is facilitating healing and taking time to rest. And we appreciate the continuing prayers, calls, texts, love and encouragement from so many of you. Thank you from the bottoms of our grateful hearts!! ❤️💕❤️

**March 29, 2023**

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — March 29, 2023



Proud grandparents with  
Tabor & Rebekah VanDusseldorp!



Happy 18th Birthday, Anna



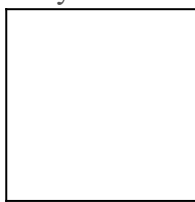
Visiting the beautiful South Dakota  
State Capitol in Pierre for a walk  
down Memory Lane. 🌲



Celebrating 50 years!!

Well, here we are on the 1-year anniversary of ‘the crash’! It’s a bittersweet day, for sure, but mostly our hearts are full of gratitude for healing and so much love from so many!! Thank you ALL, all over again. Friends and family have continued to encourage us and check to see how we’re doing so often.

We are doing well!! The doctors told us early on to expect to need a full year of healing and we’ve come so far in that year. Though our bodies will never be quite the same, we



are active and able to do most of the things we did before. Daily walks and, still, some at-home therapy keep us functioning and living life independently and well. Other than one more ankle surgeon visit, we are finished with medical care and procedures!!

We were able to drive to Colorado in August to meet with my family to remember our brother, Tim, and scatter his ashes over his much-loved mountains near Denver. Then in October, we took a second road trip to Modesto, California, for the wedding of our grandson, Tabor, and his dear Bekkah. In November, we flew to Rapid City, South Dakota, to celebrate Granddaughter Anna's 18th birthday and Thanksgiving. We were blessed on that trip to visit Roy's high school, Sunshine Bible Academy, for special events and see many dear friends and family. We were able to visit our hometown of Belle Fourche, SD, and our church, Christian Life Center, to connect with many who faithfully supported us through prayers and love during the difficult days.

Finally, on December 30th, we celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary at the La Posada and the Turquoise Room in Winslow, Arizona. What a party!! That event was especially meaningful in light of the 'could have beens' and we are grateful to family and friends who were able to join us for such a beautiful and special occasion.

So, we celebrate today and we celebrate all of you! Thank you from our grateful hearts!!



## Chapter 2

## Growing up in Norris

*"It's not the end of the earth, but you can see it from there"*

I originally wrote the following piece about twenty years ago, I've updated it recently. It captures the setting that I grew up in, and the spiritual foundation that was laid during that time.

### The Rancher and the Teacher



Loyd and Esther Letellier 1940

This story begins in 1907 but we pick it up in a tiny rural community in 1939.

A single female schoolteacher arrived to teach in a one room rural school, soon after her arrival she met a young bachelor who ranched in the area. Less than 12 months later, August 1940, they were married in spite of her parents concerns about his salvation and the fact that she wanted to marry a preacher or be a missionary.

Many years later the teacher recalled:

I prayed much that year I met Loyd because I did not want to be a farm wife. My mother didn't approve at first because she didn't think he was a Christian. He hadn't been brought up in church. But he had a deep quiet faith. Although he seldom spoke of it, it was evident in his daily life.

The rancher was a quiet man, but busy. In 1944 their 3rd child arrived and the school teacher writes: "In due time after Don was born we returned to the ranch. Mrs. John had canned the rest of the beans but naturally things had not been put away, so I was at a loss as to where to start. I decided clothes would have to be washed; I got them sorted and the piles loomed like insurmountable mountains. When Loyd came back in I was in tears. It was just too much, and I expected a little sympathy. Instead my husband just went back outside to resume his work while I struggled on. What a surprise, relief, and joy when he returned with an older neighbor lady. She was a godsend and things were soon under control with another pair of hands and some encouraging words. I often wondered why



Lloyd couldn't have said something. But he was a man of few words and actions speak louder than words."

During this time they were active in the little Sunday school that met in the local school. Sometime in the late 40's they decided to organize as a church and the rancher contributed the land that the church was built on. Around the same time he became involved in organizing a Christian high school. For the next 20 years he served on the board of that school, many times giving beyond his ability so that the fledgling school could survive. The rancher never preached a sermon, never led a song service, but he did do what was asked of him.



Lloyd Letellier



Esther Letellier

Did he catch God's vision for these infant organizations? Probably not. But with the advantage of nearly seventy five years of hindsight we can appreciate the faith of the rancher and his colleagues.

This spring the school will graduate its 74th class of high school seniors. For these past 74 years this school has prepared scores of young people who have entered the ministry as pastors, teachers, missionaries, community leaders and Christian Moms and Dads.

The little church, which at its zenith was the worship place for less than a dozen families, produced a number of pastors, & foreign missionaries.

At home the rancher and teacher faithfully taught and lived the Christian principles that they embraced with daily devotions with their children and faithful attendance at their church. They modeled godliness in their daily walk.

The Teacher was always teaching something, vacation Bible school, Good News club in her home for years and years, Sunday school. For many years each Sunday she would do a flannel graph lesson that taught a memory verse. For around forty years she chronicled the comings and goings of our neighbors for the local weekly newspapers, each column began with a pithy little saying or quotation that often had spiritual implications.

Nearly every Sunday year around you would find fresh flowers on the church piano, from her garden or greenhouse. They constantly had guests in their home, missionaries, traveling ministers, evangelists, gospel teams and more. You could not visit their home

and not know that this was a god-fearing home because the Teacher had scripture verses painted on the walls of the bathroom.

At her memorial service people spoke of her Christian testimony, and referred to her as a Godly woman and spoke of how she had impacted their faith. From teaching Sunday school and memory verses, to mentoring younger women or simply listening to a daughter in laws' grief; the memories all made reference to her relationship with Jesus Christ.

From this family, all six children have served in a variety of full and part-time ministries. From pastoring, to foreign missions, these six and their spouses have founded two churches, two Christian schools, a ministry to troubled youth and a post-prison ministry and more. The next generation has followed suit by sharing the good news in foreign lands, ministering in Christian schools, short-term missions and a variety of other areas of service too numerous to mention. People in Canada, Mexico, Russia, China, Brazil, The Bahamas, West Africa, Barbados, England and many more countries have had the influence of the Gospel shared in them by his family. And the third generation has continued to share the wondrous gift of God through short term and lay ministry positions.

These were not perfect people or model (in today's world) parents. But in spite of their shortcomings God has used a frustrated teacher and a shy, inarticulate rancher in a tiny community to take the Gospel literally around the world.

When I think of my Mother, the image that comes to my mind is her kneeling by her bed, Bible open, praying. It goes without saying that God heard and honored her prayers and those of us who have come behind my parents stand on their shoulders today.

### *Roy Arrives*

I was born July 17<sup>th</sup> 1953, in the first half of the "Baby Boom Generation" the youngest of six children. Four boys and two girls, the oldest, James had just turned 12 when I arrived, my sister Dorothy had celebrated her 11<sup>th</sup> birthday ten days earlier. From what I understand, Dorothy became my main caregiver until she left home to attend high school at Sunshine Bible Academy in the fall of 1956. I suspect that the early childhood bond explains why we have remained close the entire seventy one plus years of my life. My other brothers, Don and Glen are nine and seven years older, and my sister Alice is four years older. At this writing all of my siblings are still living. However, James, Glen and I are widowed.

I only attended school with my sister Alice from 1<sup>st</sup> thru 4<sup>th</sup> grades, then, she like all of us left home to attend SBA. In many respects I grew up as an only child, and by all accounts, I was spoiled.

Many of my earliest childhood memories involve Sunshine Bible Academy. Dad served on the board and Mom and I would accompany him on these trips. I recall having fun with my sibling's schoolmates. One story I've been told, but don't personally remember

was: that I got under one of the cafeteria tables and tied Cork Harkins shoe laces together, I can't imagine that I was able to accomplish that unnoticed, but Corky was a good sport. Bonnie and Elsie were friends of Dorothy, who along with her would always kind of look after me when we would visit. Another student I remember is Dick Harkins, he is Cork's younger brother. We later served on the SBA board together for a number of years and his son assisted me on my first legislative campaign.



Roy- 9 month



L-R Loyd, Roy, Esther, Alice, Dorothy, James, Don, Glen

My earliest memory, ironically, is an automobile accident, the first of several in my early years. My parents and I were on our way to a SBA board meeting. It was November and it was snowing a bit. I had turned three years old four months earlier; I was still sitting on Mom's lap. This was well before car seats, seat belts or safety features of any kind were introduced. As we crossed the White River south of Belvidere, the car skidded off the bridge planking and crashed into the side railing. I can still see Dad walking away from the accident to get help. (No cell phones, for that matter we didn't have a phone at home and rural electricity had arrived only a couple years before.) I was uninjured, Mom hit the windshield with her head and she had forty-four stitches to repair the damage to her nose and forehead. I remember that she picked glass from her forehead for years after. Dad hit the steering wheel nose first and he suffered from uncontrollable nose bleeds as a result of a torn artery for some time after the accident. He also had broken ribs and severe bruising. Dad spent three days in the hospital. The car was totaled. It was returned to the ranch and ultimately put behind the Quonset where it remained for many years. I spent many happy hours playing in that old carcass and when I was older, used it for target practice with my BB gun and later my .22 rifle.



This isn't the actual bridge but it is similar in style



I found this picture of a 1952 Studebaker it's even the same color

As I mentioned earlier I was apparently a spoiled somewhat coddled child. However, discipline was still administered from time to time. Dad's go to physical discipline was the "Thump" it consisted of the middle finger pressed against the thumb and released with great force on the offender's head. Other children and I were required to sit in the pew directly in front of my parents. When we (I) would get restless and start fooling around Dad would quickly restore order with a "Thump" that could be heard throughout most of the church. I recall vividly an incident at our Sunday- School. I was very bashful and always refused to go to the front and recite the weekly memory verse with the other children. One Sunday my Mother had had enough and she physically drug me to the front as I was kicking and screaming, and there in front of the entire church gave me a good hard spanking. After that I willingly recited my verses with the others.

Another incident that I remember was at Uncle Barney and Aunt Cora's home. I was left unattended and I got Barney's fine cowboy boots out and was walking around outside with them on over my own shoes. Aunt Cora discovered me and administered a severe tongue lashing that still echoes in my memory.

My parents were not at all opposed to corporal punishment and the board of education was applied as they saw fit, and it often only required a subtle reminder that proper behavior was in order. At meal time Dad would simply rattle the door knob of the basement door and that was all it took to restore order. The paddle hung on the inside of that door and we all understood the unspoken message.



1957



1958

**My Dad liked new stuff and it helped that his brother-in-law, my Uncle Bird, owned Patterson Modern Supply. He sold lots of new shiny things: appliances, cameras, toys, furniture, farm equipment and Studebakers. The store also had a car and machinery repair shop. Credit was generously extended so we always had new cars, trucks and tractors. In the 1956 Christmas letter my Mom says: "Bought- 3 top heifers at Wyoming Hereford Ranch, 2 top cows at Thorp Herefords, New tractor, New pickup, New car, Are hard up!"**

**In early 1958 I was four years old Dad took me with him to Kadoka to Uncle Bird's shop. I remember getting in the new four wheel drive Studebaker Transtar and Bird putting the temporary paper tags in the windows. That truck was one of the only vehicles Dad owned that didn't get traded off in short order and it wasn't because he liked it so much. It was a 3/4 ton and it rode rough and he didn't like that. In fact the following year he bought back the pick-up he traded in on it. I think it was only licensed for two years and after that it never saw a paved road. I started driving when I was eight or nine and I don't remember driving that truck when it had brakes. In the summer of 1962 my brother James was hauling wheat with it, I was riding in the back on top of the grain and we were side swiped by a real grain truck. The damage included driver's side fenders, rear view mirror and driver's door. Later that year Uncle Bird's shop repaired the damage and repainted it red. It remained on the ranch until it was retired and my brother Glen hauled it to his home in Mountain Lake Minnesota. Glen kept it stored in his barn with the intention of restoring it "some day". Twenty years went by and he sold it to a gentleman that has restored it to its original condition. We learned that it was actually one of only fourteen pickups of that model equipped with four-wheel-drive Studebaker produced that year.**





1958 Studebaker Transtar 4x4



2<sup>nd</sup> grade 1960



Donna Curry 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher

I turned six in the summer of 1959 and have more memories of events. Ever since I returned from the hospital after my birth my bedroom had been in the “nursery” and much to my chagrin my bed was a baby crib the entire time. That summer I was moved from the nursery to the south end of the porch and the nursery became the office. Later that summer I attended a one month term of kindergarten and in September I started first grade with Donna Curry as teacher.

One night as we were eating our evening meal, I was asked if I’d gotten the eggs. It was my responsibility to take care of the chickens. It was an entry level task. I had to open the coop in the morning and make sure there was feed and water, and at night get the eggs and close the door. For this chore I received the princely sum of a “penny an egg”. I had, of course, neglected my chore on that particular night. There wasn’t any discussion; I knew I had to get the eggs before I could have a supper. I took my egg bucket and flashlight, since it was pitch dark, and headed out. The coop was less than one hundred yards from the house, but it seemed a long way that night. I was in no hurry because the chicken house was originally an ice house so there were steps down into the coop area where the eggs were, it was a dirty nasty place in the light of day so in the dark of night I was naturally nervous. As I arrived at the door I shined my light at the roost area and I spotted a black and white creature that obviously was not a chicken. I sprinted back to the house and cried, “There’s a skunk in the chicken house!” I’d

never seen a skunk, but somehow I thought that's what I'd seen. Dad grabbed the shotgun and we went back and he quickly dispatched what turned out to be a Civet Cat. They are a black with white spots down the back, more the size of a squirrel, but they have the same odor capability as a skunk. I've never seen another one, but I sure do remember that one. My Mom thought that whole thing would make me remember to do my chores but I'm not sure it did.

My Brother-in Law Fred Peterson entered my life before I started school. He and Dorothy dated during their high school years and as soon as Fred was able to drive he would show up at the ranch. Generally my Dad would give him a job painting something; he was a town kid so he didn't have the normal ranch skills. He was fun and entertaining and he quickly became part of the family. He loved to tease and play pranks on whoever was available to be a victim. One time when he was painting the house he was on a tall extension ladder and I decided it would be great fun to spray him with the garden hose. Fred took exception and came down and was giving it to me pretty good. I got the last laugh when my Mother intervened on my behalf and gave Fred a good tongue lashing for picking on me. I don't think he's ever quite gotten over that incident. Fred remembers that one, but I remember when he threw fresh manure at me while I was milking the cow. I think he got away with that one.

Why is it that many of our early memories center on the times we got into trouble or pulled some stunt? I don't know the answer; but here are some I recall from my first couple years at the Norris Public School. The school was a few hundred yards from our front door at the ranch so it was very convenient. We walked, rain or shine, in snow and mud and it wasn't even uphill both ways. From the playground we could easily see our ranch buildings. One day during recess, one of my friends, Henry, and I spotted an airplane parked in the pasture next to our house. It wasn't unusual for repair people from Uncle Bird's store to be flown to the ranch for various tasks. Henry and I decided we needed to have a close up look at this airplane so we walked over to it. Well apparently leaving the school grounds and not getting back by the time the bell rang was not OK. I don't remember the punishment but we were chastised in some way. Another time, Henry, Rita and I thought it would be a great idea to color our finger nails with crayons. That netted us a trip to the office where the paddle came in contact with our backsides.



Transistor radio



Tape recorder



35 MM Kodak



Early Polaroid

Some of the "new" things that came from Patterson Modern Supply



Studebaker Champ The exact model and color

**The most notorious escapade of my childhood happened in the fall of my second grade year.**

**It was a lovely day and we had enjoyed playing outside at each recess. My friend and classmate, Roger, whose parents owned the store in Norris, and I had been playing at something all day and we decided it would be great if he came home with us after school. I had forgotten that our parents were gone and they had given a work assignment to fill our time after school until they returned. Alice quickly reminded me that we had to get a bale of straw for the chicken house before we could play. We were supposed to take the children's wagon to a shed a half mile north of the house and bring the straw bale back in the wagon. After a bit of collective whining, Alice said "It's too bad we can't take a pick-up." Roger confidently responded that he knew how to drive. We first tried the Transtar but it wouldn't start, then we got in the Champ and away we went. We got the bale loaded and as Roger was turning around to go back, he backed into the road ditch. The ditch was very shallow but he was having a little trouble getting out. By this time we were having a lot of fun knowing we were getting away with this. All 50 pounds of me jumped out in order to push the pickup out of that ditch. We got out just fine and I jumped in the back of the truck. As we sped toward home I was screaming and laughing and generally having a grand time. I'm told that Roger looked over his shoulder to shut me up, and when he looked back we were heading into the right hand ditch; he over-corrected and the truck, with Alice and Roger aboard came to rest on its side in the left ditch facing the opposite direction. When the dust settled, I was lying in the middle of the road unconscious. When I came to Roger was just cresting the hill running as fast as he could. Alice got me on my feet and we walked home and she got me into bed. Roger went home, they lived above the store in Norris, his Mother noticed that he was not acting normal. She extracted the story from him in short order, closed the store and came to our place. I don't recall how I got to the hospital in Kadoka, but I spent the next four days there and another week at home in bed before returning to school. I missed out on all the community tongue wagging, but I'm sure that was the hot topic of conversation for a good while. Many years later I was told that our Sunday school teacher said "The only reason they won't put those two in jail when they're twenty-one is because they'll have done it when they're eighteen."**

Of course, the pick-up was badly damaged; the repairs were going to cost \$600. Dad opted to buy a new one for \$900 rather than fix the damage. Uncle Bird had it fixed in his shop and it became his shop truck for many years.

It seems like a lot of my memories involve a vehicle of some kind or another. Here's one more car story: I don't know exactly how old I was, I was still in grade school but I was driving on the ranch. It was winter and I decided that I should go ice skating on one of the stock dams. I took the car and drove to the dam. After I arrived I realized it was much more fun to drive the car on the ice than to skate. I was having a great time spinning around until the ice gave way and the front of the car dropped through the ice and into the water. I walked and ran the mile home. I confessed, and Dad and my brother Jim went and retrieved the car. Fortunately, the water was shallow and no particular damage was done. My Mother inquired as to what my punishment should be and Dad responded that he thought I'd probably punished myself enough.



This is the car that went swimming

### *Life Lessons*

Most of what I learned growing up was communicated non-verbally. Since I was the youngest of six, there was ample precedent as to what was expected. We were expected to behave in all situations, excel in academics and be followers of Jesus. I became a Christian at an early age. However, my relationship with the Lord was shallow and superficial during my growing up years. I also fell short in the behavior and academic areas.

The first life lesson I remember that was imparted verbally relates to “profiling”. I think I was not yet in school; we were in the car and I spotted a couple of Native Americans walking along the side of the road and I said “there go a couple of drunk Indians”. Immediately the wrath of my mother rained down on me, as she explained in no uncertain terms the fallacy of assumptions like that. Her words came to my mind many years later. I was manning the show room and a young woman came in and began looking at new cars. I remember thinking to myself, “I bet she can’t afford the spare tire”. I was wrong, and she left our dealership the proud owner of a brand new Chevrolet Camaro Z28.

Dad was definitely a man of few words, but when he spoke what he had to say wasn't empty words. This anecdote illustrates his character very well. He was working in the garage and I walked in and he asked me if I had done a certain task. I replied "Nobody told me to." That was not the right answer. Dad was mild mannered with little or no temper, but my response triggered him and his succinct comeback has remained with me my entire life and I've tried hard to live my life accordingly. He said, "If you have to be told to do everything, you're worthless as tits on a boar." I don't remember being told that "Any job worth doing is worth doing well" but it was modeled and I would say it to our kids as they were growing up. Mandi recently told me that she hears those words as she cleans areas in the store that no one except her will ever see. That warms a parent's heart.

One of the realities of ranch life is the occasional death loss of livestock. I remember how Dad would inevitably respond to the loss of an animal. He would flash a little grin and with a twinkle in his eye he'd say "I guess that was one of God's cows". Many years later when I was notified that a lifetime of our savings were gone, those words came to mind.



3<sup>rd</sup> grade



1964



8<sup>th</sup> grade

I think someone said that my earlier school pictures were "cute" so I was intentionally sullen in all school pictures.

In the fall of 1960 I entered the second grade and Glen left for SBA, at that point I was the only boy at home and my chore responsibilities increased from simply taking care of the chickens. I was taught how to milk a cow and morning and evening it was my responsibility to get the cows in from the milk cow pasture; milk one for our household use and put the bum calves with the other one or two cows so they could suckle. There were usually some older calves that required the feeding of grain as well. The milking and feeding weren't bad jobs but getting the cows from the pasture into the corral by the barn was sometimes a challenge. Our milk cows were often very uncooperative. First, they were usually grazing at the far end of the narrow, half mile long pasture, then more often than not, at some point they would double back and the process would start all over again. Failure was not an option so I learned perseverance.



As time passed I was given additional responsibilities. Until I went to SBA it became my job to feed the calves when they were weaned, so morning and evening I would carry two five gallon buckets of feed at a time until all 100 or so calves were fed. In addition, I would often be tasked with grinding the feed for those calves, this involved shoveling grain into the grinder-mixer and then unloading it into the granary in the north shed. Dad didn't pay me wages, but he gave me a heifer calf and some hogs for a 4-H project. He allowed me to keep the female off spring and sell some from time to time. He also let me farm a 6 acre field for my own gain, so over the next few years I accumulated a few hogs and cows. I remember that I was nine years old the first time I was sent to the field unsupervised. In those days the fields were summer-fallowed every other year. That meant that nothing was planted and that you tried to keep the soil weed free. Farmers have since learned that the summer fallow practice was completely counter-productive as it removes scarce moisture from the soil. Now no-till farming is the accepted practice. But in 1964 we were still using a one way disc and attempting to keep our fields weed free. I was hot and dirty work. Tractor cabs were never a part of my growing up experience and the dust would just boil up over the fenders of the old Minneapolis Moline U tractor. In addition, the one-way only took a ten foot swath, so summer fallowing 160 acres took what seemed like forever. One had to be patient. When I got to be in the seventh and eighth grades Mom was teaching at our school. She would leave home earlier than I to prepare for her day. It was not unusual after she would leave that Dad would say: "I need you to help me today." I guess my labor was worth the tongue lashing he inevitably received from Mom at the end of the day.



Minneapolis Moline U



one-way disc

While work, school and church took the majority of my growing up time and attention, there were "approved" fun activities. Fishing in the creek was one such activity. Mom was a good sport and she would cook anything that we brought home, mostly bull heads, the occasional snapping turtle, pheasant, grouse, cottontail rabbits, and squirrels also graced our table from time to time. Prairie dogs and jack rabbits were not eaten, but prairie dogs were fair game and shooting them with a .22 was a preferred form of entertainment and greatly approved of by Dad. Sometimes there was a bounty on jack rabbits and that made great winter sport. We would go out at night with a spot light and pick them off. Great fun!

One of the approved/required activities was 4-H. My siblings all participated in a variety of projects. I on the other hand did not. I always had a Beef project as well as Swine. I do recall on one occasion doing a Range Management project. That involved collecting, identifying and preserving various plant samples. I think my project was an unmitigated failure. We also participated in livestock judging events. I didn't mind the judging, but then you had to give your "reasons" and I stunk at that. I always had more success with

livestock projects. Each year I would show a steer or heifer along with hogs at the county achievement days. Part of the preparing a calf to be exhibited was to break them to lead. What a pain, they were always difficult and uncooperative. Patience and perseverance were required in quantity. One year I showed a steer at the county fair. This critter was always stubborn and unruly, after the show he got away from me and we had to chase him all over town, later that day he was sold at the 4-H sale. Good riddance. Sometimes I took livestock to the Western Jr. Livestock Show in Rapid City. One particular year I exhibited three head of hogs: A boar, gilt and a barrow, I also combined them in what was known as Pen-of Three. I received the top purple ribbon for each entry. That show awarded a trophy known as the "Swine Sweepstakes Award". My brother Jim has won it several years before and I so admired the little trophy he received. After winning all purples I was sure that I would bring the award home with me. I was sorely disappointed when I learned that some girl had won, simply because she exhibited more animals than I had. I'm still a little bitter.



In 1961 the Washington Senators moved to Minneapolis, the games were broadcast on a radio station that we could get and our household quickly became Twins fans. I can still remember many of the players' names; and the summer I was nine, I saved up money and the folks put me on a bus, by myself and I traveled to Minneapolis. Fred and Dorothy picked me up and I stayed with them for several days and we attended a MLB game at the old Metropolitan stadium in Bloomington. The Baltimore Orioles beat the Twins 2-1 that day.

Back in Norris I would regularly join friends to play baseball behind the gas station in town. George Gibson owned the station and his sons Bernard and Raymond were always part of the game, in addition I remember Bobby Becker, Henry and John Whoel, there were others but I can't remember them. We never had full teams and that was fine because the outfield fence was directly behind second base so we didn't need outfielders. After our games we would go inside and enjoy a cold Coke out of the water cooled soda machine and George would hold court and regale us with his stories.

In Dad's younger years he had pitched on local town teams, which were very common at that time. We would play catch most every evening in the yard, he would throw me grounders and I'd try to throw a curve ball. As an adult I played softball for a number of years. I was a petty good second baseman, probably a result of all those grounders Dad threw.

We always subscribed to magazines known as Popular Mechanics and Popular Science. Included in them were test reviews of various new cars. I was always interested and read

them religiously. One issue featured a go-kart that you could build at home. I was completely enamored with the idea and convinced Dad to help me with the project. He assembled the necessary components from around the ranch except for the hard rubber tires. I ordered them from some mail order catalog and paid for them with my own money. The gas motor was something that we had for powering a device known as a pump-jack. We would use a pump-jack on wind mills when the wind didn't blow and the cattle needed water. In that country it was rare that the wind didn't blow most every day so I was allowed to use that motor for the go-kart. I had great fun with that crude machine; I would even drive it into Norris from time to time. The fun came to a screeching halt one day. I always wanted more speed and Dad adjusted the carburetor until that little motor was screaming. It didn't take too long until the piston rod went through the block. End of go-kart.

School was fairly mundane and I earned decent grades except in "Conduct". Apparently the teachers my teachers were not entertained by my behavior. The Indian students required more time and effort to complete their school work, so I suppose I was fooling around when I completed my work ahead of others. I might add that white students were a minority in our school. As I remember, there were normally about twenty Caucasian students out of one hundred in grades 1-8.

I maintained a small circle of friends at school, several overlapped into the church community. At that time in the Norris community there were three separate social groups, they did overlap however your identity was determined by which of these groups you were a part of. The largest group but least influential were the Native Americans, Indians as we knew them. The majority of them lived in what was known as the "Indian Camp" on the north side of the creek from Norris. The white community was divided into Protestants and Catholics. I recall the 1960 presidential election divided our community along religious lines rather than party affiliation.

A number of my school friends were Roman Catholic. Tim Taft was one of them, he was one year younger than me, but our parents were friends so it was a natural and acceptable friendship. One day he and his older sister were feeding livestock. She was running a tractor with a loader and Tim got in the way and she impaled him with one of the one inch square loader tines. The tine entered his chest, narrowly missed his heart and came out the back. By some miracle Tim survived and he would gladly show off the scars from his wound and surgery. When I was an eighth grader, our school was granted some federal funds for physical education equipment. This included tumbling mats, parallel bars and a trampoline. The school didn't have a gym so the trampoline had to be used outside. Some of us older students would use it in the evenings. Tim was the only one of the group that could do a back-flip, so one evening I convinced our teacher Ron Brengle to let me drive his pick-up to the Taft place and get Tim to join our fun. Their place is located east of Norris a couple miles. Mr. Brengle was quite young, this was probably his first teaching job and his truck was reflective of that. It was a 1965 Chevrolet C10 with a V-8 and 4-speed manual transmission and it had loud exhaust pipes. It was a cool, clear and still night. Mr. Brengle let me know that he had heard every bit of our trip to and from. When I returned Tim that evening I took it easier.

Dale Wooden Knife was a good friend during our seventh and eighth grade years. Dale's Dad worked as a ranch hand for a large rancher North of Norris. In those days many of the students rode the bus to school. There was what was called the "north route" which ran first then the bus went south and east. One day my Uncle Ken Barney wiped out his motorcycle on the rural dirt road that was part of the "north route". Joe Stoddard was the bus driver and he stayed with Ken and had Dale drive the bus back to school and summon help. He did so without incident and I don't think anyone thought anything of it.

In January of my eighth grade (1967) Mr. Brengle took several of us to Pierre to observe the state legislature. That experience made a profound and lasting impression on me. I remember the House chamber was painted a somewhat sick and pale pink. I'm told it was painted during the depression years because the beautiful details in the ceilings and walls had been encrusted with tobacco residue. Fortunately, all of the original beauty has been restored and the entire building is awe inspiring. I was highly impressed that I actually knew one of the House members. Walt Miller, who we knew as Walter Dale was a first term Representative. He and my Dad served on the board of Sunshine Bible Academy together which is how I was acquainted with him. Walt served in the house until 1986; he held every leadership post in the house at one time or another. In 1987 he was elected Lt. Governor and became Governor upon the death of George Mickelson in 1993. I clearly remember leaving the Capitol that day and thinking to myself, "I can do that some day". I don't think I ever shared that dream with anyone until after I had actually been elected some twenty five years later. Interestingly, Walt's political career and mine overlapped in a couple ways, when I was elected he was Lt. Governor and then became Governor, and my legislative district was made up of primarily Meade County which was Walt's district as well.

Each spring shortly after school let out for the summer, "branding season" would commence. Each ranch would set a day for branding, vaccinating and castrating that year's calf crop. Neighbors would gather and form a branding crew. It was an annual ritual necessary to complete the task but it was also a much looked forward to social season. At noon there would be a large and delicious lunch prepared by the ranch ladies. Most often the job would be finished before lunch, then it was normal to hang around and visit until it was time to return home. I learned the art of calf wrestling when I was pretty small. Even the small calves outweighed me by two to three times. Calf wrestlers work in two man teams. As the calf is drug out of the pen after being roped one boy would grab the tail, the other the rope and at the right moment lift and pull and the calf easily went on its side. The boy on the tail would grab a front leg and plop himself on the calf's head the boy on the rope would grab a hind leg and sit on the ground wedging his foot against the other hind leg. It was a hard and dirty job, sometimes a big calf would try to get the best of the little wrestlers, but you soon learned that giving up wasn't an option. I spent many days in a branding pen until I left the ranch after high school. That experience served me well some twenty five years later when I was a first time candidate for the state legislature. A Meade county rancher invited me to his branding and I gladly agreed to show up. Calf wrestling is the entry level job at a branding but I teamed up with a young man and went to work. Harold Delbridge was roping that day and he

decided to have a little fun at my expense. He drug out a calf and as he approached us he sped up and yanked the calf my direction. The calf hit me and I went head over heels. This wasn't the first time something like that had happened to me so I simply bounced back up and threw the calf. It wasn't long before they asked me to run the irons, which means I was doing the actual branding. That's a job normally reserved for the rancher himself or some other senior member of the community. I probably earned more votes those few hours spent there than anything else I could have done. Donald Trump recently took a page out of that political playbook when he spent fifteen minutes "working" at McDonalds.



Norris was isolated, but not insulated from the outside world and the evil that exists. Criminal acts occurred ranging from petty theft, to sexual abuse, rape and murder. These incidents were rare and never discussed in our home. I would usually hear the details from school or community friends.



### EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATES

Nola Becker NORRIS	Judy Laird WHITE RIVER
Lavonne Bordeaux WHITE RIVER	Ernie Larson BIG WHITE
Lucille Broncho Bill WHITE RIVER	Robert Lee WHITE RIVER
Lonnie Burnham MITCHELL	Roy Letellier NORRIS
Emery Chamberlain BIG WHITE	Linda Little Thunder NORRIS
Gloria Deutsch WHITE RIVER	Robert Moreno WHITE RIVER
Melvina Eagle Bear NORRIS	Mark Petranek WHITE RIVER
Richard Evans WHITE RIVER	Kay Pierce RUNNINGBIRD
Merlon Fairbanks RUNNINGBIRD	David Powell WHITE RIVER
Curtis Gustafson BURNS	Loretta Rattling Leaf WHITE RIVER
Anthony Green COTTONWOOD	Kristi Rasmussen CEDARBUTTE
Kelly Green COTTONWOOD	George Ryan WHITE RIVER
Robert Heinert PRAIRIE VIEW	Danny Schmidt PRAIRIE VIEW
Susan Hibbs WHITE RIVER	William Sharpbutte WHITE RIVER
Cheryl Hight WHITE RIVER	Leslie Sherwood PALECK
Derald Hill PRAIRIE VIEW	Candy Stromer WHITE RIVER
Linda Hollinger WHITE RIVER	Rita Tarr NORRIS
Alfred Kary PRAIRIE VIEW	Eugene Thin Elk WHITE RIVER
Benny Krogman RINGHUNDER	Deanna Trenary WHITE RIVER
Daniel Krogman WHITE RIVER	Peter Wilcox NORRIS
Roger Krogman PALECK	Dale Wooden Knife NORRIS

### GRADUATION PROGRAM

Prelude .....	Mrs. Art Everett
Processional .....	Mrs. Art Everett
Invocation .....	Rev. Eugene Ratz
Flute Solo "March for Flutists" .....	Judy Laird White River School
Poem, .... "Sea Fever" .....	Kay Pierce Runningbird School
Address .....	Dr. J. Howard Kramer, Pres. Northern State College, Aberdeen
Piano Solo, "Prailudium" .....	Kristi Rasmussen, Cedarbutte School
Song, "I Believe" --	Gloria Deutsch, Judy Laird, Cheryl Hight, Linda Hollinger, Richard Evans, Mark Petranek, Deanna Trenary, Dan Krogman, Eugene Thin Elk, White River School.
Awards .....	Pauline Kever Eighth Grade Teacher White River
Presenting Diplomas .....	Don Barnhart Superintendent, White River School Luree Wacek, County Superintendent
Benediction .....	Rev. Eugene Ratz
Recessional .....	Mrs. Art Everett
Motto: - "The days that make us happy make us Wise"	- John Masefield: "Biography"

I graduated from grade eight in May of 1967 with a class of seven from Norris. I clearly remember that my Mom borrowed an ill-fitting and out of fashion suit from a neighbor. I was more than a little embarrassed wearing it. That summer I began to work for various neighbors, and they actually paid me in dollars. I believe my first wages were a dollar an hour, that income along with the sale of my livestock and grain provided me with a bank account that allowed me to purchase my own clothes all through my high school years. I very much enjoyed buying nice clothes at the men's store in Miller.

When I reflect on those formative years at Norris I can't help but recall men of the community that, along with my parents, placed their fingerprints on the person that I became. I grew up watching and listening to my Dad sell Hereford bulls. He would simply let the customer sell themselves, a technique that I later employed successfully in the car business. Reece and Evan Bligh, both were my Sunday school teachers at one time or another. I know they had their doubts about me. Russell Allard, when Russell lost his life I was just married and not yet twenty. His death broke my heart. He was always patient with my mechanical curiosity and he taught me so much in his quiet and simple ways. "Skinny" Merchen, his daughter Ronnell was my High School classmate and on occasion I would ride home with them. I always sat up front and he and I would talk. Years later he took credit for me becoming a Republican. He said, "You know, all those Letellier's were democrats." Harry Merchen Jr. Harry and Jeanne were like a second set of parents, their daughter Melonie and I are the same age and we attended both

elementary and SBA as classmates. Harry may have been the first one to hire me to do farm work; he still tells stories about my mishaps, some may even have a shred of reality.

### **Chapter 3**

## **Sunshine Bible Academy**

*"God's Truth for Today's Youth"*

Sunshine Bible Academy is a non-denominational K-12 Christian boarding school, located 13 miles south of Miller, SD. Our family has been associated with SBA since the very beginning in 1951. It's not clear as to how our parents became involved initially. We speculate that it was through Don and Ruby McFarling. Don was the American Sunday School Union missionary that served Norris, he and Ruby resided in Norris for a good while. Prior to living in Norris, they lived in St. Lawrence, SD which is near Miller. We think that SBA founder Mill Seaman probably was acquainted with the McFarlings and that became the connecting point. At any rate in the 1951 Letellier Christmas letter Mom wrote that "Loyd is on the board of Sunshine Bible Academy, a new Christian school located south of Miller, SD." Dad served on the board until I graduated in 1971, at that time my brother James replaced him and served until his Son-in-law Paul Beckwith went on the board. I served on the board for nine years during the time our daughter Katie and Mandi attended. Glen served as chaplain and taught during the 1970's, my niece Sue taught English there I believe in the 90's and Niece Ja and her husband Jason Burma have been on staff since 1997 and 1998. After Mandi graduated in 1998 she filled in as girl's dorm counselor for a short time. Fred and Dorothy did a good number of projects there with MMAPer's and SOWER's beginning in 2008. Including in-laws, the 24<sup>th</sup> Letellier descendant will graduate in the class of 2025. Jimmy Burma will be the ninth third generation Letellier Alumni. Since the very beginning in 1951 there has continuously been a Letellier family member on the board, staff or enrolled as a student.

I remember snooping in the SBA board meeting minutes that would be sent to my Dad. More often than not there would have been a discussion regarding the current financial shortfall. It would then be noted that they would "pass the hat". I came to understand that the reason Dad would go to the bank following a board meeting was to sign a note to cover the check he'd written the day before. I'm sure Dad wasn't unique among his fellow board members. They were humble visionary pioneers of Bible based education and seventy-five years later the thousands of lives impacted by the ministry at SBA stand on their shoulders.

My siblings excelled at Sunshine. James, Dorothy, Don and Glen all graduated as honor students. They were active in all activities including student government, athletics, choir, gospel teams and more. The standard was set pretty high for any Letellier SBA student and I was not prepared for that. I strongly resisted being enrolled as a freshman, and I lobbied my parents vigorously to let me attend anywhere but SBA. All my efforts were to no avail. I did, however, convince them to revisit the issue after one year. The freshman class of '71 consisted of seventeen students, eight boys and nine girls. I knew

two of my classmates previously: Ronnell Merchen and Kevin Kruse. I was elected freshman class president and served on the student council. I played football and basketball without distinction. I discovered girls that year and was disciplined several times for “improper socialization” and “physical contact”. I’ve only found my second semester report cards but I don’t think the first half of the year was much different than the B’s, C’s and D’s earned the second semester. Fortunately for me my sister Alice, who graduated the spring before I entered SBA, had not achieved honor student status so my abysmal academic performance wasn’t a complete shock.

The boy’s dorm was housed in the south wing of the main building and consisted of two floors. The dorm counselor, Harley Minnich and his family lived in an apartment at the far end of the lower level. There were eight rooms on the top floor; they were primarily occupied by upper classmen. There were only two freshmen on the top floor, Ken Jones who was rooming with his brother and me. I roomed with Dennis Shelbourn. Dennis was a senior and was pretty good sized. He was not opposed to some hazing and physically imposing his will on a sassy underclassman. SBA has a long history of racial integration. John Sanders and Lavelle Cushman were African Americans, both from Chicago Illinois, they roomed together directly across the hall from my room. Bobby Sanni lived next door he came to Sunshine from Nigeria. John Sanders was a gifted athlete; he went on to play football for USD and in the NFL for several years with the Philadelphia Eagles.

One of the student requirements at Sunshine is the student work assignment. These are often custodial tasks, sometimes office, kitchen, scullery, garbage and work on the campus farm. My “gratis” as a freshman was scrubbing the dining hall. It was a four man crew made up of Sam Mickelson, David Maude, Paul Jorgenson and me. The dining hall consisted of three sections. We would scrub and buff one section each night. This required stacking the chairs on the tables and moving them out of the way. On Thursday we were required to scrub buff and wax the entire dining room. It was a lot of hard and unenjoyable work. It did get us out of evening study hall.

That year there were seven of us students from the Norris area. Bruce Allard was a senior and he had a car. We would all load up and make the three hour trip back home on the occasional weekend and holidays. I remember being stopped and questioned by a highway patrolman who suspected us of running away from home. Another time the car broke down about halfway back to school and the Superintendent came and retrieved us. My recollection is that he was not at all pleased with us, as if it were all of our faults the car broke down. It was common practice to invite other students to come home with you on weekends. Often there would be finagling to have a neighbor invite a boyfriend or girlfriend so some off campus and unsupervised socialization could go on.

After spending the summer at home following that freshman year, I couldn’t wait to get back to SBA.



President



"B" TEAM

Back Row: Randy Dearborn, Larry Kent, Ken Jones, Lyle Weiss, Gavin Banik, Kevin Kruse, Roy Letellier, Paul Jorgenson, Warren Rahn, Steve Fawcett.



Page Marie Ingalls with Representative Walter D. Miller in the House Chamber.



SCHOOL BOARD

Left to Right: Tom VanZee; Orris Shippy; George Ford, Jr. Secretary; Ed Roskens; Reece Bligh, Chairman; Dwayne E. Snell, Director; Lloyd Letellier; Dick Seaman; Christian Mehlhaff.

Our class had significant turnover between our freshman and sophomore year. We lost seven classmates but added eight; nine boys and nine girls. Grade ten was my academic low point with D's being my most often received grade. It was also the year that I made lifetime friendships. Nathan Mains and his brother Doug came to SBA from the island of Grenada where their parents were missionaries. Kevin Kruse, Nathan, Mary Weiss (Hanson) and I were great friends and hung out together constantly. The rest of my free time was taken up with a new girlfriend. I was greatly enamored with a cute freshman girl, Barb Seaman. We "dated" through my entire sophomore year and into the beginning of my junior year. Barb even accompanied my parents and me to my brother Glen's wedding in North Dakota. The rehearsal dinner was on July 17<sup>th</sup>, my birthday. I remember my sister-in-law Anna May sitting down in front of me and asking "Sweet sixteen and never been kissed?" I was too embarrassed to respond. Ultimately, I think Barb's father, Dick Seaman, liked me more than Barb did. Our paths crossed occasionally over the years and Dick would always say to whoever would listen that at one time he thought I would be his son-in-law.

The first shenanigan of our sophomore year involved Kevin Kruse and me. Kevin and I started the year as roommates. The SBA dorm rooms were roughly 12'x12'. They were equipped with a bunk bed a chest of drawers and in my case an old easy chair. The floor was bare concrete and there were no window curtains. Prior to the beginning of the school year I decided I wanted to upgrade my room, so I purchased a 10'x12' carpet,

window curtains and a throw for the chair, all color coordinated with a new coat of paint for the walls. It was the nicest room in the boy's dorm. That year SBA started a schedule that on every Monday you attended every class for a single period, on Tuesdays and Thursdays you had your even numbered classes for a double period and Wednesdays and Fridays the odd numbered ones. On Mondays and two other days Kevin and I had study hall immediately after lunch. We immediately recognized an opportunity and we never went to the study hall, consequently our names weren't included in the attendance roster. We simply hung out in our room and napped until it was time for a regular class. This went on for a good long time until one day our door opened and there stood the superintendent, dean of students and the business manager. I don't recall the punishment, so whatever it was it must have been worth it.

According to the SBA annual, the only extra-curricular activities I participated in that year were football and basketball. Nathan, Kevin and I were starters on the "B" team. We thought we were pretty good but our record said otherwise. The other starters were Steve Fawcett another classmate and freshman Angus Anson. Angus lost his life twenty-five years later in a tragic plane crash along with Governor Mickelson and six others.



One of the academic requirements in those days was to pass two math courses. I had managed to get through algebra as a freshman so the sophomore math class was geometry. The teacher was Mrs. Cozine. We all thought she was ancient. She was probably about my present age. At any rate Mrs. Cozine had similar mental acuity then as Joe Biden does now. Without exception, every student during the two years she was at SBA has a "Cozine" story. She taught almost nothing, had little to no classroom discipline and often dozed during class. Students would often simply walk out of class without her knowledge. Grades seemingly were given based on her perception of the student. Nathan recently recounted a test that I copied his answers exactly, he earned an "A" and I managed a "C". I'm not sure why, but he confronted her about the discrepancy and after that he became a "C" student. I managed to get through the first half of the year with a "D" for the semester. The first six weeks of the second semester she awarded me an "F"; at the end of the second grading period I was snowed in at home so I was given an Incomplete. As the end of the year approached I realized I was on thin ice and I knew almost nothing about geometry. I went to Mrs. Cozine's office and turned on every bit of charm I could muster. When my final report card arrived, the incomplete had been changed to a "B" the final six weeks another "B" and a "B-" for the semester. That was my highest semester grade in any subject for the entire year.



Mrs. Marietta Cozine



MAJORS  
Education, Psychology, Speech

COLLEGES  
University of South Dakota, B.A.

GRADUATE WORK  
University of California

SUBJECTS  
Geometry, Speech, Psychology

EXTRA CURRICULA  
Sophomore Class Advisor

Miss Nancy Wallace



MAJOR  
Voice

COLLEGES  
John Brown University, B.A.

SUBJECTS  
English III and IV, Bible II,  
Music Appreciation, Choir

EXTRA CURRICULA  
Assistant Dorm Counselor  
Pep Club Sponsor,  
Girls' Basketball Coach,  
Freshman Class Advisor

Miss Wallace taught Bible II, Old Testament survey. She graduated from John Brown University and attended with my brother Glen who was a distinguished and respected student. I suspect she had some preconceived notion of the type of student and person I would be. Ironically, in the years to come I taught several Bible study classes on the Old Testament, so I must have learned a little. One of the weekly assignments was to memorize a certain number of Bible verses. We could choose any verses that we wished or Miss Wallace would give extra credit for those that she specified. When class convened on the day we had to do verses, we would simply take a blank sheet of paper and write out our passages. I hated memorization and was bad at it so my initial solution was to scour the scripture for the shortest and simplest verses. We would practice by writing our verses out before class. It didn't take long for an easier method to come to mind. We would write the verses ahead of time, and while we were supposed to be completing them during class we'd simply write random stuff on our blank sheet of paper. When it came time to turn in our work we'd hand in the earlier copy. This worked great, we even began to "memorize" the extra credit passages. Kevin, Nathan and I were the original perpetrators, Mary quickly joined and soon our entire class, with the exception of a handful, were involved. This scheme continued throughout the entire first semester. Sometime early in the second semester, Miss Wallace was likely tipped off by a jealous non-participating classmate and the jig was up. Appropriately, Nathan, Mary, Kevin and I were the only ones charged with the crime. We were required to write a letter of confession to our parents and do extra work to erase the "F" we had coming for that grading period. For some reason the whole matter was never discussed with me at home and I don't think the others got in much trouble either.

If I remember correctly, my work assignment as a sophomore was cleaning a classroom. This was a piece of cake compared to scrubbing the dining hall. Most days it wasn't even necessary to dry mop the floor as we were supposed to. I would simply pick up any debris, empty the trash can, straighten the desks and clean the chalk board; it would take all of fifteen minutes if I didn't hurry.

Because of my farm and ranch background I often was hired for weekend farm work. I primarily worked for Wesley Yost and Dwight Dearborn. I became acquainted with the Dearborns through Dennis Shelbourn. Their farm was just a few miles from SBA. Their son Randy was a year ahead of me and we were friends. The Dearborns were fun-loving and it was always a good time to be there. The soil around SBA is riddled with rock, from pebble size, to many hundred pounds. Norris doesn't have rocks, so I was

accustomed to driving anywhere off-road that I wished. We didn't use horses on the ranch, pick-ups were our saddle horses. I learned to drive with my Dad roping cattle from the back of the pick-up. My first encounter with a big rock came as I was farming for the Dearborns. I was pulling a four or five bottom plow when I struck a rock hidden just below grade; the whole tractor jerked and raised the front end before I could stop. When I looked back at the plow one of the bottoms had tipped up 90 degrees. I thought I'd really done some serious damage. For some reason I put the tractor in reverse and lo' and behold the plow bottom pivoted right back into place. Turns out it did exactly what it was designed to do. On another occasion, I wasn't so lucky. One of the Dearborns was moving a tractor and implement on a dirt trail and I was following in their pick-up. I felt the need to pass the tractor so I pulled off the trail and immediately struck a pile of rock that was hidden by the tall grass. It made a terrible crash and when the dust settled the truck sustained a broken driveshaft and I had to endure endless teasing and harassment.

In spite of my 1.9 GPA earned my sophomore year, it marked a turning point for me. I made friendships that have endured the fifty-six years since. I also learned to accept the consequences of poor decisions and mistakes.



Mains, Jeanne Allen, Letellier, Kruse 1970



Mains, Letellier, Kruse 2024

August of 1969 marked the beginning of my third year at SBA. There were several new faces on staff, including SBA founder Mill Seaman. Mr. Seaman filled the Superintendent position from 1951 through 1967 and once again for the 1969-70 school year. In addition, alumni Gaylon Van Zee a classmate of my brother Glen returned and taught various classes. Delbert Blume and Loren Weise also joined the SBA faculty. Loren Weise served as the summer pastor at my home church in Norris prior to his arrival at Sunshine. I liked Mr. Weise and I earned my first "A's" in his classes: Bible III, New Testament survey, and American History. I also earned an "A" in Driver's Education taught by Mr. Van Zee which was no great accomplishment since I had been driving for nearly ten years by then. Mr. Blume taught English III, English Literature. He would often read aloud to us and most, including me would have a nap. Most of my classes had little or no homework so I had ample time to work off campus. Three days each week I was finished with classes at noon, and if you had a certain grade average you could be excused from study hall. I would leave campus at noon or two o'clock each day and drive to Wesley Yost's farm and work until I had to return at ten PM for lights out.

My junior year was the high water mark for me academically with a remarkable 3.11 GPA. I attribute this “stellar” performance to: class selection, one extra-curricular activity, (football) and no girl-friend.

I didn’t go home very often that year as there were eight students from the Norris area. It required two cars for everyone to go home so those visits were for holidays or long weekends. I didn’t mind because weekends at SBA were when staff relaxed a bit and students could have fun, also staying at school allowed me to work and get paid as opposed to going home and working for free. Sharon Allard had the only car and it was a VW Beetle. I only recall a single trip in that car. There were at least four but probably five of us in that little thing. I remember that it was very cold. A VW Bug of that era was “heated” by an air exchange system that would blow warm air in Phoenix, AZ in the summertime. Traveling in below zero weather in South Dakota the primary heat source was body heat. Needless to say that was one long trip home.

That fall our class grew from eighteen to twenty-six. While five of our classmates didn’t return there were thirteen new faces in our class. Each year the junior class is responsible for organizing and funding the junior-senior banquet. It’s the equivalent of a prom without the “evil” dancing. Historically the “J-S” was simply a nicer meal prepared by the kitchen staff served in either the decorated dining hall or sometimes the Quonset that served as the gymnasium. Our class, under the leadership of John Lane and I, took it to a whole different level. To fund this undertaking our class managed the concessions at all home games, in addition we put on several other special events to raise the necessary revenue. We chose the theme “Oriental Gardens”. To that end we constructed, under my direction, a waterfall with actual water, a lily pool with a fountain, also with real water, and an arched bridge that attendees crossed to enter the gardens. The sophomore servers were outfitted with costumes befitting the oriental theme. The walls and ceiling of the gym were camouflaged with crepe paper streamers to complete the garden atmosphere. We spent many afternoons and evenings preparing and constructing the garden environment. We hauled tons of rock into the gym to construct the water features. My Mom had a real lily pond at home and to go along with it she had pumps and a fountain fixture. I appropriated them, along with my old wading pool for our pond. I recall going to Huron and convincing a funeral home to lend us some artificial grass for the garden lawn. In addition, we highlighted the evening with entertainment by a Christian band from Indiana. They even had their own bus. The 1970 annual has this to say about the event: “A night to remember, the JS was perhaps the most elaborate and most anticipated event of the year.” “Oriental Gardens” marked the end of the on-campus junior-senior banquets. I’m not sure why, but I like to think that no one has felt like they could measure up the 1970 event.



The waterfall



Barb Seaman "oriental server"

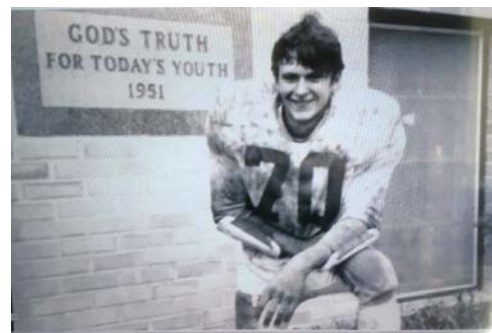
The summer between my junior and senior years I turned sixteen so I was able to get an actual driver's license rather than the restricted permit that I had for the prior two years. Since I had been working for several years, in addition to my livestock and farm income, I had a nice bank balance. Immediately after my birthday I convinced Dad to let me buy a car. It was a 1965 Chevrolet Impala. Unfortunately it wasn't a good car and I traded it for a 65 Impala Super Sport the following summer. I also purchased a stereo and a set of craftsman tools which I still have and use on occasion. In those days they would merchandise record albums by enticing you to join a "record club", which I did. By the time school resumed I had a respectable collection of the latest popular music. Today it's referred to as "classic rock". I continued to work for other farmers that summer and I felt pretty flush with money. In today's dollars I think I spent about \$18,000 that summer. After wheat harvest in July, Kevin Kruse and I decided that we should make a trip to Michigan to see our friend Nathan Mains. We boarded a bus and made the long trek to Jackson, MI. We were met at the bus station by Nathan's brother Doug and two lovely young ladies. While we were en route from SD, Nathan was involved in a car accident near Detroit and was hospitalized when we arrived. Consequently, Doug had to enlist someone to pick us up. Needless to say we were enamored with our cute chauffeurs. When our visit ended we still had money in our pockets so we opted to fly home. It was both Kevin and my first time flying so we were quite pleased with ourselves, especially for navigating O'Hare in Chicago. I was quite taken with Jeanne Allen and we maintained a long distance relationship until the following spring. Several years later, Jeanne and Nathan were married. They have two lovely daughters and 5 grandchildren. Kathie met Jeanne in 1990 and they became the best of friends and enjoyed many interests in common. We have visited each other's homes regularly over the past 30+ years. Nathan and Jeanne have been so supportive over these past three difficult years.





Nathan, Jeanne, Kathie, Roy

My senior year extra-curricular activity at SBA was completely different than prior years. In addition to football I participated in choir, choir tour, one-act play, safety club and gospel team. I was elected senior class president, co-captain of the football team and was honored to be chosen as homecoming king. Many weekends our gospel team traveled to perform at area churches. Often it would be late when we returned to campus on Sunday night. It wasn't uncommon for our adult sponsor to have me do the driving if he became drowsy. The weekends that we didn't have gospel team I would work at the Yost farm and ranch. I continued to work there most weekdays as I had the previous year. During the first semester any holidays and long weekends either Jeanne would travel to South Dakota or I would fly to Michigan. I spent very little time at home my senior year.



Academically my grades weren't quite what they were the previous year, and I made a determined effort to take the least challenging courses available. After breezing through a freshman world geography class the first semester I needed to pick up another easy course. I spoke to Miss Abrahams regarding the basic music class she wanted to offer. She assured me that it would be easy and there wouldn't be homework. I told her to sign me up and I proceeded to recruit a couple of other "highly motivated" buddies to join in. I couldn't keep my mouth shut and my good friend Mary Weiss joined us. That was very bad news because Mary had had about twelve years of piano lessons. Miss Abrahams mercifully gave me a D+ for the semester. Another class that bears mentioning is English



IV. Mrs. DeVries was our instructor. It was somehow established that I was deficient in grammar so I was required to do remedial grammar work. I just didn't want make the effort so I conscripted Mary to do the extra grammar work on my behalf. The main focus though was creative writing. I didn't excel, but in the years to follow I have had the occasion many times to put that part of my education to use. Perhaps the single most impactful statement that I have appreciated was made by Coach Pederson, my Industrial Arts instructor. He said: "The best carpenter is the one who can cover his mistakes." There is tremendous wisdom in that remark that applies to life in general, not simply carpentry. It's a simple fact that we will make mistakes, everyone does. What's important is that we acknowledge and own our errors and make the necessary restoration regardless of the personal cost or embarrassment.

In advanced woodworking I built a set of speakers. It was a "thing" at that time to have large stereo speaker cabinets. Mine were 36" high by 18" wide and 16" deep. I also built a light control box for the drama department. It allowed the operator to control individual lights for stage productions. With my expertise in electrical matters I'm surprised that it worked and didn't catch fire, but it was still in service 25 years later when my girls were in drama at SBA. For some reason I became responsible for the sound equipment at SBA that year. There were some old outdoor PA speakers that were no longer used so I saw fit to hang them in my room and connect them to my new stereo. I could blast classic rock through the entire building. After that year they banned all but small tape players and radios. Another project that created quite a stir was a small AM radio transmitter. When my brother Glen was a student at SBA he operated an authorized campus radio station. When he graduated he brought the equipment home. I put the transmitter into service one weekend and let my friends in the girl's dorm know that they could listen in. The dorm parents were beside themselves and my "radio station" was quickly dismantled.



My stereo & Katie "jammin'"

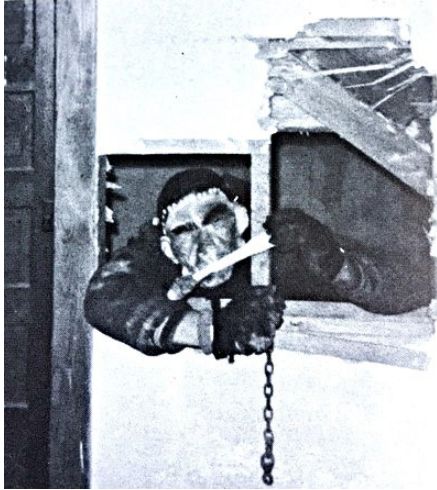


two were plenty for a 10'x12' room



AM radio transmitter

By virtue of being class president I was also a member of the student council. We sponsored a Halloween party that included a haunted house. We took over an abandoned farmhouse and created a spooky venue complete with lighting and soundtrack. Of course the house had no electricity so I borrowed a generator from the local Rural Electric Co-op. We made the soundtrack by recording some of my classic rock at 16 rpm rather than the 33 1/3 setting on my stereo. It made for a very ghostly atmosphere. I'm told that my roommate Reid and this cute freshman girl named Joy had their first kiss at that party. They're still married.



A couple of characters from the spook house

Each year the seniors enjoyed a “skip day”. In our case we traveled to Sioux Falls and according to the annual we went shopping, had a softball game, an elegant dinner and an evening swim. The day started at four AM and we returned to campus at one the next morning. The day was funded by “Senior Sells” which involved selling hamburgers, hot dogs and French fries along with various ice cream to the staff and student body. Thursday evenings were set aside for this activity. In addition, we potted thousands of trees for the local conservation district. My recollection is that we were paid five cents per tree. The best part of that project was that we were allowed to drive our cars into town and work without adult supervision.

The rules are a big part of SBA memories. Each year we were provided with a student handbook that contained all of the various rules we were to adhere to. Some were obvious, such as boys weren’t allowed in the girl’s dorm, physical contact or any public display of affection was strictly forbidden and the use of alcohol and tobacco were completely prohibited. Special permission was required to leave campus. Other rules were not quite as understandable. Skipping meals would earn you a demerit, neckties were required at the evening meal, and shirts were to be tucked in at all times. The big ones were: skirt length for the girls, which was really sad because it was the mini-skirt era. For the guys it was hair length, which was also sad because it was the long hair era. Since I was accustomed to leaving campus at will to go to work, one day I went to town to get a much needed haircut rather than going directly to work. Much to my surprise and chagrin the Superintendent, Mr. Singhal was occupying the barber chair. We greeted each other without comment, but the next morning I was invited to his office. Following a firm but diplomatic scolding, I was required to copy one of the epistles of the apostle Paul.

Scripture admonishes parents to: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” It’s also a simple statement of fact. For example: when my girls were students at SBA, I did a number of projects in the girl’s dorm. I

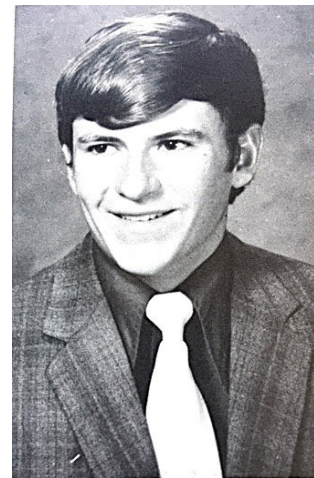
always felt a bit queasy about being in that area and I was fifty years old before I could walk around with my shirt untucked. After that my stomach made it necessary.

My good friend and classmate Bruce Damon was elected student body president and our friendship no doubt cost him honor student status. Bruce is very smart. He and his wife Mary spent forty some years ministering in Hong Kong and Macau. Bruce completed his seminary studies in the Cantonese language. Bruce was highly intelligent and I liked to have fun, so maybe we balanced each other out, but Bruce's grades paid the price. Often on weekends we would slip out of the dorm around midnight and go out to the old Quonset gym and shoot baskets for several hours. When we had had enough we would raid the senior class ice cream inventory. I suppose rank does have some privilege.

Gaylon Van Zee taught Driver's Education and in that capacity he was able to secure the use of a car and a motorcycle from local dealers. In conjunction with the driver's ed classes he formed a "Safety Club". The 1971 annual says this: "The newly formed safety club received a plaque at the "Teenage Safety Convention" in Pierre for a motorcycle safety project. The club will also be represented among the state officers next year by Angus Anson, who was elected East-River Vice-President." I have a clear memory of attending that event. Mr. Van Zee overslept and we needed to be there early to campaign for Angus. Gaylon handed me the keys and said get us there on time. I proceeded to drive 100 MPH from Sunshine to Pierre and we arrived unscathed and on schedule. The convention was held in the House chamber and no doubt reinforced my dream of serving in the state legislature.



BRUCE DAMON  
Rapid City, S. Dak.



ROY LETELLIER  
Norris, S. Dak.

The final escapade involves Bruce Damon, the Safety club motorcycle and me. Several other boys' dorm residents were aware of our plan, but they knew not to discuss or share any details. South and west about three or four miles from the SBA campus was located a tall communication tower. At night you could clearly see the red marker lights on the tower. Bruce and I decided that we needed to scale that tower before we left SBA. I only recently learned that Bruce had climbed said tower earlier. Either I never knew or forgot, but in retrospect that might have been helpful information. The final week of school

consisted of final exams and other year end activities. Thursday night was “awards night”, Friday we had our final Bible exam and all that remained was the graduation day formalities. We determined that Thursday night was the perfect time to execute our plan. Bruce was president of the safety club so he was able to check out the motorcycle key without raising any red flags.

After the 10 PM lights out bell we waited impatiently until we were sure we could slip out the back door of the dormitory undetected. The motorcycle was stored near the gym and we pushed it quietly until we felt confident we could start the motor without attracting any attention. We navigated directly cross country toward the tower and when we would come to a fence I would stop and simply kick the wire until the post staples gave way, Bruce would step on the wire and I would push the bike across. By the time we encountered a fence very close to the tower my conscience was beginning to bother me for having damaged all those fences. I suggested we leave the bike and walk the remaining few yards. We crawled through the fence and made our way to the tower. Even in the darkness it was imposing, we estimated the height to be 360'. I'm not sure how we determined that, but it's my story and I'm sticking to it. As you drive past these towers they appear to be quite small, but they actually are quite large inside the tower structure. There was a fixed ladder inside the structure of this one. It was very dark so we couldn't see the ground and it wasn't particularly scary as we made long and deliberate ascent. I recall two things that impressed me while we rested at the very top. First the flashing lights located at various intervals on the tower. From a distance they look like small red light bulbs. I was surprised that they were actually the size of a 20 gallon oil drum. The other shocker was that the tower swayed in the wind. There was only a light breeze on the ground, but at the peak the “breeze” was much more pronounced. We could feel the back and forth movement as the tower swayed from side to side against the heavy stabilizing cables. We proceeded to make our descent and when we reached the ground we took note that the time was just past midnight. It was very dark and we searched unsuccessfully for the motorcycle. After failing to locate our conveyance we sat down next to the small building located at the base of the tower. The temperature began to drop and we were not at all comfortable. When it began to sprinkle rain drops we took action. We crossed the perimeter fence and started walking; I don't think we had a plan. After a bit we made out a farmstead in the distance and we could see what looked like a barn where we thought we could take cover from the rain. We opened the door; it was pitch-black inside, immediately we heard a horse nickering. Not wanting to share quarters with a horse we summoned all our courage and went to the house and knocked on the door, there was no response. I tried the door and found it unlocked so we walked in turned on the lights and looked around. The premises seemed to be somewhat occupied. There was beer in the fridge along with a few basic condiments, but no real food. By this time it was after one AM and we were exhausted. After a bit of discussion we made ourselves at home and crawled into bed. We slept fitfully, no doubt with visions of the fairytale “The Three Bears”. Fortunately, no one joined us and we left our quarters at daybreak. It was very cloudy and dark following the previous night's rainstorm. We quickly spotted the bike right where we had left it the night before. The farmstead was located on a well maintained gravel road that we deemed to be an east-west thoroughfare. We happily headed in the direction we



determined to be east, knowing we would intersect Hwy 45 that passes in front of the SBA campus. We had traveled for a good distance when I spotted buildings on the horizon. It turned out we had been traveling north rather than east and what we saw were the outskirts of Miller. The town of Miller is located 13 miles north of Sunshine. While we were disappointed in our navigation, we were relieved to know exactly where we were. We turned east on the first road we came to and in due time reached Hwy 45. We breathed a sigh of relief because it was only six AM and we were sure we had plenty of time to return to campus unnoticed. As we sped happily down the road the motorcycle began to sputter and we came to stop on the side of the pavement. We had run out of gas. Lucky for the two of us, there was a farm house very close to the road where we were stranded. Not to be deterred we walked to the farm. The farmer was outside doing morning chores and we vaguely explained that we had run out of gas. He graciously gave us a gallon of gas and we shortly resumed our trip. Breakfast was served at 7 AM and we arrived at campus a few minutes after seven. We stayed out of sight by driving in the east ditch in front the school and skirted campus on the south. We carefully returned the motorcycle to its proper spot, entered the dorm the same way we had left hours before and casually went through the breakfast cafeteria line.

When Kevin Kruse got up that morning he checked our rooms and discovered that we were missing, concerned, he discreetly left campus in search of his wayward friends. Of course he found no trace of us and returned to campus just in time to join us in Bible class to write our final semester exam. Since that was the final day of school, word of our escapade never reached the staff or general population and we graduated with unblemished records and an entertaining tale.



Sunshine Bible Academy Class of 1971



Mom, Kevin Kruse, and a bit of Dad

As I perused through my high school annuals for forgotten details and useful pictures, I read the comments fellow students and classmates had written. I noticed that according to my friends I was “fun to be around” possessed a “great personality” and “good looks” some predicted that I would “go far” some admonished me to “take it easy on the girls” and others to “keep Christ first”. Not surprisingly, no one mentions my great intellect or academic prowess.



If you're a student reading this, don't let your grades define who you are. And if you're the parent of an underperforming student, take heart and don't give up, they will very likely over perform later in life.

**Opinion****January/February**

**Administrator's corner**

By Jack A. Jones

Roy Letellier, graduate of Sunshine Bible Academy class of 1971, was sworn into office as a South Dakota Representative in Pierre last week. "To God be the glory" when men of his caliber are elected to the House of Representatives. Roy's years of dedicated ministry on our school board have been deeply appreciated by the faculty, staff and Christian school community. The general public, at large, will now be exposed to his bold testimony for Christ and his deep commitment for quality education.

In 1992 Letellier conducted

a valuable study, attempting to determine if the need for SBA still exists today. This study contains 28 pages of facts, charts and graphs. A copy of this study has been placed in the school library and may be read by those interested in his findings.

We were privileged to witness the ceremonies in Pierre and to hear Governor George Mickelson address the combined session of the House and Senate. Gov. Mickelson paused at one point and made his only direct contact with one of the hundred-plus legislators. He pointed directly to Roy Letellier and explained that Roy was sitting at the very desk where Mickelson sat years ago when

he was a member of the House. We learned later that Roy's assigned desk has been designated as the place where the representative with the most promising future is seated.

May our entire SBA family join our hearts together, faithfully, to support and undergird Roy as he fulfills his awesome responsibilities to our state. May the prediction for a promising future become a reality.

Again we praise and thank our wonderful Heavenly Father for SBA and the ministry that through the years has produced our outstanding alumni.

Kind words from the Sunshine Bible Academy Crusader

## Chapter 4

### Norris to Miami to Chadron

*Kathleen Ruth Marks, "loving her was easier than anything I'll ever do again"*

The summer following graduation was similar to previous years. Farm and ranch work during the week but traveling to spend time with friends around the state on weekends. In 1971 the Viet Nam war was still going on but there were ongoing negotiations to end the United States involvement. The war was very unpopular and war protests were a constant thing. I along with almost every other eighteen year old did not want to go to "Nam". The army had instituted a draft lottery several years before whereby every year each birth date was assigned a draft number. My number was 199 which was a good safe number, and as it turned out no one was drafted in 1973. I had no plans for the fall since my "best laid plan" of going to college in Michigan lost its appeal without a girlfriend residing there. I had explored some options in South Dakota before graduation but no place held any appeal for me. As the summer progressed I became increasingly concerned that I would end up spending the winter feeding cattle while enduring sub-zero temperatures in Norris. As the weeks passed, the criterion that made for an acceptable institution minimized with each fleeting day. One of the surviving criteria was geographical. I was tired of cold weather; I also held on to the fantasy that I could play college football, but I understood that it would have to be a very small school for that to be feasible. One day I was perusing some Christian magazine my mother subscribed to

and spotted an ad for Miami Christian University. I checked a map and figured it should be warm there during the winter, the ad mentioned extra-curricular sports and small class sizes. I quickly sent for an application and further information but I was already sold. I applied and in due time, accepted. Obviously the academic requirement for acceptance was a low threshold. I was even given tuition credit for having graduated from a Christian high school.

As the summer days passed I was made aware that a high school classmate, John Lane had also been accepted at MCU. I contacted John and we began to make plans to for our journey to Florida. In the meantime I had traded my car for a more dependable and classy model.



1965 Chevrolet Impala Super Sport

John and I both had some large and bulky possessions that we felt had to go with us. I recall three problematic items. First John's drum set, second his Honda trail 90 motorcycle, and finally my large stereo speakers. A 1965 Impala has a massive trunk, I remember spending the night sleeping in it on one occasion. That space wasn't close to enough for all our belongings. I removed the lower cushion of the back seat so as to create a larger flat area in the back, we rented a u-haul rooftop carrier and stuffed it full and purchased a motorcycle carrier that attached to the rear bumper. My cool Chevy looked like the Beverly Hillbilly's going down the road. The details of that trip have escaped me but I do remember a few things. First we drove to Dallas, Texas and stayed overnight with my brother Glen and his wife Linda. Glen was a seminary student at Dallas Theological Seminary. From Dallas we headed east crossing Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama before entering the Florida panhandle. Somewhere in northwestern Florida I had to brake hard to avoid another vehicle, as I applied the brakes the pedal went all the way to the floor. I performed an evasive maneuver and avoided a collision but the brakes were gone. I shortly discovered that the flexible brake line over the rear axle had failed. Undeterred we unloaded John's Trail 90 and rode to the nearest town, located a parts store and purchased the necessary repair parts and supplies. I of course had my new tool set close at hand and completed the repair in short order. It seems like we drove for the better part of two days to cover the miles from one end of Florida to the other before finally arriving at the MCU campus at 3500 NW 135<sup>th</sup> St. in Opa-Locka, Florida.

I don't remember any details of our arrival on campus, so I have to rely on the many times told version that Kathie delighted in sharing. She was employed by the school as a secretary in the administration building. As such she was privy to all the names and details of the new students. We were all invited to a welcome reception and Kathie assigned herself the job as official greeter. The majority of the MCU student body hailed from the south eastern region of the country, so South Dakotans were a definite oddity that she felt obligated to investigate. She easily struck up a conversation with us and before long she commented on our dark sun tanned complexion. John and I had both spent all summer working in the South Dakota sun, so we were dark brown. I guess I thought I'd have a little fun with her so I told her we were Indians. She said "Letellier doesn't sound like an Indian name to me" and I responded "It's French Indian". I don't think she believed me, nor did it enter her mind that it would become her name sixteen months later.

As the school term commenced I soon learned that the MCU idea of football was intramural flag football. I was completely disgusted and disappointed. John and I were both able to get part-time jobs at Alterman Trucking. The firm was a family owned regional trucking company and we were employed on the loading dock. Our job along with several other MCU students was simply loading trucks with whatever we were assigned. It was a good part time job that paid well; it was however, hard physical labor with little to no chance of advancement.

In short order I realized that MCU was SBA 2.0. There was a boys and girls dorm; there were daily chapel services, Bible class, cafeteria meals, no classes that held any interest for me, and rules. I quickly decided that if I could find a full-time job that wasn't loading trucks and find a place to live, I would leave school. I was hired by "Olin's rent-a-car" and a local married classmate offered me a spare bedroom in their home. My college career ended after fourteen days. I remember driving to work my first day; I-95 was bumper to bumper five lanes each direction. I thought to myself "Mister you're not in South Dakota anymore". Our rental office was located in the Moulin Rogue hotel at 41<sup>st</sup> Street and Collins Avenue. Forty First Street becomes I-195 which is a causeway traversing Biscayne Bay and it's an easy eleven mile drive to Miami International Airport. Our office was the Miami Beach satellite location while the main office was located at the airport. My responsibilities were simple: I picked customers up at their hotels and dropped them off when they turned in their rental. In doing so I became familiar with all of the hotels up and down Collins Avenue. My other job was keeping our small fleet of rentals clean. I was furnished with a scrub bucket, a whisk broom and a towel. I quickly discovered the best method of cleaning cars was to drive it to the main office and switch to a clean one. The Olin's fleet was comprised of a few Chevrolet Impala's, 4 door Dodge Duster's equipped with the slant six cylinder and automatic transmission and Ford Pinto's and Chevrolet Vega's. I was instructed to hurry so I interpreted that to mean go as fast as the car will go. Top speed on the Impala's was close to 100 mph, the Duster's could eek out 90 on a good day and the Pinto's and Vega's struggled at 85. I would leave the office and not take the gas pedal off the floor until I reached the office. It was great fun for an 18 year-old country boy. My net paycheck each week was \$61.00, right about \$500.00 in today's dollar. I was not

accustomed to payroll deductions and I had not filed tax returns in the past (oops). Neither had my hours been limited to forty per week. Even so I had sufficient income to cover my expenses.



The Moulin Rouge, the picture looks better than it was.



The Switchboard

The Moulin Rouge was on the upper end of the seedy portion of Miami Beach. The occupancy rate was never particularly high, so the hotel operated with a small staff. I soon became acquainted with all of the hotel employees including the manager, desk clerks and the bell captain. They convinced me that I could make more money as a bell hop than I was earning with Olin's. My formal training for this new role was minimal. I was told "there's the luggage cart, put the guests bags on the cart and take the bags and guest to the elevator and on to their room. When you get to the room park the cart directly in front of the door, unlock the door and open it slightly, reach in to the right and flip on the light, turn around and wait a few seconds before opening the door and showing the guests in." That allowed the cockroaches sufficient time to escape to the darkness under the bed or some other out of sight location. My other main task was to man the hotel switchboard. This involved connecting guest to outside lines and dialing the requested phone numbers. For long distance calls we would request the phone company operator to call us with the charges. We would then mark them up considerably at our discretion and add it to their bill.

Unfortunately, I was required to work the 4PM to Midnight shift, this greatly interfered with my social life, and shortly after the New Year I was fired for my repeated absences. I believe that you haven't fully experienced life until you've been fired at least once. I later learned as an employer the answer to the age old question: "When is the right time to fire an employee?" The correct answer is: "The first time you ever think about it."

During my few months in Miami Beach I discovered a new and innovative merchandising scheme. "The factory outlet store" I had great fun buying the latest men's clothing at bargain prices.

In the meantime I had fallen head over heels for Kathie Marks. After my premature departure from MCU, beyond my nine to five jobs I had nothing to do and no other responsibilities and outside of the school I didn't know anyone. In the evenings I would visit the school library where Kathie was the librarian. She was always willing to chat so



those visits became a regular part of my evenings. My friend, John Lane asked her out and bet me that he could kiss her on the first date. I took that bet because she had told me she never kissed on the first date. Despite John's best efforts Kathie stuck to her principle and I won the bet.

Our first date was on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1971, and before the Christmas break I had asked her to marry me. We spent every possible moment together, often just hanging out in my apartment. On weekends we would sometimes go to the beach and an afternoon movie then have dinner at Randy's steak house. Even in those days a large sirloin steak, baked potato and salad for \$2.75 was a great deal. Other favorites that are long gone were Lum's and Farrell's. John worked at Farrell's so we always enjoyed some complimentary favors.



American [family restaurant](#) chain based in [Florida](#) with additional locations in several states.



Farrell's became known for their offer of a free [ice cream sundae](#) to children on their birthday. The parlors had an early 1900s theme, with employees wearing period dress and straw [boater hats](#), and each location featured a [player piano](#).

Kathie used to say that she did no school work that year until after I left Florida in early May. She sometimes had to impart disciplinary measures on herself for missing curfew, since she was the dorm monitor and it was her job to enforce the curfew. I remember that during the 1971 Christmas break she returned home to Michigan and left me with a gift for each day she was away. About the time Kathie returned to Miami I became unemployed, so I took the opportunity to make a quick visit to South Dakota in mid January. I got on a flight from Miami and when I arrived in Miller, SD late that evening it was -30 degrees. That is literally what I recall about the entire visit. I'm sure I told the folks about Kathie but I suspect they didn't take it very seriously.





MCU "dress-up" dinner. Note the sport coat from the factory outlet store.

After one semester at MCU, John Lane left, moved into my one bedroom apartment and enrolled in Miami-Dade Community college. In a letter I wrote to Kathie during the Christmas break, I tell her that we borrowed a vacuum cleaner from the MCU cafeteria and appropriated a mattress from a dorm room. I remember that we also went grocery shopping in the school pantry. I'm sure we justified it due to the fact that I had paid tuition for an entire semester and they refused to refund any money. I think my Mother was more upset about that than me quitting school.

When I returned to Florida following that winter visit I got a job at "Brake and Alignment World". It was a discount brake and front end repair shop. They had two locations; the first was in Opa-Locka, in a very sketchy area. After only a couple weeks they moved me to a shop in Hallandale between Miami and Fort Lauderdale. It was more of a commute but the location and clientele were much better. I was finally able to work on cars and get paid for doing what I enjoyed.

Inflation was a serious economic problem at that time and in an effort to reduce the rate of inflation the government imposed a wage and price freeze. It gave employers an easy excuse not to grant wage increases to poor saps like me, so my hourly wage remained at \$1.65 per hour even though I produced more volume than any other mechanic in the shop. I worked there until the end of April when John and I returned to South Dakota. This time we wisely rented a small enclosed U-Haul trailer and made the trip without incident.

May 1972 was a whirlwind month for Kathie; she had to do an entire semesters' worth of school work in addition to final exams. One of the letters I received from her was written on college letterhead, she and a fellow student were doing school work in the administration office in the wee hours. She closed the letter by saying she was going to take a nap on the couch in the Presidents office. When the school term was complete she traveled up the eastern coast of the US with the MCU choir on a two week choir tour. In spite of the hectic schedule she managed to write me a letter sent by "air mail" almost every day.

When I started this project I discovered our letters from the summer of 1972. Kathie always said she saved "both" of my letters to her. The truth of the matter is this: It was 240 days from the time I left Florida until we were married December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1972, we spent time together in June, July and October; assume that we were apart 215 days. In that span she wrote me 96 letters and I wrote 29. I of course don't have the scorecard on phone calls, but I called often, probably more than I wrote. The discourse in our letters reveals that we were very much in love. We were privileged to share our lives and our love for more than 52 years.

Kathie's parents visited Florida once during that school year and I spent a small amount of time with them. I don't think they took me too seriously at that point, but they did let Kathie know how they felt about my "too long hair". That became a major point of contention after our engagement. Kathie was willing to go to the mat over it, to the point of not even having a public wedding ceremony, cooler heads (mine) prevailed and it was agreed that I would get a haircut for our wedding.

Kathie arrived home from the choir tour on May 27. From what I can glean from our letters the plan was for her to move to SD as soon as possible and enroll in school and get married in June the next year. Apparently the Marks family thought that was a very bad idea so a compromise was agreed to. Kathie would remain in Michigan but we would get married in December rather than the following June. I don't know when the agreement was reached but Kathie came to SD on June 5<sup>th</sup> and I presented her with a diamond engagement ring, making it official. I had been hired as a mechanic at the Chevrolet dealership in Martin, SD and had an apartment at the Candlelight Inn. My cousin Ron Letellier and his wife Marva owned the Inn. Marva's and my parents were close friends so we spent countless hours together while the adults played Scrabble. Ron is three or four years older than me but I hung around their place quite often while I was growing up. Just before I moved to Martin, Ron and I took a fishing trip to Wisconsin and I think he helped me get the job in Martin. At any rate it was nice to have familiar friendly faces at my new home. Kathie was scheduled to fly from Rapid City and return to Michigan on June 12<sup>th</sup>. However, on the night of June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1972 tragedy struck Rapid City in the form of the Rapid City flood, resulting in 238 deaths and 3,057 injuries, over 1,335 homes and 5,000 automobiles were destroyed. The value of property damage was estimated to be over \$160 million in 1972 dollars \$1.17 billion in 2023 dollars. I took Kathie to Rapid City on Sunday June 11<sup>th</sup> and left her with my Aunt and Uncle. It took several days before she was able to travel since air service was disrupted and available flights were packed. She arrived home on June 14<sup>th</sup>.



The Rapid City Flood was a devastating flood that occurred in Rapid City, South Dakota on June 9–10, 1972. It was the deadliest flash flood in the United States' history.

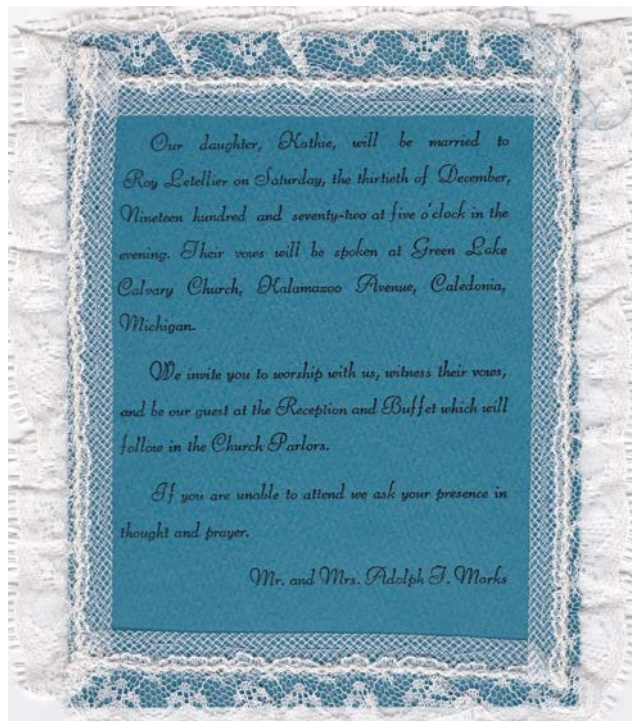
Less than one month later, on July 8<sup>th</sup> I traveled to Michigan. Kathie's parents had made a quick stop in SD that last weekend in June. I mentioned in a letter that they had arrived late for church in Norris and that I didn't stay long after so our interaction was very brief. I suppose they visited with my parents. I'm sure that the visit to Norris and my childhood home dispelled the misconception that their daughter was marrying me for my money. During my Michigan visit I met all of Kathie's family and had a heart to heart conversation with Mr. & Mrs. Marks. The issue of the long hair was again raised and I assured them that I was more than happy to get my haircut for the wedding. The meeting ended coolly with Adolph's acquiescence to add his blessing to a December wedding. This somewhat chilly accord was a huge victory for Kathie, due to the fact that her Dad had openly disapproved of her older siblings spousal choices.

Upon my return to SD I kept my eyes open for a work situation that would take us closer to a college. Shortly, I was offered a job at the Ford dealership in Gordon, Nebraska. I wrote that they were starting me at \$100.00 (\$813 in 2024\$) per week with a raise to \$125 (\$1000 in 2024\$) after 30 days. I found a room to rent with a young man named Lon who was a parts man at the dealership. Recently, while attending a celebration of life in Phoenix for a mutual friend, I met a couple who hailed from Gordon. We conversed and reminisced about people I remember from Gordon. I inquired as to what Carolyn's maiden name was and she replied "Zlomke" she then told me that Lon was here older brother, we then figured out that her mother had worked for us at the Chevrolet dealership when we lived there. I guess that falls into the "Small world" category.

I didn't stay in Gordon long enough to qualify for the 30 day raise. I learned that the Chevrolet dealership in Chadron had just changed hands and they were advertising for mechanics. I inquired and was invited to come in for an interview. After we chatted for a bit Mr. Reid asked if I would be interested in sales. I replied that I most certainly

would be. I had grown tired of being greasy and dirty all the time and the idea of not having grease under my fingernails sounded pretty good to my 19 year old ears. He proceeded to administer a lengthy aptitude test. It was sent in and two weeks later he invited in for a second interview and proceeded to offer me a sales position with a 90 day guarantee of \$500 per month and straight commission after that. I embarked on my new career September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1972. I clearly recall at the end of the first week not receiving a paycheck. All of my previous jobs had paid every week, after the second week with no payday I had to inquire about when we got paid because I was broke. Mr. Reid informed me that payday was at the end of the month but that he would give me a “draw”. I was very embarrassed, and I never asked for or needed a mid-month draw again. Five or six months later I had a “barnburner” month and earned today’s equivalent of over \$13,000 in one month. I was hooked, and for my entire working career I was always able to control my income by my production. Floyd Reid was fond of imparting bits of wisdom to his young salesman, often telling me “You have to make money on your friends and relatives, because your enemies won’t do business with you.”

Kathie visited me again for a week in October of 1972. She couldn’t have been too impressed with the basement apartment that was to be our home. The only redeeming quality was its’ location. Across the alley to the west was a Laundromat, and Safeway was across the street to the North. Upon her return to Michigan she kept me updated on final weddings plans and we spoke frequently by telephone. I’m sure I boasted to her about my sales successes, but for some reason I didn’t mention that in any of my letters. I was however, very excited to tell her that I was being allowed to special order my own demonstrator. Mr. Reid gave me permission to drive my new demo to Michigan for our wedding, with the caveat that I disconnect the speedometer.





The map app on my phone shows that it is a little over 1000 miles from Chadron, NE. to Wayland, MI with travel time of around 16 hours. The speed limit at that time was 55 MPH and I seem to remember it taking over twenty hours, at any rate I know I was very anxious to see Kathie and I drove straight through. I suspect that I left after work on Saturday December 23<sup>rd</sup> and arrived in the morning of Christmas Eve.



Our Honeymoon car

I have no specific memories of the days between Christmas and our wedding day with the exception of the lame bachelor party. I had learned that a schoolmate from SBA and his wife were living in Grand Rapids so the four SBA friends and I met at Ken and Deb's home. There may have been a bottle of champagne, but that was the extent of the festivities. It was customary in those days to decorate the newlywed's car after the wedding ceremony; I was very concerned that some over exuberance could cause some damage to my new demonstrator so I "hid" the car in Ken's garage so we could avoid that whole thing. The next day when we arrived to pick up the car I discovered my good friends had carefully adorned it with "just married" and other verbiage.

December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1972 was a cloudy and rainy day in Caledonia, MI. The weather conditions may have contributed in part to Mr. Marks t-boning a post in the church parking lot as he was ferrying three of my groomsmen to the church; with the exception of a minor whiplash no one was injured. The truck didn't fare so well. I can still see the bumper of the old Ford sticking out in a pronounced "V" shape. That incident may have contributed to Adolph's late arrival for the ceremony, but he was routinely tardy for everything.





In my Mother's 1972 Christmas letter she says "He (Roy) and Kathie Marks from Grand Rapids are planning a big wedding on December 30, I'm ready to go-finished making my long avocado dress." It wasn't really that big. According to the guestbook, maybe 150 total in attendance. I knew only a handful of those present that day. I think maybe three outside of the wedding party and our families. I do recall a moment of panic as we were preparing to exchange our vows. I thought to myself: "You're 19 years old, what are you doing?"

The reception was no coffee and cake affair, but a full meal with multiple entrees' in "old country" tradition. The caterer's got lost in the rain and fog so the festivities were delayed for a good while. I remember my Dad's typical succinct remarks. "Well, it's raining today, so this should be a productive marriage."



Following the reception we were chauffeured to our hotel in Grand Rapids, where Kathie's father had reserved the honeymoon suite for us. The second thing we did that

night was to count the wedding cash. We were very happy and appreciative of the generosity of Kathie's friends and family. In today's money we were gifted between six and seven thousand dollars. Kathie had mistakenly entrusted me with the honeymoon arrangements and I heard about it for the next fifty years. She had suggested that Manistique MI might be a nice destination. Manistique is located in the Upper Peninsula on the shores of Lake Michigan. The current website says: "[Come to the beautiful Manistique area and experience scenery, four seasons of recreation and history.](#)"

As I studied the map I noted that Manistique was some 350 miles from Grand Rapids. I further noticed that the town of Manistee was also located on the shores of Lake Michigan and it was only 142 miles from Grand Rapids. Unbeknownst to me, Manistee was not a tourist destination but rather an industrial center. Entertainment options were limited but we were simply happy to be married. Kathie pointed out that I needed new underwear, so we made a trip to J.C. Penny, on another occasion we had a picnic on the floor of our room and I enjoyed Kentucky Fried Chicken, I don't think Kathie ever had KFC again. We also went to the movie "What's up Doc?" starring Barbara Streisand and Ryan O'Neal. We spent three nights in Manistee and then returned to Wayland where we loaded all the wedding gifts that we could fit in the Nova and headed west. We spent the first night in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I recall that I thought the Village Inn Motel was quite nice. The next day we traveled to SBA so Kathie could visit my high school roots. We spent the night with Dale and Ruth (Bligh) Paulson. Ruth is a Norris childhood friend and they were married just a few days before us. We exchanged wedding gifts that we had received in duplicate. We made our way to Norris and were honored with a reception in the new "Norris Hall". I think our reception was the first event held in that building. Kathie's wedding dress was stained from the bare concrete floor. Ironically, fifty one and a half years later I was joined by friends and family in that same building, following the placing of Kathie's remains in the Letellier family plot in Norris.

*Thank You*  
FOR YOUR RESERVATIONS

VILLAGE INN MOTEL  
100 F AVENUE N. W.  
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52405

From Jan. 4, '72 To Jan. 5, '72  
The following accommodations are being held:  
one room - one bed for two  
people

Received deposit of \$18.00

WE SINCERELY LOOK  
FORWARD TO SEEING YOU

Rate \$ 17.95 + .5% tax  
Date taken Dec. 1, 1972 Jackie  
CLERK

RESERVATION CONFIRMATION

Mr. Roy Letellier  
P.O. Box 1294  
Chadron, Nebraska 69337

Unconfirmed reservations are held until 6:00 P. M. unless otherwise indicated.  
If your plans change, please notify us promptly.

A.H. HOTEL REGISTER CO., 228 W. ONTARIO ST. CHICAGO, ILL. 60610 FORM 555-5000



Norris reception

We settled in our basement apartment in Chadron and embarked on the next chapter of our lives together. For the next fifty one years one month and twenty two days we lived and loved and laughed together.

## Chapter 5

### Chadron to Gordon to Belle Fourche

*"Service to humanity is the best work of life"*

When I moved to Chadron September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1972 I didn't know anyone other than my employer Floyd Reid. Mr. Reid insisted that I become involved in the community and get to know people, so I joined the Jaycees and the Toastmasters Club. Toastmasters met on Saturday morning at 6:30 AM. As far as I was concerned that organization had no redeeming qualities; 6:30 AM on a weekend, speaking in front of "old" people I didn't know just didn't cut it for this nineteen year-old. Jaycees on the other hand was more to my liking as it was made up of men age 18-35 and met in the evenings. The Jaycees were a well established service organization in Chadron and were called upon to be involved in a variety of community functions. At that time there was also an auxiliary organization known as the Mrs. Jaycees. Kathie and I were both heavily involved over the next few years each holding various local offices including President. In addition, Kathie was elected to a state office and I became a District Director and later a Regional Director. We attended many state conventions as well as a national convention in Atlantic City, NJ where we helped elect a fellow Nebraskan as US Jaycee President.

### The Jaycee Creed

*We Believe:*

*That faith in God gives meaning and  
purpose to human life;  
That the brotherhood of men transcends  
the sovereignty of nations;  
That economic justice can best be won  
by free men through free enterprise;  
That government should be of laws  
rather than of men;  
That earth's great treasure lies in  
human personality;  
And that service to humanity is the best  
work of life.*

As Kathie and I became more and more involved in the Jaycees we began to attend the state conventions. There were four state gatherings each year and we attended nearly all of them for several years. We carried out many local projects each year. In searching through our scant archives and my dusty memory this is a list of projects we did during my year as president. A hunter's breakfast on opening day of deer season, a benefit basketball game with Denver Bronco players vs. community members, Jr. Wrestling, this involved scores of young local wrestlers and culminated with a tournament that drew hundreds of participants. We

sponsored the Chadron High School athletic banquet featuring University of Nebraska Cornhusker coach Tom Osborn as keynote speaker. The Chadron Fur Trade Days is an annual community event that celebrates the historical significance of the fur trade in the region. This year 2025 will mark the 49<sup>th</sup> celebration. It was always a big community event and the Jaycees were heavily involved from the very beginning in 1976. Our hallmark and organizational brainchild was the World Championship Buffalo Chip Throw. When I checked the Fur Trade Days website I was proud to see that the Buffalo Chip throw that we initiated in that first year is still going strong. In addition, we sold concessions at a community air show, ushered at a United States Air Force band concert, and sold concessions for the homecoming parade. Those years represented a period of great personal growth for me. I learned to manage such things as personnel, evaluate performances, delegate responsibilities, problem solve, plan and execute a plan and many more things that proved beneficial in the future. It was not all positive however. As I assumed more and more responsibility, I was required to speak in public more and more. Not only was I not a gifted speaker, I was terrified. Consumption of alcohol was a normal and accepted part of most Jaycee functions. In spite of my tee-totaling upbringing I found that a cocktail or two would render me quite glib and comfortable in front of a group. My use of alcohol progressed during the next several years. I was lucky never to have been apprehended for any illegal activities, and it serves no purpose to recount them here.







Donkey Races Jaycee Fundraiser

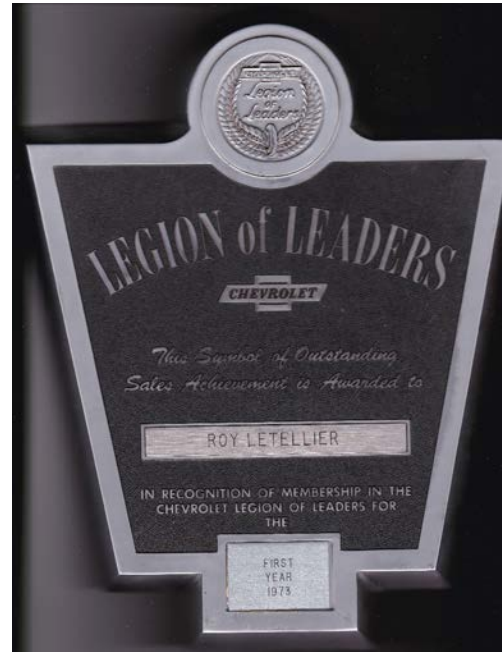
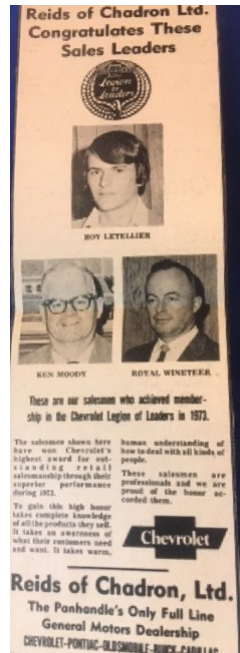


Upon our return from our honeymoon we quickly settled into our new lives. Kathie found employment at a local plumbing company as receptionist and secretary, later she went to work at Safeway first as a bagger then a checker. She of course excelled and soon became a top checker even being sent to other stores to conduct checker training. I continued my job at Reid's of Chadron. In addition to automobiles we were also a mobile home dealer. Kathie and I soon purchased a brand new 1973 12x60 Hillcrest mobile home. We were living large; it came completely furnished including washer and dryer. We financed the entire purchase price of \$5,500 for a term of 84 months. The payment was \$85.00 and the lot rent was \$30.00 which included water, sewer and garbage. For some reason I remember that cable TV cost \$6.00 per month. I think we got seven stations, four from Denver, PBS, and two local channels. Last spring I passed through Chadron and discovered that our old mobile, now abandoned, is still where we parked it in 1973. I bought Kathie an Amana Radar Range microwave oven for Christmas that year. They sold for right at \$500.00, in today's dollars that would be a bit over \$4,000.





The late 1960's to mid 1970's was a tumultuous period in America. The Viet Nam war created riots and unrest on college campuses all over the country. President Nixon was caught up in the scandal of Watergate and ultimately resigned. The news media continually warned of the next recession, and just about the time the war in South East Asia was ending the United States was faced with an oil embargo by OPEC. The result was a national gas shortage, which caused rationing, and long lines at the gas stations. Fuel prices jumped 35% from 35 cents per gallon to 53 cents. This all put a damper on automobile sales. Fuel economy had never been a high priority for car manufacturers or most consumers. In 1975 the federal government mandated CAFÉ (corporate average fuel economy) and established fleet average requirements that had to be achieved by manufacturers each succeeding year. Reid's of Chadron was a dealer for Chevrolet, Buick, Oldsmobile, Pontiac and Cadillac. The 1975 Oldsmobile Toronado held the distinction of the worst gas mileage of any new car that year at 7-8 MPG. In spite of my overall success in car sales, I was very apprehensive about the immediate future of the industry. I was approached by a local New York Life agent and he ultimately recruited me to sell life and health insurance. The offer appealed to me since they offered a decent guaranteed income for the first twelve months. Mr. Reid may not have been sad to see me go. In the two years I was employed at Reid's I totaled two new demonstrators, neither of which were my fault, but I still got blamed. Fortunately no one suffered serious injuries in either incident. I did not enjoy very much success in the New York Life insurance business, in search of greener pastures I moved on to a local independent agency with similar results.



I met Curt Lecher soon after we moved to Chadron. Curt is three years my senior but we are both “car guys” and struck up a long lasting friendship. Curt’s father Tommy Lecher was a car salesman at the local Ford dealership. Tom was a colorful and delightful person. He had many descriptive phrases to describe people and things, and he would have described someone like him as a “Good Feeler”. Tommy had a large and loyal clientele; I think he especially enjoyed his Native American customers. He usually had two or three “Indian cars” parked at his home. Curt and I soon started buying a few older cars. I would fix them up so they were saleable and Tommy would move them to one of his customers. This helped to supplement my meager insurance earnings.

Later, we began to purchase more expensive later models vehicles. I was then tasked with “adjusting” the odometers. At worst that was illegal, at best unethical. However, it was still a common and accepted practice at that time. Curt and I would call on new car dealers in a roughly 100 mile radius of Chadron and purchase inventory for the newly established “Tommy’s Car Lot”. On occasion we would make the trip to Denver and buy cars at the auction or direct from Denver dealers. I learned a lot through those experiences. One is that the money is made in the buy. Later as a dealer I would say to my sales people “I can train a monkey to sell this stuff but it takes a pro to buy it right.” The other principle that I held fast to my entire career is: “You’ll never make an enemy by paying fast.” We always paid before we left a dealership, with or without the title or even the vehicle. This endeared us to many cash poor dealers we called on and they were always glad to see us.

Steve Lecher is one of Curt Lecher’s older brothers. Steve was born without arms; a birth defect resulting from the drug Thalidomide that was commonly prescribed for pregnant women in the 1940’s. Steve has never seen himself as handicapped; he married, had children and worked as a car salesman. He opened car doors and drove with his toes, he liked to show off on occasion and I recall riding with him in a 1954 Ford with a manual transmission. As he drove he lit a cigarette while holding a can of beer under his single finger that was positioned where the left arm would have been. Anyone that knew “Stevie” understood that they would sooner or later be called on to help him go to the restroom. Let’s just say that alcohol made that task a little easier. Steve always called Kathie “Katie” I think it was because she spelled her name with an “ie” rather than “y”. He and Tom would ask how “Katie” was doing and when she became pregnant they would inquire about “little Katie” and Kathie became “big Katie”. Thanks to Steve and Tommy there was never any doubt about what our child’s name would be.

When Kathie became pregnant late in 1975 we decided we needed a larger home so we purchased a little old 2 bedroom house on Chapin Street. The purchase price was \$17,750.00; we assumed the seller’s loan in the amount of \$14,757.16. We closed on the property February 26, 1976. Sadly our baby daughter was still-born on March 31. I was 22 years old at the time and knew nothing about babies or childbirth other than what caused them. Gratefully, a friend whose wife had also lost a child took me aside and explained how traumatic and devastating it is to a Mother. I’m not sure that any young man can begin to grasp the pain a young woman endures with the loss of their baby, I know I was clueless. My friend explained to me that “she’ll never get over it.” He was right. In Kathie’s last days on earth, she repeatedly spoke of re-uniting with our daughter. That loss instilled in both of us the value and sanctity of life. Kathie went on to serve as a counselor and board member at a Crisis Pregnancy Center, and I was able to support and promote Right to Life causes as a State Representative.



It looks the same today as 1976

Not long after this my old friend Mike Crawford, who I had worked with in Martin, and had since come to work at Reid's of Chadron asked me to partner with him on an airplane. I had some money from selling our mobile home, so I agreed on the condition that he would give me flying lessons since he was a certified flight instructor. We purchased a 1951 Cessna 170B for \$6,000.00. I was not a skilled pilot; take-offs in that tail dragger were always exciting with me at the controls. I did finally manage to solo, and that was the pinnacle of my aviation career. Later we upgraded to a 1968 Cessna 177, it was a tricycle gear airplane and I did better with it. Once I took my Dad for a ride and I bounced a few times when I landed. He asked if I always landed like that; no more rides for him.

In the meantime, Kathie (somehow) became pregnant again and on May 7, 1977 Katie Louise was born. I realized that having a family, owning an airplane and having no regular source of income was not a winning combination. I sold my share of the plane the day Katie was born and my flying days came to an end.



Cessna 170



Cessna 177 Cardinal

***From the Welcome Wagon website:***

Welcome Wagon® was founded in 1928 by Thomas Briggs, a visionary marketer from Memphis, Tennessee. Briggs introduced a unique approach—friendly “hostesses” personally delivered gift baskets from local businesses to new homeowners. These women, knowledgeable about their



communities, would share insights over a cup of coffee while offering gifts and coupons to newcomers.

The Welcome Wagon hostesses would locate new arrivals by calling on the utility companies and obtaining information on new customers. One of the off shoots of these visits was a “Newcomers Club”. Kathie naturally became involved and one of the activities that came from the club was a “gourmet group”. This involved four couples. The ladies would select and plan the cuisine, assign tasks and the guys would show up and eat at the appointed time. Over the course of the next fifty years Kathie became well known for her culinary skills. She attended and taught many cooking classes, even appearing on a Phoenix television station’s morning show several times. Welcome Wagon always held a special place in Kathie’s heart; she was the “Welcome Wagon Lady” in Belle Fourche for a short time after we moved there. Those friendships made in the early months of our years in Belle grew through her involvement in Beta Sigma Phi. There was a group Sorority Sisters made up of young mom’s, whose husbands were Belle Fourche businessmen and professionals, that regularly got together for lunch. They referred to themselves as the “lunch bunch”. This group still gathers to celebrate special events and occasions. These lifelong friends were so supportive during Kathie’s illness. I did not marry a cook. Both of Kathie’s parents were excellent cooks so her involvement in the kitchen was limited to setting tables and clean up. She would tell of making a tuna casserole in our first few weeks of marriage. Kathie would say: “Roy told me, “You don’t have to make that again.”” I only recall one other failure. Kathie made a Banana Soufflé for one of the gourmet club dinners. She served it and when she tasted it she simply got up and took everyone’s dishes. She loved to acquire and read cookbooks and by doing so she not only assembled a huge collection of cookbooks, she taught herself the fine points of culinary excellence. Kathie’s love language was hospitality; she was in her element when hosting friends for a meal. Often our guests would look at me after several courses and dessert and ask “Why don’t you weigh three hundred pounds?” She demanded excellence from herself in everything she did and failure was not an option. Whether it was cooking, raising and home schooling her children, starting and running a private school or becoming an outstanding successful Realtor, she always did her absolute best and her best was pretty damn good.

#### *Return to Gordon, Nebraska*



In the fall of 1977 just a few months after Katie was born, I received a phone call that changed the trajectory of our lives. Widd Merchen informed me that he had purchased Borman Chevrolet in Gordon, and he proceeded to offer me the opportunity to buy in and



become sales manager. Widd is eleven years older than me, so even though he grew up on a ranch that joined ours I didn't know him well. I did know his parents and a couple of his siblings, so we weren't unknown quantities to each other. Recently, more than 47 years after that initial call, I asked Widd "Why did you want me?" He responded without hesitation, "You were young and aggressive and you knew your way around the car business. You were raised right, you were tough and weren't beyond stretching the normally accepted boundaries." I had just turned 24 and it took about ten seconds for me to agree to his proposal, it was too good a deal to even think about turning down. I will always be grateful to Widd and Lana for providing us that opportunity. In later years it's been my privilege to help several other young men advance in the car business, following the example of the Merchen's. Having "skin in the game" made me an excellent employee, I not only carried out the normal sales management duties, I acquired a set of coveralls that allowed me to move into the service department and get greasy from time to time. I also learned how to navigate the parts books and man the parts counter as needed and on occasion it would fall to me to take wrecker calls. I recall one winter day some Native Americans came in and said they had a car stuck in the ditch north of town. I followed them and proceeded to winch the vehicle out of the deep snow and onto the pavement. Of course it wouldn't start so I turned toward the wrecker to get jumper cables. I looked over my shoulder and saw that they had already removed the battery from the running car and without any hesitation they turned the battery on its side and touched the terminals together and started the dead car. The whole thing couldn't have taken 20 seconds; I was in awe of their ingenuity.

In those days Chevrolet had a District Sales Manager that regularly visited his assigned dealerships. Ray Novak from Rapid City was our District Manager. His job was to convince us to buy what the company was pushing at any particular time. I knew Ray casually from my time at Reid's of Chadron. Ray and his family lost their home in the Rapid City flood. I remember him recounting that event: saying "We were walking down the street barefoot wearing our pajamas, and that was everything left of what we owned." That was the condition in which many families found themselves after that catastrophic event. We also had a Chevrolet service manager who would also visit from time to time. His primary job was to audit our warranty claims, he could make a dealer's life miserable if he was so inclined. The third person who came through the doors on a very regular basis was the GMAC representative. He would conduct a "floor-plan check" with each visit. Gordon, NE was at the eastern end of each of the representative's territories so they would often overnight there. For some reason, it fell to me to entertain these guys on their overnight stays. I would take Ray Novak to dinner and buy him all the liquor he wanted with the express purpose of getting more "good inventory" and taking less of the slow moving product they were trying to stuff into us. It was no doubt at one of these dinners that the idea of owning my own dealership was first discussed. Ray was the one that let me know when the Belle Fourche location became available. Likewise I developed a positive relationship with the District service manager so we would receive favorable decisions on subjective warranty cases. The GMAC representative would conduct two types of inventories; one was to simply ask if the vehicles on his sheet were in stock or paid off. Dealers were supposed to put a check in the mail as soon as a vehicle left the premises, that rule was routinely stretched. The better relationship you enjoyed with the rep the more likely they were to accept your word as to whether the

vehicle in question was still actually in inventory. The other level of inventory confirmation was referred to as “hands on hood”. In theory that meant “see the car or get a check” no excuse or story was good enough. Sometimes though, because of the rapport developed at the after hours dinners, we would be accorded leniency. The time and expense invested in these lunches and dinners was well worth it. I learned much during those days in Gordon, Widd was a willing and able instructor but I learned from customers as well. I recall delivering a new car to the bank in Merriman, a smaller town east of Gordon. I was acquainted with the bank manager from our days in Chadron when he had worked at a sister bank there. Ted was “tighter than bark on a tree” and it pained him to spend money. When I arrived, Ted invited me into his office and proceeded to type out a bank check which he in turn signed with a flourish. As he handed it to me with a grin he said “It’s easy to spend someone else’s money.” When I entered public service I came to realize how true those words are. The government bureaucracies are prime examples of spending other peoples money with little oversight or accountability.

Looking back on our relatively short time in Gordon, it’s a good thing we were young and full of energy. Katie was six months old when we moved to Gordon so Kathie had her hands full with just being a wife and mother, but she also was deeply involved in the Nebraska Jayceettes both at the local and state level. I was elected District Director for our area and enjoyed a very successful term. I was honored to receive the “Charles Thoene” award as the number one District Director for the entire state. The following year I became a Regional Director and my region covered the entire Nebraska panhandle. I worked long hours in these volunteer positions, attending multiple meeting many weeks. If the chapters were nearby I could leave after work, but often I would leave work mid- afternoon so I could arrive on time for a meeting and it was common to arrive home in the early morning hours. I was definitely the beneficiary of God’s grace, since many times I would arrive home with no recollection of passing through several towns on my route home. As the top ranked Regional Director I was positioning myself to run for State President. I had secured the backing of all the other potential candidates, when my real career intervened and we relocated to Belle Fourche. My resignation created chaos on the Nebraska Jaycee political landscape.



One of many charter nights for a new Jaycee chapter



Businessman’s cow ride sponsored by the Jaycees

When we arrived in Gordon we rented a duplex apartment and after just a few months we purchased a vacant lot and began preparation for placing a new modular home there.

Our little house in Chadron had sold quickly and turned a nice profit even though we owned it for less than two years. We closed the loan on our new home in August of 1978. The loan amount was \$28,800 at 9.25% for 20 years with a monthly payment of \$289.00. We placed the modular on a full basement so we had lots of space. The main floor had three bedrooms and two bathrooms.

Our younger daughter Mandi arrived six weeks prematurely on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1979. She spent the first 10 days of her life in an incubator. She was not released from the hospital until she had gained weight beyond her initial birth weight of 4 pounds 8 oz. I could hold her head in one hand her butt in the other and my hands would touch. She was so tiny, but she was really loud and she suffered from colic for weeks after she returned home. Those were hard days even for the ever patient and graceful Mom.

Sometime during the winter of 1979 & 80 I learned that Rainbow Chevrolet in Belle Fourche, SD was available. I made a discreet visit and spoke with the owner “Buzz” Heimbaugh. Mr. Heimbaugh’s father had founded Rainbow Chevrolet in 1927, the dealership was named in honor of the Rainbow Division of World War I fame. Buzz told me the price was \$80,000 and that represented \$60,000 in parts inventory and \$20,000 for furniture, fixtures and equipment. He agreed to leave his used car inventory on consignment. His son Cass worked there and stayed on with me and was a very valuable employee. With the help of my Dad I was able to secure the needed funds to make the purchase and adequately capitalize the business.



M.J. (Buzz) Heimbaugh and Roy March 1980

## Chapter 6

## Belle Fourche the Early Years

*"Too Dumb to Fail"*

We arrived in Belle Fourche the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1980 and moved into our new to us home. When we shopped for available homes there were a total of four homes for sale in Belle. It was a modest 3 bedroom ranch style home with a finished basement. Over the next eighteen years we made many improvements and upgrades. Mortgage rates were high and the seller agreed to carry our mortgage with a five year balloon payment. The interest rate was well below market at 12%. We were fortunate to have sold our Gordon home which provided an acceptable down payment. I was also able to sell my shares in Merchen Chevrolet which allowed me to have some equity in the new dealership since those shares were paid for. In exchange for Dad's co-signature he was issued 49% of the outstanding shares of the new South Dakota Corporation, Letellier Chevrolet, Inc. In spite of difficult business conditions we were able to retire Dad's shares after just 30 months. I was officially awarded the Chevrolet franchise in early July 1980. Company personnel informed me that at 26 years of age, I was the youngest Chevrolet dealer in the United States.



**Signing Chevrolet franchise agreement**

**Letellier Chevrolet — a Brand New Way to Go Chevrolet**




COME IN and meet the new owner, Roy Letellier. It wouldn't be a Grand Opening without him!

If you need another reason to buy a new Chevrolet, we're it! As a brand new dealership, we're eager to please. And our entire staff bears this out, delivering the kind of deals, advice and attention that will win your business and keep you coming back for more sales and service on Chevy cars and trucks.

**Grand Opening -- Thursday, Oct. 30**

**OPEN EXTENDED HOURS** . . . and you'll need it! We have on hand lots of new 1981 Chevrolets that you'll want to look over. And, of course, we're serving good old American refreshments like FREE HOT DOGS and APPLE PIE.

Stop in THURSDAY, OCT. 30 and see the new way to go Chevrolet!

**LETELLIER CHEVROLET**

717 Sixth Avenue  
Belle Fourche



Phone 892-2565



**ON HAND**  
for the celebration will be  
**PAUL TIERNEY**,  
World Champion Calf Roper,  
to hand out autographs.



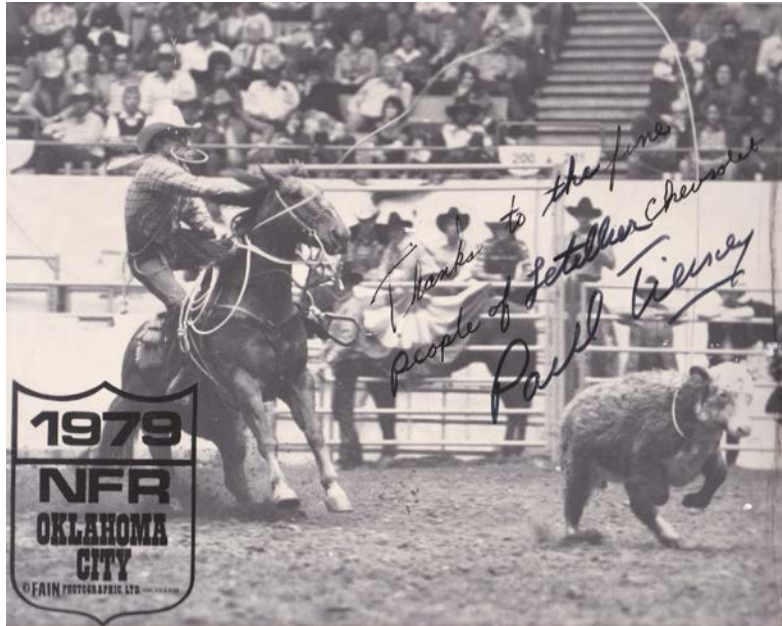
We "branded" our new vehicles

It didn't take too long for some hard realities of business ownership to set in. Payroll came every two weeks; accounts payable were due the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month and floor plan interest on new inventory had risen to 23%. We were fortunate in that we did not have a huge stock of new vehicles and other dealers were more than happy to share inventory with us. While the high interest rates were detrimental to many, Belle Fourche had more than it's share of people who were enjoying 15%-20% returns on their certificates of deposit. These folks were key to our success. I am proud of the fact that during my entire career as an employer I was never late on payroll and my payables were never delinquent. I've always maintained that my business survival was in large part that I was too dumb to think I could fail. However, I know that we were truly blessed by God during that thorny economic time.

We held our "Grand Opening" in conjunction with the "New Car Show". In those days model change occurred in September and it was a much anticipated event in every community. Dealers were required to "hide" the new models until "the day". Invoices weren't issued until that certain date, so dealers weren't able to close deals prior to official new model introduction. PRCA cowboy Paul Tierney was our special guest that day. I met Paul through his then father-in-law who was a customer in Gordon. I had subsequently sold Tierney a truck and remained in touch with him. When we moved to Belle Fourche we agreed to sponsor Paul for the coming year by providing a new



Chevrolet truck for his use on the rodeo circuit. It must have worked well for him because he won All-Around Cowboy in 1981. In turn he cut radio commercials for Letellier Chevrolet. His tag line was: "This is Paul Tierney, I'm ridin' with Roy and you should too."



The truck provided by Letellier Chevrolet



Grand opening celebration of Letellier Chevrolet September 1980

Paul Tierney doing a remote radio interview.

Note Katie and Mandi's matching outfits for the special event

Shortly after we arrived in Belle we began attending the Open Bible Church. We were warmly welcomed by a core group of members. Little did we realize that there was trouble brewing. A new pastor had recently assumed the pastorate over the objections of many of the parishioners. The situation deteriorated and four couples were stripped of their memberships and invited to leave the church. They happened to all be our friends so we accompanied them in their exit along with roughly half of the congregation. This led to the formation of Christian Life Center a church that continues to serve the Belle Fourche community. Kathie and I were charter members of CLC and I was appointed to the original church board. A short time later I experienced a major course correction

in my life. I was returning home late at night after spending too long in the bar, as I stumbled from my car I leaned against a tree in the backyard and I said to myself: “You can’t live like this.” I knew I was being a hypocrite and I was determined not to live two separate lives, and I realized it was time to get serious in my faith journey. I didn’t touch a drop of alcohol for the next twenty-five years and I’ve never again been inebriated. Kathie and I became deeply involved in CLC, both of us taught Sunday school, Kathie was the Church Secretary and custodian, I served on the elder board and even took my turn filling the pulpit when needed. We met in the Seventh Day Adventist church until we out grew that small building and for a short time gathered in one of the local schools. After only a couple years we called a Pastor and made plans to build a church building. The bank was unwilling to loan to the church but they agreed to lend the needed funds to the five board members as individuals. The years that followed were not without challenges at the church, including hiring and firing a pastor, enduring the church split that resulted, and then hiring a replacement. Paul & Judy Howard came to Belle Fourche as our pastor in 1988 and they are still there at CLC.

Our 1982 Christmas letter highlights Katie being crowned “Snow Princess” for the city of Belle Fourche Christmas festivities, Kathie serving as President of her sorority and taking a break from her real estate career. In spite of continued high mortgage rates she enjoyed modest success in the business, however, when she was called on to show homes on Easter Sunday that was a deal breaker. She did resume her real estate career in Arizona after an eighteen year hiatus. That summer we visited Fred and Dorothy at their cabin in northern Minnesota; this began an annual tradition that lasted for many, many years. Fred and I completed a host of “cabin projects” in the succeeding decades. These tasks were most often completed with improper tools and equipment and a sparse budget, all of which led to many entertaining incidents. The lake was the last place we visited during Kathie’s final illness. Big Pine Lake was truly her “happy place”. I recall one year asking the girls if they would like to go to Disneyland or the cabin, and without hesitation they chose the cabin. The memories made at the cabin hold a special place in all our hearts. In the fall of 1982 Kathie and our friend Ree spent twelve days touring the New England states and savoring the autumn scenery and our girls enjoyed a nice long stay with Kathie’s parents in Michigan.





Big Pine Lake, Garrison, MN Kathie's happy place



Big Pine Lake Memories

When we came to Belle Fourche in 1980 there were five new car dealerships, today two remain. I was involved in reducing the census by two. In the late summer of 1983 I learned through the local grapevine that Chrysler had terminated the local dealer for violating his franchise agreement by making an unauthorized location change. Chrysler Corporation was in deep financial trouble in 1979 and was on the verge of bankruptcy. The federal government came to the conclusion that it wasn't in the best interest of the United States to allow that to happen. The government bailed out Chrysler with a \$1.5 billion dollar loan guarantee. Under the charismatic leadership of Lee Iacocca Chrysler made a dramatic comeback with the introduction of the "K" car and memorable

marketing catch phrases like “Rich Corinthian Leather” and the introduction of consumer rebates “Buy a car, get a check.”

I called the Chrysler Zone office in Minneapolis one Friday. I explained who I was and that I understood they had lost their dealer in Belle Fourche and I might be interested in acquiring the franchises. The following Monday morning the Dealer Placement Manager walked into my office and said: “If you buy \$7,000 of parts, \$2,500 of special tools and a \$500 sign you will be our dealer.” My first shipment of cars included a Dodge Caravan. The mini-van was an instant success. Kathie loved her Caravan demonstrators and I sold mini-vans to all our friends with young children. The most profitable attribute of the Chrysler, Plymouth and Dodge franchise was the ability to buy “program cars” at dealer only factory auction sales. We developed a market for current model, low mileage cars. I made the trip to Billings Montana twice each month to attend these sales. During the next eight years we sold hundreds of Dodge Dynasties, K-cars and other Chrysler products. Following our acquisition of the Ford dealership I would fly to Denver twice each month and attend auctions for three days, it made for lots of travel but the returns were well worth the time and effort. No one in our area was doing what we did and that niche became the major profit center for Letellier Motors.

### **Letellier takes over Chrysler dealership**

Roy Letellier, Belle Fourche Chevrolet dealer, announced yesterday that effective immediately he also has been named the Chrysler-Dodge-Plymouth dealer for this area.

Letellier will handle the full line of Chrysler cars plus parts and service. He says, however, that he probably will have no new cars available until the 1984 line comes out in September.

He received the dealership from Chrysler after Tri-State Motors, former local dealer, had terminated its franchise with the company.

Letellier will continue as the local Chevrolet dealer.

Frank Hoffmeyer owned Vanco Motors, the Ford-Mercury dealership in Belle Fourche; he also owned the Buick, Oldsmobile, GMC dealership known as J&F Motors as well as the Ford store in Buffalo, WY. Frank was a good competitor and a friend. We bonded as fellow car dealers along with our shared faith. He was a very busy man who kept long hours and spent many, many hours on the road. It all caught up with him on the night of October 2, 1984. He collided head on with a semi-truck near Lusk, WY. I swore that would never happen to me, and in the hundreds of trips I made to Denver in the coming years I only drove a handful of times. I wasn't willing to risk falling asleep at the wheel like Frank had. It soon became apparent that Frank's widow had neither the ability nor desire to operate a car dealership let alone multiple stores. After a few



months I engaged in conversations with her for the purpose of buying Vanco Motors. By February of 1985 we had come to a verbal agreement and I gave her an earnest money check to seal the deal.

Prior to all of this we had scheduled a trip to Cozumel, Mexico with our friends Lonnie and Janie Humbracht. I explained this to Mrs. Hoffmeyer and she understood and agreed that we would formally complete our deal when we returned in one week.

In planning our trip we decided to save money by flying from Denver on a morning flight, to save a hotel room we planned to drive through the night and arrive in Denver in time to make our departure. We were driving a new Dodge Grand Caravan that unfortunately possessed a design flaw that evidenced itself in extremely cold conditions. Condensation would collect in the air intake, subsequently form ice and choke the air flow to the motor ultimately causing the engine to die. We found ourselves stranded on the side of the road outside Newcastle, WY. In thirty below zero temperature.

Fortunately I knew what the problem was and I was able to use some “reservation ingenuity” and get us going again. We enjoyed our winter break and made many lasting memories, and some of us fell victim to “Montezuma’s Revenge”. In those days Cozumel was not a popular destination for American tourists so communication with the locals was an ongoing challenge. We met only one other English speaking couple the entire week.

Upon our return to Belle Fourche I was devastated to learn the Mrs. Hoffmeyer had broken our agreement and sold Vanco Motors to Ted Carner. Since there was no written agreement I had no legal recourse. In time I accepted the whole situation, knowing that it was in God’s hands. Less than two years later Ted came to me and asked if I still wanted to buy Vanco Motors. Mr. Carner was a veteran car dealer and he had cleaned up the mess that existed following Frank’s death. He proceeded to offer me a much more favorable deal than I had negotiated earlier, including carrying the contract on the business, a model that I used when I sold to Scott Peterson years later. God knew. I terminated my Chevrolet franchise and moved Chrysler to our new location. I took over September 1, 1986 and the dealership became known as Letellier’s Vanco Motors. We represented Ford, Mercury, Chrysler, Plymouth and Dodge.



## Letellier buys Carner-Vanco dealership

Sale of Carner's Vanco Ford in Belle Fourche to Roy Letellier of Letellier Motors, Belle Fourche, was announced here yesterday. The transaction is to become effective July 1.

Letellier, who has been a Chevrolet dealer in Belle Fourche for six years, and more recently also acquired the Dodge, Plymouth franchise, said he is giving up the Chevrolet franchise to take over the Ford line.

Letellier will be moving to the Carner Vanco location on Fifth Avenue and closing out the present downtown facility.

Meanwhile, Ted Carner, who has been in Belle Fourche since March 1985, says his plans are to move on to a larger operation. When that materializes he cannot say.

Carner who came to Belle Fourche from Eugene, Ore., says he and Mrs. Carner hate to leave Belle Fourche. "We hate, especially, to leave the staff here. They are a fine group of people," said Carner, "and part of the agreement is that all of the staff will be retained."

This came up suddenly, said Carner, "two months ago we were looking for a place to build a house."



no cell #, email or website



1986

As our business thrived and evolved so did our little family. Kathie described Katie's first grade in the Christmas letter of 1983: "She loves learning to read and recess, but despises hot lunch. She likes her teacher, but doesn't like the boys. She was chosen to be a flower girl for the high school homecoming coronation." Mandi started Kindergarten in 1984, and after struggling in public school, mid way through her third grade year we made the decision to home school her. She thrived under her Mom's tutelage and when Katie was ready for 7<sup>th</sup> grade she asked if she could be taught at home as well. Both girls took piano and dance lessons and were active in 4-H. Home schooling was far from main stream in the late 1980's and the state required home visits by the local school district Superintendent. During one such visit Kathie informed him of our upcoming travel plans. In preparation for this adventure the girls had written letters to the tourism department of all fifty states telling them of our intentions and asking for pertinent information about their state. I had acquired an older motor home and our plan was to tour the quadrants of the United States in four separate tours of three weeks each. Kathie was very concerned that Superintendent O'Dea would disapprove. However, his response was, "I wish every student could have this opportunity." When Katie attended SBA her geography instructor told us: "We haven't yet studied anywhere Katie hasn't been". We have many treasured memories of those trips. Ultimately we visited 39 states traveling through the NE in the fall, the SE during Dec. of 1990 and the SW in March of '91. A typical day would involve breakfast in the RV, we would then spend the day touring whatever was planned for the day. In the evening we would head to the next destination often eating on the move. The girls each had a bunk so they could do school work in there own space. I had acquired a small TV with a video cassette player integrated in it and Katie would take video classes as we traveled. We

would often arrive at our campground late at night. One morning after pulling into our spot in the wee hours I struck up a conversation with an older gentleman who we were parked by and apologized for the late night disturbance. He looked at us and our little girls and he said, “You’re doing it right.” He continued, “We are eighty years old and our kids are making us do this.” I’ve never forgotten that and I still appreciate the wisdom he shared. We were fortunate and disciplined enough to travel a great deal before our “kids made us”. Kathie and I took a number of trips to escape the nasty South Dakota winters including: Mazatlan, St. Thomas, Bahamas and Kauai, Hawaii a couple times. There are too many, many adventures and experiences to share, but I will include my favorite. We were traveling the Gulf States and studying the Civil War and we visited numerous battlefields and memorials of that bloody conflict. The girls were on “Civil War Overload”. Katie coined a phrase at a certain statue that we stopped at. We approached the monument and she quickly looked it up and down and said “Very pretty, let’s go.” We agreed to have a “fun day” and visit the amusement park Six Flags over Georgia located in Atlanta. I drove late into the night and arrived at a campground near the park. We pulled our motor home into the empty parking lot first thing Monday morning. (Picture the movie “*Griswold Family Vacation*”) We were informed “the park is closed on Monday.” Disappointed, but undeterred Kathie and the girls searched their trusty file box from the tourism departments and soon found a hands on science museum, located in downtown Atlanta. With Kathie’s navigational help, in due time we arrived at the museum, only to be told “the museum is closed on Monday”. It was at that point I made a serious tactical error. I suggested that she should have somehow known the museum’s schedule. The atmosphere got very cold and completely silent in the coach. Consider that GPS and cell phones didn’t exist, every street in downtown Atlanta GA is Peachtree something, my navigator was on strike and there were no parking spaces for an RV. Naturally I was more than a little upset, but as I wandered aimlessly, I began to cool down and when I spied a directional sign for the “Carter Presidential Library”, I was sure of my solution. I followed the signs, finally arriving in the library parking lot. I was quite pleased with myself and proudly announced “Here we are the “Carter Presidential Library.” Kathie crossed her arms and through gritted teeth replied “I didn’t like him when he was president and I’m not going to his library.” We finally salvaged the day by touring Stone Mountain, then the girls went shopping and I got in a round of golf.





**Kathie called it a “Gypsy Wagon”**

**At the Alamo**



**The US Capitol 1990**



**Getting to know the Mains girls**

**Our bonus daughter Jess entered our lives during Mandi’s early elementary school years. They quickly became best friends and Jess and her family have been an integral part of our family ever since. Sometimes she accompanied us to the lake on our annual summer trips and when it came time for high school she and Mandi both became Sunshine “Crusaders”.**





Jess and Mandi best buds



Crusader girls



Trouble



SCHOOL SAYS THANKS — Elementary Principal Bill O'Dea (right) presented a Friend of Education Award to Kathie Letellier at last week's Chamber of Commerce luncheon during American Education Week. Kathie received the award for her volunteer work performed in the elementary grades.

During the home schooling years Kathie organized a home educator's co-op that provided a variety of opportunities for home schoolers in the Northern Hills. Among other things they sponsored a science fair and various fine arts events. When Mandi went into 6<sup>th</sup> grade and Katie left home to attend SBA she added a second student: Nicky, her mother Marge and Kathie shared the teaching responsibilities. The following year Kathie and I (mostly Kathie) founded Belle Fourche Christian School. We were allowed to use the Christian Life Center facility for the first two years. BFCS started with 11 students and two teachers: Kathie and Cindy Roberts. The following year there were 19 students and 7 staff. Kathie taught and acted as the administrator. She routinely would work from 7 AM until 5:30, and return to the school after our evening meal until sometime after midnight. The third year BFCS used space in the First Baptist church. Following that year we formed a 5013c and turned the school over to a board of directors. Kathie taught at BFCS for a total of five years and then handed off her responsibilities to others when we relocated to Arizona. Now thirty two years after the school's humble beginnings it is known as Black Hills Christian Academy with nearly two hundred students K-12. BHCA has honored Kathie's memory with a "*Legacy of the Lion, Kathie Letellier Memorial Scholarship*". As a family we are honored and pleased that one of the first recipients is a daughter of one of the schools original students.

The following are a small sample of notes she received and require no explanation, Kathie left her mark on so many.

May 24, 1995

Dear Mrs. Litellier,

I just wanted to thank you for helping me change my life and helping me to see Jesus. You opened my eyes to His teachings and helped me understand their meanings.

Thank you also for your encouraging words about my poetry. It's people like you who give me inspiration for my writing.

I want you to know this has been the best year of my life and I'm glad I could share it with you.

I will be thinking of you a lot next year and through the years to come. I'll keep in touch.

Love Always,  
Debbie J. Carlson



Words surely can't express my thankfulness to you for the part you have played in teaching our sons; giving them A "Solid Rock" foundation in so many areas. The vision you've had for our youth is so valuable & you've done so much to impart it & share it with so many. You have walked a hard road in this Area, But I think of you as "An over-comer" and a "Trail blazer"! You have opened the way that many will be able to come. What An Awesome thing to know God used you to plant so much I believe we will reap what we sow & you have sewed into so many lives, Thank you! I've gained so much in being able to work with you & watch you "organize" and pull together so many things that otherwise would have fallen. I thank God for the Blessings of your Friendship too.

**Dawn Newland**





6-4-98

ABC.123.XYZ.ABC.123.XYZ.ABC.123.XYZ

A colorful illustration of school supplies. On the left, a yellow and white striped pencil holder with a red heart contains a yellow ruler, a pair of scissors, and two pencils. Behind it is a small chalkboard with a wooden frame, showing the numbers 0, 1, 2, 3 and the letters A, B, C. To the right of the pencil holder is a red apple with a green leaf. In front of the apple are two books: one with a blue cover labeled 'SCIENCE' and one with a red cover labeled 'MATH'. The background is a light blue sky with a yellow sun.

Friends forever,  
Heidi

Dear Kathie,

After you left the school on Monday, I just sat at my desk to reminisce over the years that you have been a part of my life. I know me too well to know that I could never express my feelings to you face to face just because the words wouldn't come out right.

Without your friendship through my married years, my life could have ended up very differently. Lots of events have transpired in fifteen years, and you have faithfully stood with me. Thank you for being there for me. I want you to know God has used you to help shape me into a godly wife first; a godly mother second; and third, a godly teacher. (Some of the best lesson plans I made were those of my first year of teaching. I still rely on them heavily!) Thank you for living out your Christian walk for me. You have given me far more than I could ever repay. Thank you.

It is very hard for me to see you move from Belle Fourche. I took for granted that you would always be here. But I know that it is only selfish of me so I will trust God to finish the work in me that has been started. I am filled with confidence because of Him. I pray for only the best for you and Roy as you spend these years together in fulfilling some of your dreams.

From the bottom of my heart--I will miss you greatly and I love you. May God go with my special friend always. A favorite chorus of mine, "Lord, bind us together with love...."

Lots of love,  
Valynn





Belle Fourche Christian School staff and student body 1992



Belle Fourche Christian School staff and student body 1993

**In the summer of 1988 I was asked to serve on the Sunshine Bible Academy Advisory Council. The following year I was elected to the SBA board, I served nine years and acted as board secretary the entire time. The board convened monthly and meetings were held on campus which is 300 miles from Belle Fourche a four and a half hour drive. Our meetings routinely lasted eight hours or more so it made for very long days. For several years there were four of the nine board members that lived west of SBA. All of us were alumni and well acquainted. Lyle Weiss is a pilot and owned a plane so sometimes we would drive to his ranch and fly from there. That would cut my driving time in half so that helped a lot. The first several times we flew Lyle would land on highway 45 that passes in front of the SBA campus then taxi onto the school property. Apparently on one occasion we frightened a driver as we were taking off and they complained to the local sheriff, after that we landed in Miller and someone would come to town and pick us up. My time on the board was marked by the normal financial and personnel challenges. I vividly remember a particular annual meeting. New advisory council members are seated at this meeting which is held in June of each year. Karl was a new council member and he owned a commercial roofing company. There ensued a long discussion with him regarding the main building roof. I groused silently about the waste of time. I thought, “We can’t even make payroll, why are we talking about a roof?” God taught me an unmistakable lesson a few weeks later when a hailstorm struck the SBA campus and destroyed every roof on campus and broke scores of windows. We were well insured and the premium was current. Using the insurance proceeds and a lot of volunteer labor we were able to not only repair all of the damage but do many other building enhancements as well. As penance I spent about ten days doing roofing and window installation.**

**At the other end of the spectrum for volunteer board service was the Ford Dealer Advertising Fund. I was chosen to serve on that board and it was great duty. The “Rocky Mountain Ford Dealers” purpose was to promote Ford products in our area which stretched from Northern New Mexico to Belle Fourche on the North and included all of Colorado, Wyoming and western South Dakota. Each new vehicle included a dollar amount that was credited to the fund and the board responsibility was to administer the expenditure of those funds in cooperation with the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. Each month we would brainstorm with agency representatives regarding promotional ideas and approve scripts and budgets. We were reimbursed for all travel expense and every year at Christmas we enjoyed a luxurious Christmas party in Denver; our wives joined us and they were treated to a shopping expedition all at the expense of the fund. Each summer featured a family outing at a high end resort. I**

always played golf and Kathie and the girls went on a variety of adventures. We weren't allowed to spend our own money on anything; the days would conclude with dinner at a five star restaurant. Ordering a meal was always a challenge for the girls. On one occasion Mandi wanted a burger and of course they didn't have that. They did offer to grind up a filet but she opted to share a chateaubriand with her Dad.

My Dad died September 17, 1988 at the age of 80. He was afflicted with Alzheimer's for several years before he passed. Since I am approaching the age of his onset, and the fact that my grandfather and several uncles suffered from this disease, I am motivated to complete this work while I'm still able to remember who I am. Loyd Letellier was a great man and with the benefit of seven decades of hindsight his stature increases and his legacy is carried on through his descendants. As a little boy I was allowed to ride along when Dad would show bull buyers his herd. I got to open the gates, but more importantly I observed my Dad's low pressure selling technique. He had total confidence in his product and he allowed his livestock to sell itself, only occasionally pointing out the attributes. I think that unintentional education made me very comfortable in the sales game. He taught me the value of work and that there is dignity in work. Knowing how to work has served me well all of my life, it's an invaluable characteristic that is near extinction in today's world. Most importantly he taught me generosity, not verbally but rather through the way he would discreetly and without fanfare support causes he believed in. My Dad fully embraced the following words of Jesus: *"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."*

My Dad didn't amass a large estate here on earth, but I'm thinking he has a big ranch in heaven.

In typical Letellier manner his obituary is brief and understated.

Loyd Edward Letellier, - was born December 22, 1907 on a farm near Centralia, Kansas, to James and Anna (Fanning) Letellier. As a boy, he moved with the family to a ranch near Gregory, South Dakota where they lived for three years before moving to a farm near Page City, Kansas. He was reared and graduated from high school in the Page City area. In the 1930's the family moved to a ranch near Norris, South Dakota. Loyd purchased the present ranch LEL Hereford Ranch, near Norris, South Dakota, in the mid 1930's. Loyd was united in marriage to Esther Marousek on August 24, 1940, in Rapid City, South Dakota. They farmed and ranched near Norris where they raised registered Hereford cattle and Chester White pigs. Due to health reasons, Loyd moved into the Kadoka Nursing Home in June of 1987, where he received excellent care. Loyd was a charter member of the Norris Union Church, which later became known as the Norris Bible Church. He helped start the Sunshine Bible Academy, was a board member and on its advisory council until 1976 and he was elected to the Academy's Hall of Fame in 1978. He was a 4-H leader for twenty years and was a member of the Rosebud Hereford Association. Grateful for having shared his life are his wife, Esther, of Norris; four sons, James Letellier of Norris, Reverend Don Letellier of Wewela, South Dakota, Reverend Glen Letellier of Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and Roy Letellier



of Belle Fourche, South Dakota; two daughters, Dorothy (Mrs. Fred) Peterson of Minnetonka, Minnesota, and Alice (Mrs. Gary) White of Marquette, Michigan; 16 grandchildren; three brothers, Ralph Letellier of Onida, South Dakota, Bill and Gale Letellier, both of Belvidere, South Dakota; three sisters, Nellie (Mrs. Bird) Patterson of Kadoka, South Dakota, Madeline (Mrs. Ken) Barney of Hill City, South Dakota, and Evelyn (Mrs. Sydney) Sterling of Sun Lake, Arizona; and a host of other relatives and friends. Loyd was preceded in death by his parents and two brothers, Emile and Byron Letellier.

He died Saturday, September 17, 1988 aged 80 years, eight months, 25 days. Services at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, September 20, 1988 at Norris Bible Church, Norris, South Dakota with Reverend Dwayne Snell officiating. Mrs. Clyde Brewer, Pianist; Mrs. Harry Merchen, Jr. and Mrs. Boyd Porch, Vocalists; Mrs. William Weller, Accompanist, John Kaiser and Harry Merchen Jr., Ushers. Active pallbearers: Evan Bligh, Richard Totton, Ray Berry, Gale Letellier, John Healy and Dan Eggebraaten. Interment in Norris Cemetery, Norris, South Dakota.

## Chapter 7

### Belle Fourche to Pierre and Back

*"Better to be silent and thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt."*

As the end of the 1980's approached I became increasingly disenchanted with the car business. While the dealership was financially very successful it was no longer fun. I used to say that "however many employees plus their wives and family members, that how many problems you had." I understood that the employees were my greatest asset and along with that my greatest responsibility, and over a period of time that burden and what I considered to be my lack of options weighed heavily on me. At that time the outlook for rural towns in SD looked bleak. Agriculture continued to face difficult times and young people saw no future in staying in small town South Dakota. I would lie awake at night and fret. I was worried that no one in their right mind would be willing to invest the kind of money the dealership represented in the small town of Belle Fourche. I knew that the dealership had value; it was, as I referred to it, "a money machine." Frankly, I had little to do with the success, I was fortunate to have inherited some good employees and I brought some good ones with me from Letellier Motors. Between my frequent trips to Billings and Denver for auctions and regular vacations I was away from the store many days each month and in general it functioned fine with out my presence. Sometime after our return from our last motor home trip in the spring of 1991, one night I woke up and the name Scott Peterson came to my mind, and that proved to be providential. The next morning I visited Scott at his small used car lot in Belle. We walked into his office and I closed the door behind me and asked "have you ever wanted to own a new car store?" He replied in the affirmative and I said "well how would you like to have mine?" Scott and Susan took over September 1, 1991. I owned Letellier's Vanco Motors for exactly five years. I quickly found that drawing interest was a lot more fun than paying interest. I carried the contract on the business and real estate. Scott made payments to me for ten years and was never late or missed a payment. We used the template that Ted Carner had in his contract with me and it worked out great for all parties and I'm very proud to say that we remain friends to this day. When Scott and I were hammering out the details of the transaction, I told him "the car business will make an old man out of you." He later described the business: "car years are like dog years." Scott and Susan were very successful and I'm honored to have had a small part in that success. They operated Scott Peterson Motors for a few

months shy of thirty years. When they sold several of my former employees were still working there.

After the sale was made public, I was asked by the local newspaper reporter what I was going to do. I replied that “I was going to help Carl Smith.” (Carl was a local retiree) She responded “Well Carl Smith doesn’t do anything” and I said “that’s right.” I was 38 years old at the time. I rented office space in Dr. Jewett’s building and the next few months I played all the golf I could. The following January Kathie, Mandi and I spent three weeks in Kauai along with our college friend John Lane his wife Jan and their two boys. Kaitey, much to her chagrin stayed in South Dakota as a freshman at SBA. I’m not sure she’s ever quite forgiven us for that. By the time we returned home we had made the decision that I would run for a seat in the South Dakota House of Representatives. This was not my first foray into politics. Not long after we moved to Belle I agreed to run for City Council, my heart was not in it and I didn’t campaign or make any effort. In spite of that I finished second in a three way race. That was the first election I’m glad I lost. It would have been detrimental to my business at that particular time. I was later appointed to the City Planning Commission which proved to be educational and enjoyable.

Every ten years following the national census states are required to adjust legislative districts to reflect any population shifts. In 1992 Belle Fourche was moved into District 29 which was primarily made up of Meade County. That resulted in there being three incumbent representatives residing in the new district. Representative Chuck Mateer lived in Belle Fourche; Ken McNenny came from rural Meade County as did Marie Ingalls. Marie was my brother Jim’s wife Marjorie’s aunt and I was acquainted with her. I spoke with her and told her that I intended to run but I didn’t want to run against her and that if she ran for the house I’d run for the Senate seat. Marie chose to run for Senate so that left me pitted against the other two incumbents. I didn’t have a clue how to run a campaign, but when we returned from our vacation I told myself, “This is my job now.” I became aware of a “candidate school” sponsored by the Heritage Foundation, it was held in Bismarck ND and I traveled there to take part. We were taught the nut and bolts of conducting and winning a political campaign. I returned home with a clear understanding of very specific tasks I needed to accomplish. Every campaign needs to know the answer to a couple of basic questions: How many votes are needed to win? And who will be voting in this election? The answers to these questions can be found in voter registration list and histories, both available to the public. In 1992 these records were only available in printed form so identifying primary election voters was a long and tedious job. When the records became available in digital form, what took me many days could be accomplished in a few minutes. When that task was complete I had a list of people that I knew would likely vote. I then sorted the list by street and developed a “walking list”. Each day I would drive to Sturgis and knock on the selected doors, I took my time to chat with people and let them feel like they knew me. Representative Mateer was a retiree and the public perception was that he didn’t do much, so I adopted the slogan “Vote for active representation.” I worked 6-7 days a

week for four solid months, I was determined to leave no stone unturned. We assembled a team of volunteers that worked along side of us. The voters rewarded our efforts and I garnered the most votes outpacing both incumbents.



**Belle Fourche**

# Black Hills Pioneer



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## Letellier wins, Ingalls calls for recount

By SHANE L. MOFF

**BELLE FOURCHE** — The hard work and months of campaigning paid off for Belle Fourche's Roy Letellier as he led the pack in Tuesday's Republican house of representatives primary, June 2, with 1,763 votes.

In District #29's Republican Senate primary, Les Kleven squeaked by Marie Ingalls with a narrow 15 votes, 1408 to 1393. Ingalls took Belle County 462 to 390, but Kleven won Meade County.

"It was close enough that I will be calling for a recount," said Ingalls.

Once the votes are canvassed next week in Meade County she has 48 days to call for a re-count, she added.

Traditionally only a few recounts have changed an election's results.

In District #29's House primary, Letellier took both Butte and Meade Counties handily down. Chuck Maser placed second in Butte County with an unofficial 460 votes but lost to Kenney McNeeny in Meade County.

In the Butte County Council's Republican primary race, Dr. Michael Glanzer won by 86 votes more than Russ Miltiken's 514.

Another close race occurred in the Republican primary between Commissioner Bill Hannah and challenger Dick Plummer. Hannah won by 28 votes. Plummer took Ward IV, Precinct One, while Hannah took the other two precincts.

In District #28 Bill Johnson defeated Ed Walker for the Republican Senate nomination 1,312 to 718. The Democratic contest was much closer with Richard Waddell taking it soundly with 705 votes, followed by Rocky LeCompte with 471 and Richard Zacher with 280.

Unless an independent candidate declares their candidacy the following people will enter office unopposed: Lane Kell - Butte County Treasurer; John Fitzgerald - Butte County State's Attorney; Dick Rader - Butte County Commissioner from District Four; Della Wubard - state House of Representatives District #28B.

"I'm pleased of course," said Kleven. "Doing something about property taxes is important and the people of Butte will see how important after the re-assessment is finished."

"I guess we worked as hard as we could in the time frame we had," said Ingalls. "It was a good positive campaign. I'm pleased the people of Butte County supported me."

"I was surprised to win first," said Letellier. "The work paid off. We worked harder than anyone else."

"I'm proud of the way all three of us ran the campaign. We dealt with qualifications, philosophy and issues. I learned to respect the other candidates and appreciate them."

"We're very grateful for the support of the voters of Butte and Meade County."

"I'm just happy to be re-elected," said McNeeny. "I'll be working on the interim tax study this summer. I'd be willing to visit with anyone on any subject."

"Letellier worked long and hard and the effort paid off for him," said Maser. "I wish him good luck on his endeavors. I bought a fishing license and I'm going fishing."

"I was happy to be re-elected," said Hannah. "I hope to continue to do a good job representing all the people in Butte County."

"I wish Bill well," said Plummer. "Obviously he has a tough job. The majority of the people didn't agree with my statements."




## Are You Tired?

TIRED OF  
INCREASED TAXES?

TIRED OF  
MORE REGULATIONS?

TIRED OF ERODING  
FAMILY VALUES?



**VOTE  
FOR A  
CHANGE**

Vote for  
Active  
Representation


Vote for

# ROY LETELLIER

House of Representatives - District 29


Paid for by Letellier for Legislature Committee, Rod Horn, Treasurer,  
615 5th Avenue, Belle Fourche, SD 57717

## Have you seen this man?



Probably. That's Roy Letellier, candidate for District 29 House of Representatives. For the last several weeks he's been talking with people in every neighborhood of Sturgis, introducing himself and listening to your concerns.

If he missed you and you would like to visit with him, please call him at 892-2925.



**"I PLEDGE TO REPRESENT  
DISTRICT 29 WITH ENERGY AND  
COMMITMENT"**

ON JUNE 2nd VOTE FOR  
ACTIVE REPRESENTATION.  
VOTE FOR

# ROY LETELLIER

Paid for by Letellier for Legislature Committee, Rod Horn, Treasurer,  
615 5th Avenue, Belle Fourche, SD 57717





I don't promise  
to turn the S.D.  
Legislature  
upside down

... if elected I *WILL* represent District 29  
in an ACTIVE and upright manner!

**VOTE FOR A CHANGE!**

Vote for  
Active Representation!  
Vote for Republican

**ROY LETELLIER**

Paid for by Letellier for Legislature Committee, Rod Horn, Treasurer,  
615 5th Avenue, Belle Fourche, SD 57717

## ATTENTION BUTTE COUNTY!

For the past 12 years I have  
worked hard to earn your respect  
and business. Now I'm asking  
you to allow me to represent you  
in the South Dakota House of  
Representatives.

I need your support. Vote for  
a change. **VOTE FOR ACTIVE  
REPRESENTATION!**



VOTE FOR

**ROY LETELLIER**

**DISTRICT 29**

Paid for by Letellier for Legislature Committee,  
Rod Horn, Treasurer, 615 5th Avenue, Belle Fourche, SD 57717

ELECT  
**ROY LETELLIER**  
ON  
**NOVEMBER 3RD**

VOTE FOR  
ACTIVE REPRESENTATION



**SOUTH DAKOTA  
HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES  
DISTRICT 29**

**I'd walk a mile**



**to earn your vote**

Recently I've been walking in every  
neighborhood in Belle Fourche, listening to  
your concerns and asking for your  
support.

I pledge to go the "extra mile" as your  
Republican representative in Pierre.



VOTE FOR A CHANGE

VOTE FOR  
ACTIVE REPRESENTATION

VOTE FOR

**ROY LETELLIER**

Paid for by Letellier for Legislature Committee, Rod Horn, Treasurer,  
615 5th Avenue, Belle Fourche, SD 57717



### WHO

Roy is a veteran Belle Fourche businessman noted for his success in business at a young age. He came to Belle Fourche in 1980 and successfully owned and operated **Letellier's Vanco Motors** until he sold the business in the fall of 1991.

Roy grew up on a ranch south of Kadoka, SD. His grandfather homesteaded in Meade County in 1908, and his mother was born there. Roy understands the concerns and challenges that face agriculture today.

Roy's community and career involvement include, chairman of the Belle Fourche Planning Commission, chairman of the Middle School Parents Who Care, director of the South Dakota Auto Dealers, vice-chairman of the Ford Dealer Advertising Fund. He also serves on the board of directors of a private school, and as chairman of the board of his church, the Christian Life Center.



ROY & KATHIE LETELLIER

### WHY

Roy will bring **experience, leadership, family values, financial conservatism**, and the value of **small business experience** to the Legislature. He understands South Dakota stating, "...small business must be successful in order for South Dakota Communities to survive." Roy's **common sense** approach to decision making will provide an **active voice** in the legislative process. "I promise to **listen and learn** from the people of District 29."



AMANDA (13) & KAITEY (15)

**WHAT** does Roy think about the issues?

#### Family Values:

"Traditional family values are the backbone of society. Diligent care should be given to the preservation of these values."

#### Taxes:

"Rather than seeking ways to raise taxes, let's explore ways to prudently reduce costs."

#### Education:

"We need local control rather than government regulations. We need to decide what is best for us."

#### Life:

"I believe in the sanctity of life."

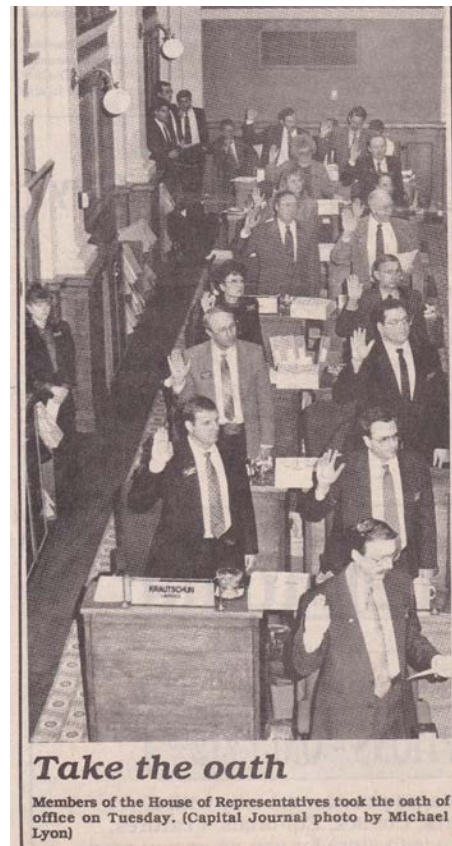
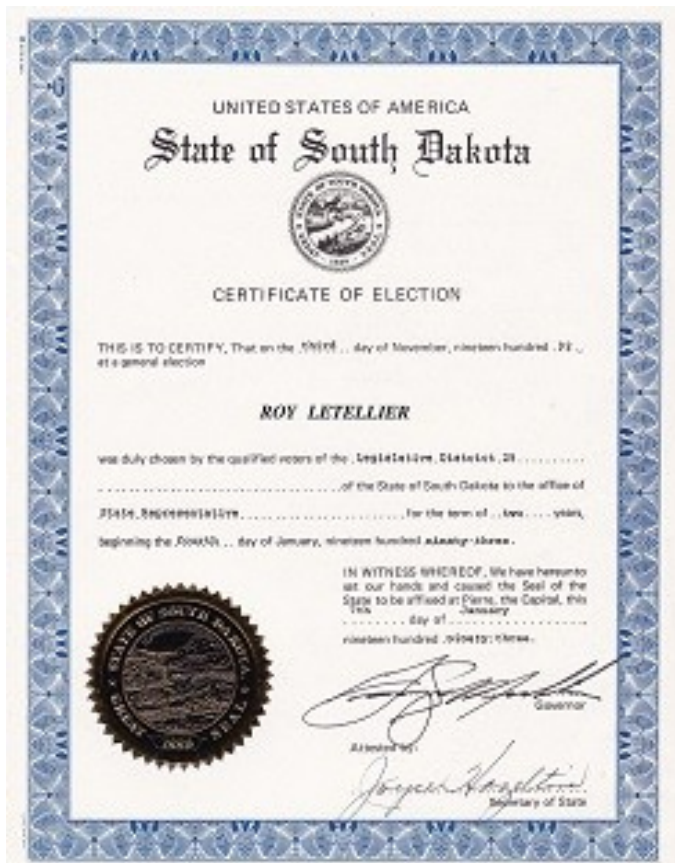
PAID FOR BY LETELLIER FOR LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE.  
ROD HORN, TREASURER, 615 5TH AVENUE, BELLE FOURCHE, SD 57717.



Trying to fit in by riding a horse in Faith Stock Show parade



Ken McNenny and me in Belle Fourche parade





Newly elected SD legislature Class of 1993



Desk Sign



Name badge

After winning the primary we thought that we were home free, however, an Independent candidate surfaced and the campaign continued. Representative Kenny McNenny and I teamed up for the general election and dispatched the Independent quite handily. Immediately following the general election the volume of mail soared. I was surprised that I was abruptly being referred to as the Honorable Roy Letellier. One of the other freshman related that his young son asked “Dad why is your mail addressed to the Horrible Doug Biersbach?”





Legislator entrance to Capitol



Campaign photo 1991

**I put in long days during my terms as State Representative. I was often the first member to arrive in the early morning hours and the capitol building was silent and majestic. Even after entering that space hundreds of times I was always in awe of the splendor of the capitol and my insignificance in the whole scheme of our history. The building is spectacular and has been restored to its original beauty. Kathie enjoyed giving tours to visitors as part of her Capitol Club duties.**

**I kept a journal during my first term. I had never read it until recently as I've gathered information for these memories. I was appointed to the Commerce and Taxation Committees, both of which I enjoyed and was able to contribute to. I served on several summer study committees dealing with taxation issues along with several sub-committees and task forces. According to my journal I wrote the talking points for the leadership television appearance regarding the property tax legislation during my second year. I had the opportunity to meet with Governor Mickelson on many occasions and we got along well. On one occasion he invited me to accompany him on a flight to an event in my district, unfortunately the weather intervened and that trip was cancelled.**



I became a member of two legislative organizations: The first: The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is a conservative non-partisan organization of conservative legislators, and representatives of the private sector from around the country. It advances a limited government pro-enterprise agenda. I was appointed to the Real Estate, Banking and Financial Services Task Force. The Midwest Council of State Governments is made up of Legislators from eleven Midwestern states and I was appointed to a newly formed committee dealing with Midwest-Mexico trade. In connection with these committees I traveled to Washington D.C. San Antonio, Texas, Traverse City, Michigan, Madison, Wisconsin and Jackson Hole, Wyoming. In my second term I was appointed to the Rules Review Committee. This committee was made up of five members and was tasked with examining the rules various departments had produced in accordance with legislation. We met at the capitol once each month while the legislature was not in session. The volume was staggering, each month we would receive a six to twelve inch stack of papers containing administrative rules. These rules carried the force of law but were created by unelected bureaucrats. Many times these rules betrayed the legislative intent. The review process was tedious, thankless and time consuming.

Traditionally state agency and department legislation is introduced in the early days of the session without a member sponsor. One day early in my first session we heard a bill introduced by the Secretary of State that would allow that office to accept credit cards for payment of fees. Having been accustomed to accepting “plastic” in my business, I assumed this should be a no-brainer. I was wrong. There was concern that if the fee happened to be \$10.00, because of the merchant fee the state would not be getting the entire statutory fee. I argued that by sending an invoice the state was not actually netting the statutory fee either. The bill passed out of committee and since I had spoken favorably in committee I was assigned to carry it on the floor. Several days later my mother surprised me with a visit to the capitol. That was the same day I had to pitch the Secretary of State’s credit card bill. Each legislative day members meet with their respective caucus and preview the day’s calendar. The bill’s sponsor explains his bill and answers questions. This was the first time I spoke in caucus and I was scared to death and dreaded having to speak on the floor. I briefly described the bill’s purpose. My friend Rex voiced his concerns regarding the bill and told the caucus that he might offer an amendment or maybe just try and kill it. The more he spoke the more nervous became. Finally I said “I don’t care what you do with this bill, just don’t embarrass me, my mother’s here today.” I unwittingly brought the house down with laughter. I recall our leader looking at me red-faced with mirth and saying “I think you got your votes.” The bill passed with over sixty votes.

As the days passed I became much more comfortable with the legislative process and like many freshman legislators grew to like the sound of my own voice and made way too many floor speeches. That year one of the controversial bills was a bill that required the use of seat belts on public roads. While I wasn’t opposed to a seat belt law, I loathed the fact that federal highway funds would be withheld unless we enacted this law. I

decided to have some fun and introduced an amendment that if a motorist was cited for speeding, his speed would be reduced by 10 MPH if the driver was wearing a seat belt. My amendment failed, rightly, but we had some laughs in the process.

The video lottery was only a couple of years old during that first session and we had a number of bills dealing with it. I was a vocal opponent of all things video lottery; I believed it was an insidious and improper method of raising revenue. The Governor introduced a bill that would have added additional machines. In caucus our leader asked if anyone could not support the bill. I was the only one that raised my hand, I explained my position and when I finished, one by one several other members also raised their hands; before long Majority Leader Gabriel observed, “well that’s that” and that was the end of it. One person can make a difference.

I recall very few votes that were difficult decisions. I knew my guiding principles and was comfortable sticking to them. I wasn’t intimidated to vote in the minority. That first term I personally read each and every bill and with the help of colleagues and lobbyists came to a clear understanding of every issue. As time went by I became trusted counsel for a number of my fellow representatives. In my four years I was the standard bearer for all things auto dealer related, most were not controversial and passed with large majorities. In addition, I became heavily involved in work to provide property tax relief and I enjoyed that very much.

I was honored to serve with some of the finest and most sincere people I’ve ever known. The South Dakota legislature is truly a “citizen’s legislature”. By virtue of the short session and paltry salary, members cannot rely on their legislative income so they have to possess some additional form of income to survive. The colleagues I served with were there for the right reasons, each one wanted to do what, in their opinion, was the best for the state and their constituency. I established close friendships with several members that have endured for more than thirty years.

Every Thursday morning at 6:45 AM Catacombs Caucus convened in the Governor’s large conference room. This gathering was made up of legislators of both parties, lobbyists, and other state officer holders. We would gather for a short Bible Study and time of prayer and fellowship, it was a welcome and refreshing break from our normal routine. I was privileged to be the featured speaker on several occasions. The legislative days can be long and sometimes monotonous. Committee meetings began around 8:00 AM they could last until noon, but normally were finished by 10:00 AM. That left free time until noon when there was usually some type of sponsored lunch. Caucuses convened for one hour at 1:00 PM and each day roll was called for regular session at 2:00 PM. The early days of session were usually quite brief but with each passing week the work load increased. We were invited to attend many social events sponsored by various industries and special interests and politicians are never inclined to miss a free meal. My journal often comments on the good food. There were also hospitality rooms that were open any time we weren’t in session. Many ideas were discussed over the snacks and drinks in these informal gatherings. During my first term I often returned to the floor of the House after the evening event to study bills. Unfortunately, other members were usually there and study time was really a “bull session”. Kristie Fiegen,

**John Koskan, and Roger Hunt were regulars and we formed a close and trusted bond. During the day we would seclude ourselves to study in the library located in the Legislative Staff office, away from other members and lobbyists.**

**Since the sessions are only constitutionally required to convene for 40 days one year and 35 the next, members must acquire temporary housing. Many simply rent hotel rooms for the duration. My first year I stayed at the Ramkota, it's a nice hotel and convention center where many evening events were held, so it was very convenient. In subsequent years I rented private homes, and that proved to be much better. My second year we rented a townhouse just down the street within walking distance from the capitol. This worked out very well. Kathie was able to spend quite a lot of time in Pierre and Kaitey was able to join us while she served as a page. Kaitey and I would often travel from Pierre to Belle Fourche together for weekend breaks. Most weekends Senator Kleven, Representative McNenny and I would have constituent meetings called "Cracker Barrels". We would let folks know what we had been doing and what legislation was coming up. Attendees were given the opportunity to express the opinions on any pertinent issue. These meetings were helpful in learning the wishes of our constituents and allowed us to educate them on the nuances of various bills. Representative McNenny had a favorite story that he told something like this: "A carpet installer finished a job and as he surveyed his work he noticed a small bump in the middle of the room, he reached in his pocket for his cigarettes and found them missing. Rather than pulling back the newly laid carpet, he simply took his hammer and smashed the bump. While he was putting his tools away in his work van he noticed his cigarettes on the dash. A few moments later the lady of the house asked him if he had seen her daughter's hamster." The moral of the story is: "things aren't always as they appear."**

**Legislative salary is set statutorily and was an issue that came up every session. At that time we were paid \$8,000 for our two year term. In addition, we received a daily per diem that was set for all state employees. The per diem and mileage reimbursement ended up about the same as our salary. One Cracker Barrel, Senator Kleven said to those gathered, "Well, we've got a pay increase bill coming up. How many here think we should raise legislators pay?" Not a single hand went up. I spoke up and said, "I personally don't care, but I've figured it out and you're paying me about a dollar an hour and I hope you feel like you're getting your money's worth." While the actual legislative session only convened for a total of 75 days each 2 year term, the job required attention year around. There were many local and state meeting, summer studies, constituent service and more. Since I was "retired" I was able to devote time to discretionary tasks that many members could not.**



*South Dakota House of Representatives*

**ROY LETELLIER**

615 5TH AVE. BELLE FOURCHE, SD 57717

605-892-2925

COMMITTEES  
COMMERCE  
TAXATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 21, 1994

The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) has announced that Representative Roy Letellier (R-Belle Fourche) compiled a 100% voting record on the issues that NFIB deemed of special importance to small business during the 1993 and 1994 legislative sessions. These votes included bills regarding Worker's Compensation Reform, Age Discrimination, Health Care Mandates, and a variety of other legislative proposals.

Small businesses are a powerful contributor to South Dakota's economy. Currently, 99% of all businesses in South Dakota are small businesses. A recent national study ranked South Dakota eighth in the nation for annual job growth and predicted South Dakota's 1995 rank would rise to that of fourth highest job creating state in the nation.

Senator Larry Pressler (R-SD), in congratulating Letellier on his voting record said, "I applaud your efforts in helping to establish an environment that enables small businesses the opportunity to thrive in South Dakota. The future success of our entrepreneurs depends upon a U.S. Congress and state legislatures that favor innovative policies designed to help small businesses maintain their competitiveness."

Letellier said, "Having worked in and owned small businesses for more than twenty years has provided me with a perspective that is extremely helpful in the legislative process, I am proud to be recognized by the NFIB for my past voting record."

One of many press releases

**On April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1993, Governor George S. Mickelson died along with seven companions in a tragic plane crash. It was a terrible shock for all South Dakotans.**



# Governor dies in crash

When George T. and Madge Mickelson's fourth child and only son was born on Jan. 31, 1941, they named him George Speaker Mickelson. The elder Mickelson was speaker of the South Dakota House of Representatives at the time. No one realized then the young Mickelson would follow in his father's footsteps, devoting his energies to the betterment of the state until Monday when at age 52, his life was cut short because of a malfunctioning airplane that crashed in an Iowa barnyard.

Others killed in the late afternoon crash included Roland Dolly, commissioner, Governor's Office of Economic Development; Ron Reed, commissioner, state Office of Energy Policy; Dave Birkeland, Sioux Falls First Bank executive; Angus Anson, Sioux Falls Northern States Power executive; Roger Hainje, director of the Sioux Falls Development Foundation; and Pierre pilots Ron Becker and Dave Hansen.

The funeral service for the late governor will be at 2 p.m., Thursday, in the State Capitol Rotunda in Pierre. A second service will be held in Brookings Friday morning.

The Mickelson family lived in Selby, Pierre and Sioux Falls when young George was growing up. George T. Mickelson was elected the state's 18th governor, serving two terms.

George Speaker Mickelson was inspired by his father's hard-working dedication to his family and the people of South Dakota.

After earning a business administration degree in 1963 and a law degree in 1965, both from the University of South Dakota, Mickelson joined the Army and served in Vietnam. After he was discharged in 1967 he returned to South Dakota and worked as assistant attorney

general and as special prosecutor for the attorney general. After establishing a law practice in Brookings in 1969 he became actively involved in the Brookings community, volunteering time to the Boy Scouts, Easter Seal Society and as chairman of the Brookings United Way. He also received a special award for his work with the Jaycees.

Mickelson was married to the former Linda McCahren, a former high school English teacher. Their three grown children are Mark, Amy, and David.

His political career, which spanned 23 years until its tragic ending, started in 1970 when he was elected the Brookings County State's Attorney. In 1974, he was elected to the first of three terms in the state House of Representatives. Following family tradition, he, too, was named Speaker of the House for the 1979 and 1980 sessions.

He served on the Taxation, Judiciary, State Affairs and Intergovernmental Cooperation committees, on the Legislative Research Council's Executive Board and was also a member of the Special Committee on Personal Property Tax Replacement which worked to eliminate all personal property taxes in South Dakota.

In 1981, he began four years as chairman of the state Board of Pardons and Paroles. He was instrumental in improving vocational rehabilitation programs so that convicts could learn the skills to become productive citizens.

He was elected South Dakota's 28th governor in 1986 and after the swearing-in ceremony on Jan. 10, 1987, occupied the office where, 40 years before him, his father had served South Dakota residents.

Mickelson was an optimist about South Dakota's future, believing problems could be turned into op-

portunities and hard work would make South Dakota's dreams come true. It was while returning from a hard-working trip that he met his death in a fiery plane crash in eastern Iowa.

Gov. Mickelson often told of his Grandfather Turner's homesteading difficulties that took place almost a century ago in what was then the new State of South Dakota. Turner, who came to the new state from Iowa, doubted his own abilities when he started working his homestead claim. In a letter to his father he told of the many rocks in the fields, that he was almost ready to quit. The response was simple and direct: "You stay where you are and pick up those rocks."

According to Mickelson, Grandfather Turner stayed, picked up the rocks and discovered that with each rock, his determination to succeed grew stronger and stronger. He cleared the land, worked hard and created a good life for himself and his family. His Grandfather Mickelson, also a persevering homesteader, eventually proved up on the land only to lose it in the hard times of the 30s. It was a happy day when George T. was able to buy the land back, to restore it to the family's possession.

His grandson believed in the South Dakota work ethic and carried on the family tradition to ensure a good life, not only for his family but for all South Dakotans.

## Miller

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tended the 1988 convention in New Orleans. Although he was elected an alternate to 1992 convention in Houston, he believed it would better that he remain in the state



# Lawmakers mourn Mickelson's death

By MARIAN EATHERTON

Local legislators Sen. Les Kleven and Reps. Ken McNenny and Roy Letellier joined their South Dakota counterparts Tuesday in mourning the untimely death of Gov. George S. Mickelson. Though terribly saddened by the enormous tragedy that visited the state at the same time, they were in agreement that the former Lt. Gov. Walter Dale Miller could assume the duties of the office and carry out the plans left by Mickelson's death.

They also were unanimous is that Mickelson was approachable, open-minded to differing opinions, and a gracious, caring person who had South Dakota interests at heart.

"I think it's about the worst thing ever to happen, I was shocked out of existence when I heard of the crash. We just don't expect things like that to happen. I knew the majority of those on the plane; some of them well," said Sen. Les Kleven.

"I first served with the governor when we both were in the Legislature. We were friends before he was elected governor. I didn't always agree with him but I had a great deal of respect for him," says Kleven.

**"ANOTHER THING THAT'S** kind of interesting is that I was a pilot for 20 years and was familiar with that kind of airplane. When it loses a motor, it becomes uncontrollable. Everyone who owned one got killed. During the budget hearings, I questioned whether we wanted to continue with that plane which has a terrible history. When we got to the governor's travel budget, I talked to Frank Brost (the governor's chief of staff) why the state continued to use it in light

three occasions during the session. The first time was after he invited the first-year legislators down so they would know where his office was. I visited on a couple of other matters and he was always gracious and accommodating, sympathetic to my feelings and where I was coming from. I appreciated the openness he allowed me as a first-year legislator.

"Oh, no, we didn't always agree," says the Belle Fourche resident. "In fact our last meeting was on the 40th day of the Legislature when we discussed the disagreement we had. But the purpose of my going to his office was to make things right, to mend



Gov. George S. Mickelson

fences. I guess I'll always be glad I did that. We had disagreed on the video lottery proposal. The main disagreement was not over the substance but the method in which he conveyed his position. He was gracious and appreciated the fact we could talk it through.



of its history. Brost said the state had found it satisfactory and it fit their needs. The plane, which had a terrible reputation, was four years old when it was purchased during the Janklow administration. The reason it sold for a low price was because of its reputation.

"The real reality", Kleven said, "is when eight families lose people, it's a tragedy of the worst proportions, a horrible tragedy."

Mickelson was elected governor the same year McNenny was elected to the Legislature in 1986. "We worked together on quite a few issues and didn't always agree but he was the 'Let's talk it over' type. You could always feel welcome to his office to talk things over."

"I think he was fair. We had our differences but I respected his opinions and he respected mine."

"Walter Dale Miller was a real asset to the governor," McNenny said. "He was knowledgeable in his workings of government and the governor relied on Walt for information. With his experience he will have no problem stepping into the shoes of the governor and they were big shoes," McNenny said, recalling the many times Mickelson referred to his size.

**"WALTER (MILLER) CARRIED** out a lot of the governor's issues, the tax, health and human issues studies were chaired by Walter Dale, they were close friends."

McNenny continued, "Another plus of his administration — he was conscious of industry and worked hard to bring it to South Dakota. REDI was his idea."

"The other people, who were killed, were capable young men. Ron Reed was a capable individual and his shoes, too, will be hard to fill."

"There are a lot of memories," McNenny concluded.

Freshman Rep. Letellier said, "I'm at a loss for words. I didn't sleep very well last night; there were a lot of thoughts going through my mind. This points out the frailty of life. None of us knows when our time on earth is over. It brings things that are real into focus."

"I visited with the governor on

**"I ADMIRE HIM,"** Letellier said, "he had a real commitment to his job and to the state. You don't serve in that office without having a good strong personality that has some charisma."

"I think Walter Dale's history in state government has prepared him (for the job) and the fact that he was the first full-time lieutenant governor is timely. He had, in fact, been involved in day-to-day operations of state government and stepped in the office when the governor was out of the state. It will certainly be a major change for him but at the same time, he is prepared as well as anyone can be," Letellier concluded.

"I always felt Gov. Mickelson had the whole state of South Dakota first in his attempts to do what was best for it. I didn't always agree with him but that's politics. He left us a legacy that he felt what he was doing was in the best interest of the state as a whole and that's what we must always do," says Marie Ingalls, former legislator and current secretary of the state Republican Party.

Ingalls added, "If some things that had happened in the past, had been approved, we would have circumvented some current problems. The sales tax is an example. I still think had it been increased, we wouldn't have the high property tax of today. He pushed very hard for that to get through. Partisanship got in the road in doing what we felt was right; I think in a lot of respects he tried to ignore it. He tried to compromise to get what was best for the state. He was a friend and his death is a personal tragedy," she said.

State Rep. Harvey Krautschun, R-Spearfish was in Dallas, Texas, Monday and Tuesday. "The mess unfolded here in Waco yesterday, and the next thing this (crash) came down. It was quite a day," Krautschun said when he was contacted early Tuesday morning.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the families. We've lost a fabulous friend and governor. There were great people on that flight," Krautschun said. "Several were very close friends."

"You could have some

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# Lawmakers

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hellacious disagreements, but you were always friends and could always go forward after they were over," Krautschun said. "He was a man of such strong conviction."

Asked how difficult it will be to fill the void now left in a critical area of state government and development, Krautschun said, "We'll just have to deal with the personal things right now, and very frankly, not get too wrapped up and wound up in the technical details in this stage of the game. I think the testament to the governor was he had good people and a good strong organization. In Walter Dale Miller, you have a lot of strength there that will come to the fore."

Rep. Kay Jorgensen, R-Spearfish, was in a state of disbelief late Monday evening. "As the reality has set in, there's just the incredible grief of the tremendous loss of the families involved in particular, the state in general," Jorgensen said.

Jorgensen will always carry a special memory of when she was first elected to the Legislature in 1978.

"I was to be sworn in the very first session, and my arm pulled so tight, it was almost going to sleep. This great, kind, what I thought was the biggest person I had ever seen in my life, then Speaker Mickelson, looked down at all of us, and happened to catch my eye," she said. "I don't know whether he saw my nervousness or not, but I was convinced he did. And he winked. That's just a part of how he is."

Jorgensen says Miller and the governor were the very best of friends. "All of our thoughts need to be directed to soon to be Gov. Miller. He has an incredible tough road ahead, but he is an incredibly tough man and will do very well," she said. "The governor put together one heckuva team. They will be there and they will do the job for the state."

## Walter Dale Miller is governor

For the first time in the history of South Dakota a lieutenant governor has been sworn in as governor. It was in the rotunda of the State Capitol in Pierre at 2 p.m., Tuesday, April 20 that Walter Dale Miller took the oath of office, replacing his close friend Gov. George S. Mickelson, who was killed in a plane crash, less than 24 hours earlier. It also marks the first time a Meade County resident has held the state's highest office.

The lifelong rancher/businessman has been a part of the state's political scene for three decades. Even before he came to be known as a Republican legislator capable of balancing opposing views he took an active role in local politics, serving as precinct committeeman and later as state central committeeman.

His philosophy was, "A hard-armed ruler can't bring results," a

stance he took when he was seeking to become House majority leader.

Miller, who in 1986, was elected the state's first full-time lieutenant governor, started honing his political skills when elected to the House in 1966, to represent Meade, Haakon and Ziebach counties.

Each weekend since 1987, Walter Dale Miller drove home to the ranch north of New Underwood. Even today, when he crests the final hill the sight of his ranch ahead he says it provides a thrill.

Miller was born Oct. 5, 1925, on that ranch at Viewfield. He was graduated from New Underwood High School and attended South Dakota School of Mines & Technology.

He married Mary E. Randall in 1943 and they were the parents of three daughters and one son: Nancy Burma, of Minnesota, Karey

Albers, Renee Johansen and Walter R. (Randy), all of Meade County. Mary Miller died in 1989.

A lifelong rancher, he is only the third West River resident to serve as governor. White River Democrat Tom Berry was governor from 1933-37 followed by Republican Leslie Jensen of Hot Springs from 1937-39.

After that first election victory in 1966, Miller was returned to the House every two years, first representing both Meade and Ziebach counties and then Meade County from 1982 to 1984.

He was assistant majority leader in 1973-74; majority leader in 1975-78; speaker pro tem in 1979-80; and speaker in 1981-82. He was House majority leader in 1983-85 and 1988. He was a delegate to the Republican National Conventions in 1976, 1980 and 1984 and also at

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Gov. Walter D. Miller

**The following is a portion of my journal entry for April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1993: *Last night we heard the shocking news that Governor Mickelson had been killed in a plane crash. It is a horrible thing to lose the Governor but several other leaders in the economic development area as well. Angus Anson a former schoolmate of mine from SBA was among the victims.***



As I have reread the news accounts, along with my journal, the wave of emotions came back, thirty two years after the fact the tears are still near the surface. Later that same day, Representative McNenny, Marie Ingalls and I made the 400 mile round trip to witness Walt's swearing in. I described it as a brief and very somber ceremony that only six legislators attended. We spoke briefly with Walt then offered our condolences to the Mickelson family at the Governor's residence. Three days later I returned to Pierre for Governor Mickelson's funeral. It was held in the capitol rotunda and an estimated 12,000 people were in attendance.

A little over a month later we were called into special session. The Senate confirmed Steve Kirby as Lt. Governor and we allocated funds to replace the state airplane. I argued in favor of a jet, but the majority favored a King Air. South Dakota still doesn't own a jet. We also funded a memorial to the eight who perished.



**Fighting Stallions Memorial was constructed by the people of South Dakota as a lasting memorial to eight South Dakotans who perished in an airplane crash April 19, 1993. The state plane, N86SD, crashed due to propeller assembly failure in poor**

weather on a farm near Dubuque, Iowa. Five state employees, including the Governor, and three Sioux Falls corporate leaders were on an economic development mission to save the largest agricultural processing employer in South Dakota.

"Fighting Stallions" is enlarged in bronze from the 1935 mahogany carving by South Dakota sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski. The sculpture was selected because it symbolically represents South Dakota's struggle to overcome adversity, desire for achievement and courage to believe in the future. It is a tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice."

*But in the passing of a century also comes the passing of friends - people who shaped the state - people who shaped our lives. As we remember the personal pain of those losses, let each of us dedicate ourselves to replacing that loss with a commitment to make new friends in our quest to build a better future."*

Governor George S. Mickelson  
1990 State of the State Address

There was immediate speculation after Walt's swearing in as to whether or not he would seek election. That question was answered in the affirmative in short order. Former Governor Bill Janklow had already made his intention to seek the nomination known, so the primary campaign was a spirited one indeed. I of course supported Walt and did what I could to help his cause. In the end the voters chose Governor Janklow by a margin of 8 percentage points. I was able to orchestrate Walt's acceptance of our invitation to give the commencement address at SBA just a few days before the election in June and was honored to make the introductory remarks.

1994 SBA Commencement  
Governor Walter Dale Miller  
Introductory remarks  
Roy Letellier

*We are truly honored today to have with us an old friend of SBA, who happens to be the Governor of our great State. in recent years Christians have finally realized the importance of becoming involved in the political process. Evangelicals, as we are sometimes called, are great for whining about government shortcomings and failures, while content to vote for and elect heathens and humanists to do the job of governing... And then we wonder why we are in the mess we're in. Each of us bear the responsibility for the moral decline in our city, county, school, state and nation, if we fail to become involved. As more Christians have been elected to public office we are sometimes viewed as "dangerous"..... we have been referred to as the "radical right" .....I happen to like that label. Because I think we are..... RADICALLY CORRECT.*

*When Walt Miller was elected to the legislature 28 years ago, Christians in Politics were rare to non existent. His commitment to the Lord has never been a secret. In fact when I ran for the legislature, it seemed like every Meade County Republican event I attended Walt Miller offered the invocation. I wondered out loud once if Walter Dale was the only Republican that could pray. No doubt the most meaningful time that I spend each week during the legislative session is Wednesday Morning at 7:00AM. A group of legislators, lobbyists and other interested individuals gather for what is known as Catacombs Caucus. During this hour we fellowship together in scripture and song as well as sharing our joys and sorrows and requests before the Lord in a time of prayer. Walt rarely misses those meetings, and as I understand it, he was a part of the group in the early days when they met as two or three individuals in the basement of the capitol, today it is not at all unusual to have thirty or more in attendance, as we gather in the Governors large conference room.*

*It seems like Walt Miller has always been there.....when he has be needed. Walt's biography reveals a lifetime of service to others. He set aside his own college education to return to the ranch and help his Family.*

*As we all know he served here in the early and formative years of SBA as a member and chairman of the board.*

*He served twenty years in the SD House of Representatives and held every leadership position. And when longtime Majority leader Joe Barnett died, Walt Miller was there, and was selected by his colleagues to fill the tremendous void left by the passing of Joe Barnett.*

*Walt Miller was there when George Mickelson called on him to be the first full time Lt. Governor in SD history.*

*Not even his most outspoken critics will deny that there was no one person better prepared & qualified to take the reins of state government on that tragic spring day just over a year ago. And Walt Miller did it ably and with dignity and courage.*

*Walt Miller has always been something special to me personally. I knew Walter Dale as a result of his service on the board here at SBA along with my Dad. I clearly recall the day during his first term in the legislature that a group of eighth grade students from Norris visited the session. I was so impressed with the fact that I knew one of "those guys down there" in the House chamber. I left Pierre that cold February day in 1967 saying to myself "I can do that someday". When I began to look into the possibility of seeking office Walt Miller was one of the first to encourage me.*

*Walt Miller did not aspire to the office of Governor. It was thrust upon him, and he has met the challenge remarkably. He seeks to continue as*

***Governor, not to serve his own ego, not to relive a dream, but to make our state a better place for the next generation.***

***The following poem was placed in the house journal on the day that I visited Pierre in 1967 as a remembrance of the late Senator Francis Case. I think that it well illustrates the attitude that Governor Miller exemplifies.***

THE BRIDGE BUILDER

An old man, going a lone highway  
came at the evening, cold and gray,  
to a chasm, vast and deep and wide  
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.  
The old man crossed in the twilight dim  
That sullen stream had no fears for him;  
But he turned when he reached the other side  
and built a bridge to span the tide.  
"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,  
"You are wasting strength in building here.  
Your journey will end with the ending day;  
You never again must pass this way.  
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide,  
Why build you the bridge at eventide?  
The builder lifted his old grey head.  
"Good friend, the path I have come," he said  
"There followeth after me today  
A youth whose feet must pass this way.  
This chasm that has been naught to me  
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be,  
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

*It is a great pleasure to present the Governor of South Dakota, Walter Dale Miller.*

Representative McNenny and I both filed for re-election in 1994 and were of course pleased that no other candidates emerged so we were elected without opposition. Over the course of my first term I realized that disposition of every major legislative issue was determined by the elected caucus leaders and that if a member was not in leadership they were on the outside looking in. I decided to seek a leadership role. The lowest rung on the leadership ladder was one of three Assistant Majority Whips. With that in mind I spent the summer and fall encouraging and advising new Republican house candidates. Following the general election I let my protégés know that I would be counting on their support in the caucus election. The strategy worked and I was elected on the first ballot. I was assigned a third of the GOP caucus members as my "Whip Group". It was our responsibility to secure the needed votes on important matters. My group was made up primarily of freshman and second term legislators that hailed from west of the Missouri River and most were compliant. One of my



guys was a staunch pig headed conservative much like some current congressmen in D.C. Sometimes I would tell him "Bill, you're so far to the right you come up on the left." As a member of the caucus leadership team we enjoyed a private office and an assigned intern, both were greatly appreciated perks.



WALTER D. MILLER  
GOVERNOR

## STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

EXECUTIVE OFFICE  
STATE CAPITOL, 500 EAST CAPITOL  
PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA  
57501-5070  
(605) 773-3212

November 29, 1994

The Honorable Roy Letellier  
State Representative  
1257 East Elkhorn  
Belle Fourche, SD 57717

Dear Roy:

Congratulations on the election to your legislative leadership post. The support of those who know you best through working with you is gratifying.

Guiding a caucus is an art form which, though appreciated by few outside the process, is a necessary element to virtually every legislative success. The next session will test your skills and, I am sure, your patience, but it will really provide you the chance to exercise all of your abilities for the benefit of the state.

Many of the issues you will be dealing with will be demanding on both you and your caucus. I wish you the best of luck in turning these challenges into opportunities.

Again, my best wishes.

Sincerely,

WALTER D. MILLER

*Jim Beach  
He like you in  
the leadership.  
This caucus  
your Calmaney and  
wisdom is necessary  
The Good Bless you!*

WDM:hjl



The hand written note says: *"I'm pleased to see you in the leadership. Your calmness and wisdom is necessary. The Lord bless you!"*

Governor Janklow was a giant personality. His persona was brash and a bit crude, but his policies were sound. During the campaign he had, by his own account unthinkingly promised a 30% reduction in property taxes. A legislative task force was appointed to craft legislation to make good on his promise and I was a member of the team. I worked hard and considered many options and when the task force submitted our proposal it looked very much like what I proposed. We were able to pass that landmark legislation early in the session. I don't remember ever having a one on one meeting with Gov. Janklow as a legislator; however he often attended our leadership meetings and would regularly host leadership dinners at the Governor's mansion. He knew I had strongly supported Walt and was always a bit cool toward me. When I ran for the PUC, I was summoned to his office and the one sided conversation concerned a letter I had supposedly written on behalf of Walt. I didn't recall ever having written something like he was describing so I vigorously denied having done so. He asked one of his aides to check the file, but he shortly returned empty handed. Our conversation concluded with his offer to help my campaign however he could. Many years later, after Governor Janklow had passed away I was looking through old clippings etc. and I found a copy of that letter. Ever since then I've felt a bit guilty that I lied to the Governor even though it was done in ignorance.

The third and fourth years of my legislative service, Kathie and I rented homes in Pierre; in 1995 Kaitey and Mandi were both at SBA and Kathie had turned over her responsibilities at the school to others so we closed up our home in Belle Fourche and lived in Pierre for the duration. I would drive to the district for any scheduled Cracker Barrels and return to Pierre the same day. That arrangement worked great and Kathie would regularly host other legislative couples, interns and various other friends in the area, for her culinary creations. In addition, she served as President of the Capitol Club which was made up of legislative spouses. They raised money for projects in the Governor's residence and the capitol building as well as conducting tours of the capitol and working in the State Archives. In her spare time Kathie was President of the Butte County Republican Women and held a state office in the GOP Women's organization.



Capitol Club



This photo was taken during the Appropriations tour on the backside of George Washington's head at Mt. Rushmore. That's me in the red jacket.

Legislators are invited on a variety of tours by various business and industry groups. These are usually interesting and educational, I recall visiting the huge open pit coal mines in North Dakota and Wyoming; on two different occasions I descended to the 7,500' level of the Homestake gold mine in Lead SD. Since I was "retired" I was able to take advantage of these invitations and broaden my understanding of these industries. The most memorable tour was the "appropriations" tour. This tour is specifically for Appropriation committee members but is open to any legislator. The tour covers every state run facility in the state. It takes parts of two weeks, one week covers sites east river and the second is spent in the west side. I recall visiting the penitentiary in Sioux Falls, it is something like you would see in an old movie as it was built in 1882. South Dakota

has gotten their monies worth out of that structure. In October 2023, the South Dakota Department of Corrections closed on a real estate purchase of two 160 acre parcels of land in Dayton Township in Lincoln County on which they plan to construct a new men's facility to replace the existing penitentiary in Sioux Falls. We also visited the minimum security facility in Springfield SD located on a former state college campus that was closed and converted during the first Janklow administration. The Juvenile Detention Center in Plankinton SD brought back childhood memories. After various mis-deeds adults would tell us: "If you don't straighten up you'll get sent to Plankinton." Our stops on the west side of the state included the Soldier's Home in Hot Springs, Mount Rushmore, the Youth Forestry Camp which was a program for juvenile boys that had run afoul with the law. I remember watching these young men confidently enter the mess hall for lunch after laboring in the forest all morning, and it brought to mind one of the Governor's favorite adages: "There is dignity in work." Our final stop was difficult and depressing as we toured the Custer State Hospital. The facility was opened in 1911 and looked like the insane asylums portrayed in the movies. It housed patients with the most severe developmental disabilities. The manner in which these people were warehoused seemed inhumane to me.

During the 1996 legislative session Governor Janklow proposed the closure of the Custer State Hospital and placing the patients in small group homes. I was privileged to witness the most selfless act by an individual member in connection with that legislation.

Representative Gordon Pederson was a career army veteran who retired with the rank of Lt. Colonel. He then served in the SD House for thirty years. Gordon was colorful and a bit crusty but he was a valuable member, his desk was across the aisle next to me in the very back of the chamber. Closure of any state facility is always difficult and controversial. It's unpopular to terminate government employees. When we polled the caucus on the final vote to close the hospital, we found that we were right on the edge of the majority we needed assuming no Democrats would join us. Gordon spoke up and said, "I'm going to vote no but if we have 35 votes I'll stand up and change my vote, then I'll step out the back door and puke." The Custer State Hospital was in Gordon's district and he knew what the political consequences would be. In spite of that he had the courage to do the right thing. Representative Pederson was defeated in a subsequent election in no small part due to that single vote.





The Honorable Gordon Pederson

**Disease claims senator**

## Kleven left mark; people recall newsman turned lawmaker

By DOREEN ALLISON-CREED and MARIAN EATHERTON

The voice of Les Kleven, which first became known to people in this five-state area as an outspoken, yet charitable newsmen, is silent. The former KHHB radio-station owner turned lawmaker died Wednesday, April 19 in a Little Rock, Ark. hospital after battling multiple myelomas for nearly a year.

Kleven's years of being "on the air" would later be the foundation for his political powerhouse. At the time of his death, Kleven was serving his second term in the State Senate representing District 29. During the 1970s, he spent six years in the state House of Representatives.

Governors, a supreme court justice, farmers, ranchers and people from all walks of life were unanimous in their opinion of how Kleven relished spirited dialogue, a good cause and a challenge. The bigger the challenge, the greater his vigor.

Those who knew him best said they admired his tenacity and willingness to express his opinions on any subject. These were personality traits they said could sometimes be frustrating yet were the very essence of Les.

In his early years, some labeled him a political liberal. He would smile when he would later admit, "I've mellowed from my earlier 'more radical days.'"

Before anyone had ever heard of Rush Limbaugh, Kleven was a tradition throughout the KHHB-radio audience. His early morning talk show, "Opinion Please," would have listeners.

"I've been thinking back to the talk show days. Both of us were highly opinionated. But I always could pursue my views as I wanted."

"Les told me he felt good throughout the legislative session. He loved it so much. If the Legislature was still in session, he would not have died."

"When I think of Les," he continued, "I recall many times when things were controversial."

The radio business made his name a household word in a large area. He really brought a unique perspective and flavor to this area. We will miss him.

**- Rep. Roy Letellier, Belle Fourche**

Kleven's closest associate and friend, said the station owner, "must have been desperate for an announcer when he hired me in 1969."

Davis was but one of many young aspiring radio personalities who got their start via Kleven's beneficence.

"I have always had the greatest respect for Les," said Davis, who left the station after a 10-year stint to go into private business. "We were business partners for several years and in past years have shared office space."

We might disagree, but he would never take it personally. I have seen him shake off criticism he received for his stands on various issues through the years. However, I would find it curious that people who strongly disagreed with him later would ask for his help. He had a daily steady stream of constituents calling or coming to his office. He worked tirelessly to help them without recognition. He was in a position to help people and he did.

"In all respects, Les was a genuine adventurer. He went to Vietnam to interview people from this area. He went to Cambodia to see what it was like. He was one of the first American journalists in China."

"Les was very hopeful the first bone marrow transplant (November 1994) was successful. When he became ill the second time, he knew it was desperate," Davis said.

Retired South Dakota State Supreme Court Justice Frank Henderson commenting from his Hill City home about his friend said, "He was energy personified. He was KLEVEN." (See page 2)

Kleven

"If you get them by their budget their hearts and minds will follow."  
Les Kleven was one of a kind

I was honored to serve District 29 with talented and respected colleagues. Ken McNenny was a soft spoken Meade County rancher, he was a mentor to me and I appreciated his dedication to the people we represented. Sadly, Senator Kleven passed away shortly after the conclusion of the 1995 legislative session, his wife Marguerite ably served out his term.



Rep. Ken McNenny



Leaving the Capitol

All of my campaigns emphasized my successful business background and I pledged to work tirelessly for the small business community. I was honored to be recognized for my efforts.

## Letellier named 'Guardian of Small Business'

South Dakota's largest small-business advocacy group, the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) announced recently it has presented State Rep. Roy Letellier (R-Belle Fourche) with its "Guardian of Small Business" statue. Only four state lawmakers were named to receive the statue this year.

NFIB's guardian award program recognizes lawmakers for consistent support and legislative leadership on behalf of South Dakota's small-business community. In announcing the honor, NFIB/South Dakota Director Bob Riter Jr. noted Letellier had

been a strong advocate of "small-business-friendly" legislation throughout his tenure in the legislature. His 1995-1996 voting record on key small-business issues was rated as 100 percent by NFIB.

Though other legislators also received perfect ratings from NFIB, Letellier was given special recognition largely because of his leadership in the effort to reduce the state's death taxes. "Rep. Letellier fought hard to reform South Dakota's inheritance tax system," Riter said.

Letellier was a primary sponsor of a bill to increase the tax exemption for children

inheriting a family farm or business. The measure passed, but was later vetoed out of concern over lack of replacement funds.

"Though the bill ultimately was not enacted, Rep. Letellier should be congratulated for his support and hard work on behalf of family-owned businesses," Riter said.

The other legislators honored with Guardian statues are Sen. Mel Olson (D-Mitchell), Sen. Kermit Stagers (R-Sioux Falls), and Rep. Linda Barker (D-Sioux Falls). With more than 4,000 members, NFIB/South Dakota is the state's largest small-business advocacy group.



"Guardian of Small Business award"



Seatmate, good friend and fellow whip Bob Roe



Senator Pressler's wife Harriet Kathie and First Lady Pat Miller



1995

During the course of my second legislative term I began to come to the realization that even though we could afford it, working for \$4,000 per year during my prime earning years was probably not very smart. Politicians by nature are opportunistic and I was no exception. When the news surfaced that one of the Democratic Public Utilities Commissioners was running a seed corn business out of the capitol, I began to think of the possibility of seeking the GOP nomination. PUC candidates are selected by delegates at the respective party conventions. When we made the decision to run, we did it with this thought in mind. "I'll either have a government job or we're moving south, either way we win."

Much to our dismay, Kaitey married Corey Marshall in a civil ceremony in November of 1995. Our first encounter with Corey ended with me trying (literally) to choke him to death. Kathie and Kaitey successfully separated the two of us and changed both our lives. He would have been dead and I would have been in the penitentiary. Over the short time that marriage lasted, my relationship with Corey improved only slightly.

We kicked off our quest for the GOP nomination in January of 1996 by attending Lincoln Day dinners nearly every weekend. Many times Kathie and Mandi would attend one and I would travel to another. Even though no other candidate emerged I continued to endlessly campaign and by the time the GOP convention made me the nominee, I had visited 55 of the 66 South Dakota counties and traveled more than 40,000 miles. In 1996 Senator Bob Dole was the Republican nominee for President running against incumbent Bill Clinton, SD Senator Larry Pressler was pitted against Congressman Tim Johnson, John Thune won the June Primary to advance to the general election against Rick Wieland in the SD Congressional race. I was honored to share the podium with both Bob Dole and his running mate Jack Kemp. Dole won in South Dakota but fell short overall. The democrats targeted Larry Pressler and turned out several hundred extra voters in college campus counties and Indian reservations and Tim Johnson prevailed by over 8,000 votes. John Thune ran away with the victory by over 20 percentage points. Several years later John was elected to the US Senate and is currently serving as Majority leader of that body. I like to say about Senator Thune, "I just call him John."



I lost by a margin of 1.37% or 4326 votes. I was inadvertently a victim of the democratic get out the vote effort in the US Senate race. With the benefit of hindsight and watching my friend Kristie Fiegen as current Public Utilities Commissioner, I thank God I lost that election. Imagine that. God knew I would hate the job. That campaign was the hardest job I've ever tackled. In the ten months that we campaigned I was away from home around 250 nights. We traveled nearly 80,000 miles spoke at scores of events and shook 150,000 hands. We saved money by taking advantage of gracious supporters hospitality on the many nights spent on the campaign trail. In doing so we cemented many friendships all across South Dakota. I was wisely advised to hire a driver for campaign travel and Travis Geppert who had been my legislative intern filled that role along with Garrett Horn who hailed from Belle Fourche and a few years earlier had been in my Sunday school class. As the passenger I kept busy with the latest technology. I used a laptop to write press releases that we would drop off at the local newspaper office in each community that we visited. E-mail was available but only a few people utilized it and social media did not yet exist, so I carried a battery powered printer to produce hard copies of letters, speeches and other documents. I also kept my trusty flip phone close at hand and Scott Peterson graciously kept us supplied with vehicles. Through Mandi's contacts in the SD Teenage Republicans our campaign had one of the first campaign websites. I spent so much time at Tim & Kristie Fiegen's home in Sioux Falls that they still refer to the corner bedroom as "Roy's room". Kathie handled our campaign office and filled in for me when we were double-booked. She was much more polished than me; she would have been a better candidate. When we produced TV ads she would require a single take, while I struggled to complete a 30 second spot. Most losing political candidates will look back on their campaign and second guess certain strategies and decisions. I did not want to be able to do that. My intention was to leave it all on the field, and to this day in my heart of hearts I know that we did just that. We raised more money than had ever been spent in a SD PUC race, worked harder than any previous candidate for that office and I have no regrets. It was the experience of a lifetime.

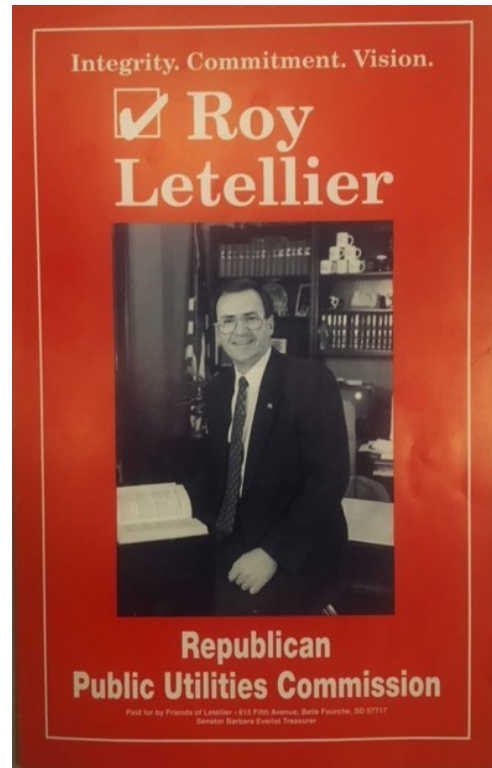


A typical press release



My regular golf partner Jr. Henderson and I have the matching hats





John Thune defeated Carole Hillard in the Republican primary election. Carole was a legislative colleague and she, John and I traveled the Lincoln Day circuit in pursuit the GOP nomination. We all had our standard stump speech and at some point each of us could have

given any one of the three speeches. John had a favorite story that I have often related. “A certain Congressman was alone in his office and the phone rang. He proceeded to answer and spoke to a constituent by the name of Mrs. Smith. He asked how he could be of service and she replied that she was having trouble getting her garbage picked up. The congressman apologized and informed Mrs. Smith that wasn’t something he would be able to help with, but he suggested that perhaps she could contact her city councilman. She replied, “Well I didn’t think I’d have to go that high.”



Upon our return to Belle Fourche from the PUC campaign we settled into a slower paced routine as we anticipated our relocation to Arizona. After my successful legislative election campaign in '92 I was locally looked upon as the political godfather. Anyone who sought a local office seemed to come to me for advice and counsel. This evolved into a pro-bono political consulting service and according to our 1998 Christmas letter I had consulted on 15 different campaigns in just the previous two years. I compiled an impressive success rate of 13 wins and 2 losses. In the 1998 election cycle a group of local attorneys hired me to help a candidate for Circuit Court Judge. It was an uphill climb. The opponent was a twenty four year incumbent named Moses. My client was energetic and coachable and he successfully defeated Judge Moses.

After selling the dealership in September of 1991, I began to play golf every chance I got. In non-election summers Jr. Henderson and I would be on the first tee every week day at noon. We were members at both Spearfish and Belle Fourche and we weren't content to play just 18 holes. Many times we would play 54 holes in an afternoon. Most weekends were taken up with tournaments in the Black Hills region.

Our first Granddaughter Amanda Kathleen Marshall was born March 11, 1997, and her brother Christopher Brian joined the family September 4, 1998. Kaitey went to SBA in the fall of 1991 and for next seven years we made countless trips across the state to attend a myriad of school functions. These trips were not completed without incident. All of us can

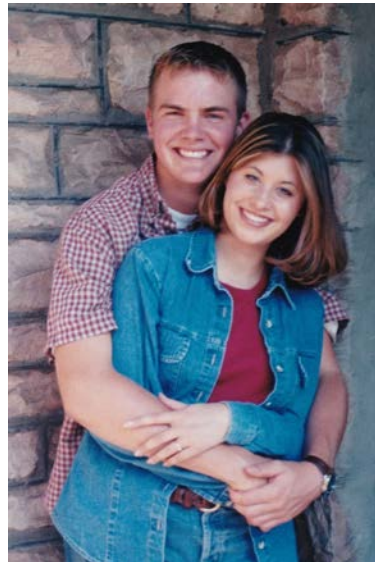


claim credit for one or more incidents. Fortunately, none of us suffered any serious injuries. I say that I killed more deer in a single trip to SBA than some hunters take in a lifetime. More than once Mandi called with her trusty bag phone late at night, stalled along the interstate. Fortunately, each time she happened to be near Murdo, SD. The Ford dealer there was a friend of mine and he would rescue Mandi and send her down the road in a loaner. Both girls regularly brought friends home with them for weekend visits and we enjoyed getting to know each of them. Gabe Vandusseldorp entered our lives during Mandi's sophomore year at SBA. He and Mandi were married in March of 2000. I'm proud to say that Gabe is not only a son-in-law but a friend and confidant as well.

Mandi graduated from SBA in May of 1998 and enrolled in cosmetology school in Rapid City. Kathie worked at a Perkins restaurant that summer and commuted with Mandi, I don't think we ever darkened the door of a Perkins since then. We put the house up for sale that summer and finalized our plan to leave South Dakota.



Gabe at the Grand Canyon in 1998



Engagement photo



Gold Canyon 1998



Gabe & Mandi's wedding 2000

## Chapter 8

### Belle Fourche to Gold Canyon, AZ

*"We gotta get out of this place"*

We lived in Belle Fourche for eighteen and a half years. During that time we were very active in the community and literally everyone either knew us or at the very least, knew who we were. Over time that weighed heavily on my introverted personality and I longed for anonymity. However, even after living in Arizona for almost 27 years, South Dakota is still "home" and always will be. The lifetime bonds were evidenced by the large crowd that attended Kathie's memorial in Belle Fourche.

We were attracted to Arizona when we visited on our motor home travels; in addition, I made several golf trips to the Phoenix area during legislative breaks. Our friend Doug Miller had relocated to Mesa and encouraged us to join him there. We decided to rent a home until we got the "lay of the land" and we located a home in Mountain Brook Village located in Gold Canyon. Mountain Brook is a 55+ community; I don't recall how we got around that since we were 45 & 46 at the time. We left Belle Fourche on October 5<sup>th</sup> in a raging snow storm, happy to be leaving that type of weather behind us. Like many Midwesterners that relocate to the Valley of the Sun, I thought I'd never wear long pants again.

I quickly gained employment as a salesman at a Mesa RV dealership. That was an interesting experience. I found the management to be of low moral fiber and generally lacking in ethics toward both their customers and employees. However, out of the cesspool came two very good things in my life both the result of an encounter with the same individual. One day a certain gentleman whose name I don't recall came in and we struck up a conversation, he seemed to be interested in an RV and had a late model Lincoln he wanted to trade in. As we conversed I discovered that he was related to one of my good friends from SBA, he proceeded to tell me about his church, Central Christian located just a few blocks from the dealership. He assured me that we would like it. He was right. We began to attend and for the first time in my life I looked forward to going to church. Since the dealership didn't deal in passenger cars I called my old friend Curt Lecher with the intention of selling him the gentleman's Lincoln, I described the car and gave Curt a price and he said "put it on a truck". I didn't make a deal with the man and I never saw him again, but the process put an idea in my head and soon "Roy Letellier Wholesale" came to fruition. Over the next ten years I attended auto auctions every week, sometimes traveling to Las Vegas, Nevada and southern California in addition to the three Phoenix auctions. I shipped hundreds of cars back to Black Hills dealers and other locations in the Midwest. It was an enjoyable and lucrative business for quite some time.

Kathie and I became involved in a Gold Canyon community organization known as the Association for the Development of a Better Environment or ADOBE. Gold Canyon is an unincorporated community governed by Pinal County. ADOBE held monthly community meetings that provided a forum for residents to air concerns and receive pertinent updates on matters affecting Gold Canyon. In addition the organization published a monthly newsletter that was delivered at no cost to all residents. During our



first few weeks as Gold Canyon residents we attended a fundraiser for the local US Congressman. While there we met some folks who were involved with ADOBE. Not long after, I was contacted by an individual who represented the nominating committee for ADOBE board members. I explained how I was patently unqualified since we had only been in the community a few weeks. They persisted and I finally agreed to allow my name to be on the ballot, simply because I understood the difficulty in getting people to step up. Some time later we attended the ADOBE meeting at which the 2 open seats on the board were to be filled. I was pleased to find that there were six candidates for two positions. When it came my turn to introduce myself I told the group that they should vote for anyone besides me since I was such a newcomer. That strategy back fired and I was elected to the board. During my tenure on the ADOBE board of directors I was given the responsibility of managing the monthly publication. I believed we could transform the newsletter into a community magazine that would be a profit center for the organization. Gold Canyon was experiencing unprecedented growth during the years 1999 through 2001. The fact that we could guarantee that the Gold Canyon Ledger would be delivered to each and every home in the community made a great advertising sales pitch. Circulation grew from 2300 in '99 to 8000 when we left Gold Canyon in 2002. In addition, we transformed the Ledger from an eight page newsletter to a twenty eight page full color magazine. Publication and distribution expense was covered by advertising. The magazine generated profits for ADOBE activities and it continued to be delivered to every home in Gold Canyon through the US mail. At one of the monthly meetings members heard a presentation by the Arizona Department of Transportation concerning the plan to construct an extension of the freeway through Gold Canyon. The membership was generally opposed to the proposal and most thought some type of by-pass of Gold Canyon was a preferable option. Several of us were able to meet with the governor and ADOT officials and they agreed to place the by-pass option in the mix. It is now twenty five years after that meeting and the highway 24 project is underway which will by-pass Gold Canyon and connect with US 60 at Florence Junction. We also sponsored a community straw vote regarding Incorporation. ADOBE did not endorse either viewpoint, but we were able to facilitate community debate and provide information. The voters ultimately rejected incorporation but it sparked healthy and lively debate.

**Dougherty Named ADOBE President**

By Libby Gantars  
The News

GOLD CANYON: The board of Directors of the Association for Development of a Better Environment (ADOBE) met last week to elect new officers.

Don Dougherty, new president of ADOBE

Roy Letellier, new vice president of ADOBE

Dougherty said his best qualification is, "I care about the environment. I'm a child of the 60s."

Letellier moved to Mountain View last year and currently has a three-generation home, with his daughter's family temporarily sharing the house.

Originally from South Dakota, Letellier began a career in car sales as a car wash boy and eventually owned two dealerships.

Letellier has previously chaired a planning and zoning committee in his community.

Dougherty and Letellier to fill the vacancies on the board.

Dougherty bought property in Gold Canyon in 1991 and built his

**Gold Canyon NEWS**

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**ADOBE Proposes To Amend Bylaws**

Change requires 2/3 vote of members, would allow for political activism

By Libby Gantars  
The News

GOLD CANYON: Vice President Roy Letellier of ADOBE presented members with a proposed amendment to the organization's bylaws at last Thursday's monthly meeting.

The proposed change would amend the portion of the bylaws that states the purpose of the organization is to "develop and maintain the community in a way that is consistent with the original intent of the community."

Letellier said, "I don't want to see the organization become a political entity."

According to Letellier, the amendment would require a two-thirds vote of the board of directors to approve any change to the bylaws.

Letellier said, "I don't want to see the organization become a political entity."

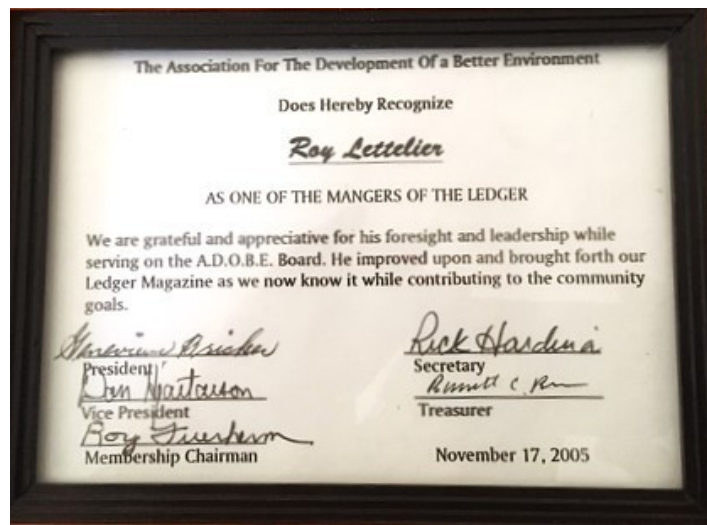
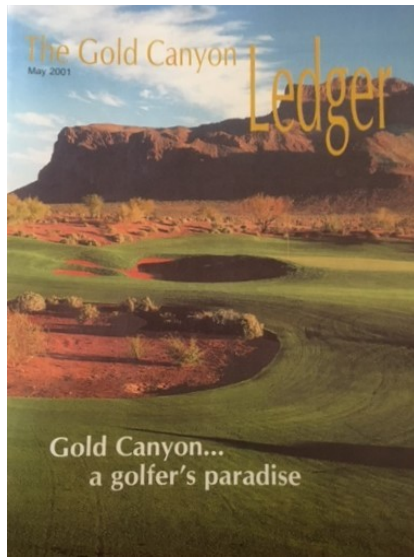
County Approves Contract For Signal

By Libby Gantars  
The News

PHOTO: The Gold Canyon News

PHOTO: The Gold Canyon News

Must have been a very slow news week



We moved into our brand new home in Gold Canyon in November of 1999, we soon realized that the purchase price of a new home is just the beginning. We made many enhancements and additions in the short time we lived there. One major project was a deluxe shed. I built it to exactly match the house, including the exterior stucco and masonry roof tile. Inside it was air conditioned with full insulation and drywall. I built and installed cabinetry and work benches; it was small but it was a fun project.

For a short time Kathie was employed as a manufacturer's representative, she called on gift and novelty retailers in Arizona and New Mexico, she did not find that position to her liking and soon she became a licensed Arizona Realtor. She was hired by a Gold Canyon firm that had the listing of a new town house community where she manned the sales office. It was through that position that two treasured friendships came. One day Ron came into the office and took the self guided tour of the models. When he hadn't returned for quite some time Kathie assumed he had simply jumped the low fence and left the premises, however when it came time to close she discovered him cooling his heels in one of the models. It turned out that he had locked himself out of his house and he was waiting for Jill to return. Naturally, Kathie struck up a conversation and by the time Jill got home a friendship had been born that continues to this day. On another occasion a South Dakota couple signed in to view the models and again Kathie did her thing. Randy and Shirley were her second clients in Arizona. After showing them homes she said "Randy you have to meet my husband." We went to dinner together that evening and the Hansen's have been most treasured friends ever since.

Kaitey and her family moved to Arizona soon after we arrived and Mandi and Gabe moved into their new to them townhouse in Tempe following their March of 2000 wedding. In June that summer Kaitey's divorce finalized and sometime after Amanda and Christopher moved in with us. We soon understood why God has young people have children not 50 year olds. In spite of my whining, I was no doubt better at diaper duty with the grandchildren than with my own kids.



Ron & Jill Eldridge



Randy and Shirley Hansen



Dad and the Bride



About the time the grandkids came to stay with us

Within a short time of our arrival in Arizona we began to attend Central Christian Church in Mesa. It was by our standards a very large church. The worship center would seat around 2000 comfortably and they held services Saturday night and two Sunday morning. We soon became involved in a “small group” that met each week in member’s homes. Through this group we developed personal friendships with other “Centralites”. My first involvement with Men’s Ministries was a weekend mission trip to Rocky Point Mexico. The mission project was to build a home for a family selected by a local ministry. Materials for the endeavor were purchased in Mexico with funds donated by trip participants. I am a firm believer in the value of mission trips. However, in my opinion in most cases the greater benefit is gained by the mission participants than the recipients. Jesus said it well, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” My first trip truly impacted my perspective on the problem of illegal immigration. We constructed a home for a young couple with a very young child. The structure they were living in wasn’t fit for animals. The “house” we built was 10’x18’ it had a floor of concrete that we mixed by hand. The walls were typical 2”x4” construction covered with tar paper and

stucco, the roof was a shed roof covered with rolled roofing. Everything was done with hand tools; this was to demonstrate to the new owner what they could actually do themselves. When we left on Sunday mid-day the family had a weather tight home with a secure window and locking door. I have two vivid memories of that trip. The first was the young wife wanted to feed us. I remembered how sick I'd gotten on Mexican restaurant food in earlier trips to Mexico. I prayed, "God purify this food and bless it to our health and strength." We all thoroughly enjoyed those fish tacos with no side effects. The other was a statement made by the local ministry coordinator. He said, "You have raised this family's standard of living immeasurably." I began to understand why Mexican nationals would risk everything to come to the United States. The following year we built an addition for another young family. The wife was afflicted with some type of degenerative bone disease and was confined to a wheel chair. She had been treated in the US and as a result she could communicate in broken English. In addition to the standard 10'x18' structure we poured more concrete and constructed an outdoor handicapped accessible shower along with an accessible "baño". Sunday morning I was inside the structure installing a locking mechanism, and the lady came rolling into the room, as she wheeled around and took it all in, she said "This is my dream." Well, that got to an unemotional crusty car dealer and I had to slip out the door to hide the free flow of tears. My final trip we built a double wide 20'x18' building to house some type of local Rocky Point ministry. On Sunday after we had completed the project a local pastor came and spoke with us. He simply read the following scripture passage: Matthew 25: 31-40

*<sup>31</sup> "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the <sup>[c]</sup>holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup> **for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'***

*<sup>37</sup> "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*

As we boarded the vans to return to Arizona, there wasn't a single dry eye. Even today as I reflect on those memories the tears flow. In 1996 during the summer of the PUC campaign I accompanied my friend Nathan Mains, and a group from his church to the island of Grenada. Nathan and his siblings grew up on the spice island. Two of his brothers were part of the group and the fourth brother Rueben was our missionary host as he and his family are full time missionaries in Grenada. It was fun to hear the Mains' childhood memories of growing up as missionary kids. Kathie filled in for me on the campaign trail while I was out of the country. I learned she told an audience that I was laying tile in Grenada and that if more politicians would spend time on their knees the



country would be much better off. She was a great campaigner. Some years later Kathie was part of a ladies group from Central Christian that traveled to Peru for mission work. She and some others took the opportunity to do some once in a lifetime sight seeing adventures as well.



Small Group from Central Christian



Rocky Point home and "baño".



Yes, I was there



New homeowners

Other ministry involvement for me included occasionally leading our small group, hosting and leading a young men's Bible study in our home, acting as a table leader at a weekly men's ministry gathering known as "Iron Men" and on one occasion I was honored to speak to the 200 plus men that gathered each week at Iron Men.

Kathie became very involved in women's ministries at Central. She was tapped to head up the "Cuisine Queens". Over the next few years that group was in charge of feeding countless staff and ministry events. She conducted a variety of cooking classes for the Mother's of Preschoolers (MOPS) group and she even did several live "Good Morning Arizona" segments on Phoenix Channel 3 TV in connection with the Cuisine Queens. Kathie was also honored as "Volunteer of the Year" by Central Christian Church. Ironically, the weekend before our accident she conducted a cooking class for a Cuisine Queen reunion.

We visited Pinetop for the first time in the fall of 2000. Some Gold Canyon friends owned a cabin in what is now our neighborhood and we enjoyed a weekend in the cool high country. Kathie would tell how she privately thought "It would be great to have a place here but Roy would never agree to it." One day toward the end of the summer of 2001, our third summer of enduring the hellish Phoenix valley heat, I asked Kathie if she would like to look at property in the mountains. According to her she said "Give me five minutes." We looked at a number of homes in several different communities and settled on a little place in Pinetop. It was important to me to be near a golf course and I didn't want to buy a project. Kathie wanted a fireplace. Ultimately, the only thing we ended up with was the golf course. The house did have a pellet stove which we removed when we completely renovated.







For the next seven years the cabin was a respite from the valley heat every weekend from mid May until the end of October. We would leave as soon as we could break free on Thursday afternoon or evening and return Monday afternoon. That schedule allowed me to enjoy golf with a group on Friday and Monday and still work the auto auctions Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Kathie was working real estate so she could tailor her schedule to accommodate our weekend trips to Pinetop. She kept guest books during that time and the record shows scores of weekend visitors, it also mentions that many weekends I played golf 4 times. If she resented all the time I spent on the golf course she never even slightly hinted at it. Kathie was probably happy to have me out of the house and she loved hosting friends.

## Chapter 9

### Gold Canyon to Mesa to Pinetop

*"The torch is passed"*

**The first few years of the new millennium marked many changes and additions to our family. Tabor David Vandusseldorp was born on July 17, 2001, my 48th birthday. Anna Vandusseldorp was born to Gabe and Mandi on November 16, 2004. This coming**

**July 2025 we will welcome Tabor and Bekka's son. Maybe we will have three July 17th birthdays.**

**In late 2002 we purchased a 2 year old home in Mesa. Kathie described it as the “almost perfect” house. Four bedrooms with a pool and three car garage, it had a large kitchen and great room that provided adequate space for good sized gatherings. Kathie was in here element. In the 5 ½ years we owned the home we hosted many parties and events including Kaitey & Josh Zollinger's wedding on January 17th 2004. The Grandchildren enjoyed the pool very much. However, I like most pool owners found it to be a little used money pit. Amanda and Christopher moved back with Josh and Kaitey at the end of the 2004 school year and we were again empty nesters. Josh has been a Godsend for our family; he is an able provider, loving husband and a Dad to Amanda and Christopher.**



The entry of the Mesa house

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Gold Canyon

In 2003, we helped our bonus daughter Jessica Karinen buy a small condo in the Valley and get her life back on track after a divorce. Kathie used her realtor skills to find the perfect condo and I was pulled into some handyman projects. Her son Zachary was born March 16, 2004, they only stayed in AZ another year until moving back to the Black Hills of South Dakota where she married Zac's father Dan Mertz. Dan is a poster boy for all things military and law enforcement. His career has taken him to several foreign countries and all over the US. He has distinguished himself in many ways but most importantly as a husband and a father. They later had two more children, daughters Gabrielle and Isabelle. We were able to stay connected over the years with their visits to Pinetop where the kids enjoyed the bunkhouse and s'mores at the redneck grill. We also spent time with them on our many trips back to South Dakota. The three Mertz kids refer to us as Nonny and Poppa so our bonus daughter gave us three bonus grandchildren.

**It took almost a year to finally sell the Gold Canyon house, the real estate market was very sluggish through 2004, but starting in 2005 the frenzy began. Bidding wars were**



commonplace and nearly every listing brought more than the asking price. We were the beneficiaries of the slow-moving market on the Mesa home. Kathie had been able to negotiate a great purchase price in the stagnant 2004 market. During the hectic real estate environment of 2005-2006, houses in our neighborhood were increasing in price at the rate of ten thousand dollars each month. By the winter of 2007-08 the market had turned and sales were again slow. I was tired of owning two homes. Each week when we would return from Pinetop, as we pulled in the drive I would wonder what was broken this week that required my attention. Kathie agreed to make the cabin our primary residence with the condition that we completely remodel. We put the Mesa house on the market but it didn't sell, and when spring came and we began to spend time at the cabin we decided to take it off the market; a short time later Kathie received a call from a realtor with clients that were looking for a home like ours. We made a deal in short order and we had just two weeks to empty a three thousand square foot home that was full of stuff and relocate to our twelve hundred square foot cabin that was also full. After selling and giving everything away that we could in that short time we still filled the two stall garage in Pinetop to the ceiling.



Tabor and Mom at 4 months



Anna at 12 months



Gabby, Dan, Zac and Jess Mertz



Zac, Jess, Dan, Izzy and Gabby Mertz



Christopher, Kaitey, Josh and Amanda

We soon started the renovation project by building a three stall 1200 square ft. garage. It's configured to house my woodworking shop as well as our home offices. When that phase was completed we relocated everything from the old garage to the new one and began converting that space to living area. The old garage became a family room, bathroom and guest bedroom. I like to say we touched every square inch of the cabin. The old kitchen was gutted and relocated and two bedrooms were converted into a master suite. We even removed the roof trusses from the front half of the house and replaced them with a vaulted system. The entire project took 30 weeks. I worked seven days a week from dark to dark, in the process I lost nearly fifty pounds. It was also during this project I met Jared Schmidt, he provided the expertise I was lacking and we formed a lasting friendship. We were blessed with volunteer help from Fred & Dorothy Peterson, Glen & Linda Letellier and Nathan & Jeanne Mains. I learned so much during those weeks and months, knowledge that served me well later as a handyman and home remodeler.

My Mother Esther Lillian Marousek Letellier died February 2, 2007. She survived my Dad by 18 ½ years. She lived alone in the ranch house she moved into following her marriage to Loyd in 1940, until she moved to the Martin SD nursing home the last two years of her life. I had no appreciation for how hard it is to be alone and I've had to repent for my lack of sympathy for those who have lost a soul mate. She touched many lives during her time on earth and her legacy lives on in the lives of her children, grandchildren and great grand children. I admired the grace with which she aged. She accepted her diminished capabilities willingly and adjusted her activities accordingly. I hope I can follow that example. I took some pleasure in teasing her in her later years. During her stay in the nursing home I would call her from time to time. Her memory wasn't too good but she continued to read books as she always had. On one occasion I inquired as to what she was reading that day and she mentioned a title that I was familiar with. I began to question her about the story and she hesitated a bit, and then replied, "Well, I'm not ready to give a book report just yet." Her books *"The Man Who Works"* and *"Homesteader's Daughter"* inspired me to record my own life story.

NORRIS - Esther L. Letellier, 92, Norris, died Friday, Feb. 2, 2007, at Bennett County Nursing Home in Martin. Survivors include four sons,

James Letellier, Norris, Don Letellier, Wood Lake, Neb., Glen Letellier, Mountain Lake, Minn., and Roy Letellier, Mesa, Ariz.; two daughters, Dorothy Peterson, Minnetonka, Minn., and Alice White, Evart, Mich.; 17 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren; and two brothers, Dr. Melvin Marousek, Belle Fourche, and Dr. Gerald Marousek, Moscow, Idaho. Her husband, Loyd Letellier, preceded her in death. Visitation will be from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. MST Wednesday, Feb. 7, at Rush Funeral Chapel in Kadoka, and one hour before services Thursday at the church. Services will be at 2 p.m. CST Thursday, Feb. 8, at Norris Bible Church, with the Rev. Don Letellier officiating. Burial will be at Norris Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, a memorial is established.



Mom in her room at the Bennett County Nursing Home



It was bitter cold the day of Mom's funeral

Kathie's mother Louise Marks passed away December 13, 2012. Her health had been failing for a couple of years before she passed and Kathie made many trips to take care of her and to give her brothers a break from their care giving duties. I was never held in high regard by the Marks family but Louise politely tolerated me.

**Louise Marks, 91, formerly of Watervliet, passed away early on Thursday, December 13, 2012, at Trillium Woods Center, in Byron Center, Michigan. Funeral services celebrating her life will be held at 1:00 P.M., on Monday, December 17, at the Dey-Florin Funeral Home, 2506 Niles Ave., in St. Joseph, with Pastors Roy Jeffrey and Tom Hill officiating. Burial will follow at Riverview Cemetery in St. Joseph. Visitation will be held from 12:00 noon until the time of service, Monday, at the funeral home. Memorials may be made to either the Forgotten Man Ministries or to Faith Hospice. Messages of condolence may be sent to [www.florin.net](http://www.florin.net). Louise was born April 14, 1921 in Stara Tura, Slovakia, to Michael and Otilie Waldeck. She married Adolph F. Marks on June 12, 1943 and together had eight children. They raised their family on the farm she helped run with her husband. Louise will be remembered as an excellent cook, baker, meticulous homemaker, and a gracious hostess to many. Each year she canned and preserved thousands of jars of fruit and**



vegetables. Above all, Louise was a devoted mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Louise is survived by her children, Judith (Thomas) Sink of San Tan Valley, Arizona, Kathleen (Roy) Letellier of Pinetop, Arizona, David Marks of Kalamazoo, Albert (Delores) Marks of Auburndale, Florida, Robert Marks of Grand Rapids, Thomas (Kathryn) Marks of Kent City, Michigan, Timothy Marks of Idaho Springs, Colorado, and Philip Marks of Grand Rapids; grandchildren, Eric Sink, Kim Oge, Lisa Marks, Tiffany Watkins, Scott Marks, James Marks, Kaitey Zollinger, Mandi Van Dusseldrop, and Katrina Marks; and great grandchildren, Amanda, Christopher, Tabor, Annabelle, Kory, Evan, Chase, Burgandy, Grace and Carter; and by her brother, Arthur Waldeck of Valley View, Texas. In addition to her parents, Louise was preceded in death by her husband, Rev. Adolph F. Marks in 1992; and by her brothers, Irwin and Albert Waldeck.



Louise Marks



Kathie, Kaitey and Grandma Marks

So the greatest generation, in our family, is gone and the torch is passed to those who remain. May we be faithful to our Savior and never cease to remember those on whose shoulders we stand.

I was greatly motivated to complete the cabin renovation in the spring of 2009 and we declared victory just before the golf course opened in mid April. Up until that time I was an avid golfer and each year I played in the championship flight in our club championship tournament. The previous summer I had my best finish, placing second. Unfortunately, when I returned to the course everything had changed due to the 50 pounds I had shed. That was the beginning of the end of my competitive golf career. I've long since regained the fifty pounds but my golf game remains MIA. That summer I built the bunkhouse for the grandkids. It was so great when they visited us. They were free to make all the commotion they wanted without bothering the big folks.





Before long Kathie began to drop brazen hints regarding certain pieces of furniture she deemed necessary. Her strategy was to show me what she liked in a catalog with the price clearly shown. That was motivation for me to build what she wanted. Those projects regularly filled my time for several years and the house contains many pieces of my work. When I started my handyman business I was often asked where I learned how to do everything. I was always a bit stumped for an answer because I have been building and fixing things all my life. Mostly I just learned by doing and figuring it out as I went along.

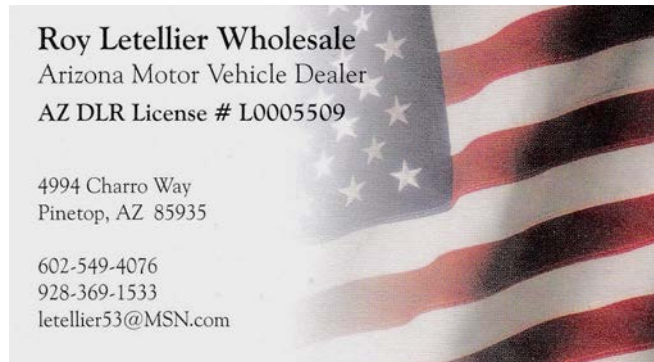


The two photos above show my early craftsmanship. In the photo on the left, I'm sitting on my "house", I spent many happy hours driving nails into that structure. Notice the larger wagon, that's the one Alice and I were to use to haul that bale of straw. My Mom saved the other project and attached a note to it that said "Roy made this when he was 3". The next projects pictured are the bunk beds I made for Amanda and Christopher when they lived with us. That was the first piece of furniture I made that we actually used in the house. The next is a miniature chicken coop I made for Amanda, it's an example of "gifts gone wrong". She asked me to build a chicken coop for her because she wanted to have a chicken for a pet. I was pretty sure how that would go so I thought I could placate her with this mini. The fact that it's still in my possession tells you how she felt about it. Other examples of errant gifts include the Dustbuster we gave to Mandi instead of the Strawberry Shortcake Vacuum Cleaner she had her heart set on. She still holds a grudge. In our early years of marriage I got Kathie a vacuum cleaner for Christmas; you can imagine how that went over.



As I gained more experience I built more elaborate projects. The doll beds were made from the old crib that I slept in until I was six. The loft bed with a slide was built for Tabor. Kathie always claimed that my toolbox should house fine china and linens rather than dusty tools. I built the hutch to exactly match our custom kitchen cabinets. The walnut table was built to Kathie's specifications.

After we completed our remodel we spent the next seven winters in various rented homes in the Phoenix valley. I teamed up with Tim Trendler and we bought and sold every kind of vehicle you can imagine. We had a lot of fun and even made some pretty good money at times.



During an evening out with Randy and Shirley in the winter of 2004/2005 we decided we should take a trip to the United Kingdom the following summer. Kathie gladly agreed to make the arrangements and we were all more than happy to let her do that. As the weeks passed and spring approached Kathie was completely consumed with real estate. I observed that no trip planning was taking place. One day I noticed an ad in a golf magazine for a golf travel agency that specialized in golf trips to Scotland and Ireland. I called and they took care of everything. We were in country for two weeks and played eight different golf courses. Kathie and Shirley did all things tourist, and it was the trip of a lifetime. Randy and I were able to play the “Old Course” at St. Andrews, Scotland the birthplace of golf. We enjoyed our suites at the famous Rusacks Hotel in St. Andrews that looked over the eighteenth green of the Old Course. In addition we visited Ireland and England. Playing the Old Course is a golfer’s Mecca and we were lucky enough to get to do just that. We were paired with two other Americans, one of whom was a serious and talented golfer, he didn’t have much to do with the likes of us. The other member of our foursome was a gentleman by the name of Charlie from Kansas City. At the end of our round that is all we knew about Charlie. He was a pleasant fellow so we invited him to join us for a beer at the nearby pub. He told us that his wife was picking him up and we invited her to join us. Immediately after we all sat down the questions began. “Where are you from? Arizona. Whereabouts? Mesa. I have a friend that lives in Mesa; she lives in one of those adult communities. Yes, they’re everywhere. She lives in one that she can see Red Mountain and it is converting from manufactured homes to site built. My friend is trying to decide whether to build, or sell and buy in another community.” I replied, “That would be Cathy Cryer, she’s my wife’s client and she’s in our small group from church.” It turned out that Cathy Cryer and Charlie’s wife were college roommates. Small world.





Charlie and his wife at St. Andrews



Randy and me on the Swilken Bridge at the Old Course



We had so much fun on the U.K. trip the following year we traveled to Spain. Our intention was to see the Hansen's nephew play basketball. Jared was a college star and played three seasons in the NBA before he completed his career with two seasons in Europe. Sadly he was on the injured list during our visit so we didn't get to see him perform but he and his wife were great tour guides. When we returned to the US we stopped in New York City and took in a couple of Broadway shows.





Enjoying Paella



On the shore of the Mediterranean



This street mime was shouting "no negra"  
this was just before the US election



The food was fantastic



Kathie loved to celebrate her milestone birthdays in a big way and it was at her request that we held her South Dakota memorial on June 4<sup>th</sup>. It would have been her 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday. When she was fifty she took a week long Colorado River kayak trip and in

2007 she had the itch to do something special to commemorate her 55<sup>th</sup> birthday. She wanted to travel to Europe and spend time in France and she asked if it would be okay if she took my sister-in-law Linda Letellier. I quickly endorsed the plan for a number of self serving good reasons. Linda and Kathie were “soul sisters” they spoke often by phone, when they discovered e-mail they “talked” nearly every day. Linda was afflicted with a liver condition that ultimately claimed her life in 2019. Her disease was already quite advanced in 2007 and Kathie wanted to do something special with her dear friend. At that time Linda’s son Casey was living in England so they were able to spend time with him before they embarked on a self guided ten day tour of the French countryside. They had the trip of a lifetime as they stayed at quaint B&B’s and ate local cuisine. One day their rental car had a flat tire; no one would help them until Kathie burst into tears, then suddenly all sorts of French men could speak English and were willing to help.

While the two ladies were away our little poodle Miki disappeared. Apparently, unbeknownst to me she went out the open front door and was never seen again. By that time Miki was nearly blind and was quite deaf as well. Coyotes routinely stalked the streets of our neighborhood so it’s a safe assumption that Miki was lunch. I knew I would be held responsible and proceeded to share my dilemma with my buddies at the auto auction. They all agreed I was dead meat and offered numerous concocted stories for me to use. The only one I actually recall suggested that I dig a hole in the backyard and say “Miki died and I buried her here.” Ultimately I told the truth and Kathie extended grace in her usual kind way.



Linda, Casey and Kathie





I don't know where this was but it looks British



Linda loved PT Cruiser's



Somewhere in France

While attending a SBA multi-class reunion in 2010 I struck up a conversation with Marie Ingalls Lambing. Marie graduated two years ahead of me. I learned that she and her husband lived in Wasilla Alaska. As we conversed I told her of our extensive remodel. I said we would like to visit Alaska but I needed a project. She told me she owned a bed and breakfast and that I should come because she had jobs waiting. I responded that I would and I promised I wasn't just saying it. In June of 2012 Fred and Dorothy, Kathie and I spent three weeks in Wasilla. We did a good number of tasks and enjoyed meeting local folks as well as sightseeing around the area.

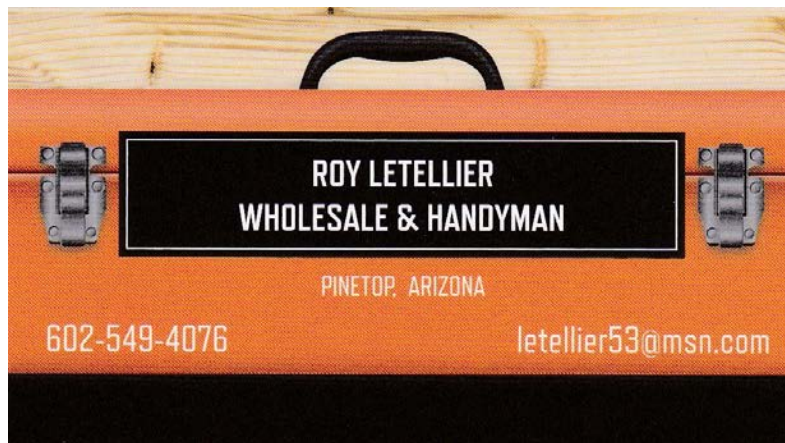


With Marie, Fred & Dorothy at Talkeetna, aerial tour of Denali



Wasilla Alaska

I started Roy Letellier Wholesale & Handyman in the spring of 2014 in response to a home inspection on one of Kathie's sales. It was one of our neighbor's homes and a local contractor presented an outrageous estimate for the minor repairs called for in the inspection. I was appalled at the gall of anyone to quote such astronomical amounts for insignificant repairs. I volunteered to take care of them, and I made the needed repairs in a short time and provided the sellers with an invoice for \$0. Out of that experience hatched an idea for a handyman service. For the next ten years I worked everyday I wanted to and in the process the jobs grew from minor honey-do's to full house remodels. I was often asked in the early days of RLW&H what I did. I would most often reply "I show up." Sadly, that was all the selling required. I did show up and I did what I said I'd do and I treated my customers like I would like to be treated and as an added bonus delivered a quality product. That's a low threshold for success.







Of the thousands of jobs completed through the duration of “RLW&H” I can think of none more satisfying than one done for our neighbor Danny. One day I received a call from Dan and he explained that they had recently moved into their home and they had some jobs that needed to be done. I inquired as to what he had in mind and he mentioned several, including a handicapped ramp. When I arrived to look at what everything entailed I discovered that Dan was confined to a motorized scooter as the result of childhood polio. I further came to realize that he was alone with no way to exit. All sorts of bad scenarios popped into my mind and I promised him that I would return the next day and build his ramp. I will never forget the million dollar grin on Danny’s face the first time he came down that incline. That smile would have been ample compensation. In the years that followed I completed many jobs for Chris and Danny, including an entire “Railroad Building” and shop for his train layout.

I was blessed with a number of skilled tradesmen that I could call on to do jobs that were above my pay grade. I found them to always be ready willing and able to answer my call and perform work in a timely manner. They all understood that I wanted quality work, that I would never question their charges and that they would be paid within minutes of completion. Together we could tackle and complete any job that came our way. The work was physically hard and I put in long hours but it was satisfying to please our customers. Mandi once commented that “Most people have pictures of children and grandchildren on their phone, but my dad has project pictures.” When I received an emotional call from a loyal customer asking me to bury his ancient pet cat, I knew I was truly a full service handyman.

We became year round residents of Pinetop in 2015. Kathie had maintained her membership in White Mountain Association of Realtors ever since we purchased our mountain home in 2001. However, the bulk of her business continued to be in the Phoenix valley. Her records show that in 2015 fully eighty percent of her income came from the valley. Each year the volume of her valley escrows decreased until that production became a very minimal portion of her book of business.

While Kathie’s real estate business prospered she still found time to pursue her passion which was cooking and baking. She enjoyed attending cooking classes and as the years passed she hosted and conducted many culinary classes in our home. On occasion she and her friend Leslie would cater various events; for a time they also maintained a booth at the local farmer’s market selling baked goods and other kitchen fare. She was one of the organizers of the “Fun

and Games Gals” this group consisted of a group of ladies that got together twice each week and played cards or Mahjong. Apparently she often bragged about me and the handyman and repair jobs I could do, but when she started scheduling work for me during her card games I had to put my foot down. Those gatherings were also the genesis of her patented phrase, “Well, you know what Roy says.....”

The Pinetop-Lakeside area is home to many churches and over twenty plus years we’ve been on the mountain we have had the occasion to visit many of them. Sadly, we never felt comfortable or particularly welcome at any of them. During the summer months of the Covid pandemic we invited friends and neighbors to join us in our backyard for church at the grill. Our backyard kitchen is known as the “Redneck Grill” and among other things it’s equipped with a large TV that makes streaming the Central Christian worship service easily accessible. I have continued these gatherings since Kathie’s passing and very much enjoy the weekly fellowship.



Cuisine Queens



Church at the grill



Roy's Redneck Grill

## Chapter 10 The Final Chapter

*"It's a long long road from which there is no return"*

Following "the accident" of March 29th, 2022 we recovered at Randy and Shirley Hansen's Mesa home. The Hansen's return to South Dakota for the season coincided with our release from the rehab center so they graciously turned their home over to us for our convalescence. We returned to Pinetop two nights on Memorial Day weekend to attend a memorial event for Leslie Callow, our good friend and neighbor who succumbed to cancer the previous July. We were finally able to come home on June 18th. We tearfully said goodbye our daughter and number one caregiver, Mandi. Fred and Dorothy Peterson joined us in Pinetop for two weeks to make sure we were able to manage on our own. By mid August we were well enough to drive to Colorado, accompanied by Kathie's sister Judy Sink for their brother Timothy Marks memorial. Tim passed away in January of that year.





Good bye tears



Marks family

In October we took another road trip as we traveled to Modesto, California for grand son Tabor's wedding. November found us back in South Dakota to attend Anna's Senior Chapel at SBA. I was honored to have a small part in the service. While we were there we were able to go down memory lane with a visit to the state capitol in Pierre, we even ran into former intern from my legislative days. We celebrated Thanksgiving in Rapid City with the entire Vandusseldorp clan.



Outside my old office in the capitol



Tabor & Bekka's wedding day





Chief Cook



Vandusseldorp family

The La Posada Hotel is a historic hotel located in Winslow, AZ on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroadway. It was one of many Harvey Houses that served railroad passengers before the Interstate highway system came into being. Winslow is less than eighty miles from our home in Pinetop and we celebrated special occasions there regularly. In addition, the hotel features a five star restaurant known as the Turquoise Room. The cuisine lives up to Kathie's high and demanding standards. We observed our December 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary there and extended our stay through New Year's Eve several different years. During our 2021 observance it struck me that we should host our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at the LaPosada the following year. It was an easy sell and we made reservations for twenty five rooms the next day. We joked that we wanted people to say nice things about us while we were still alive. Little did we know...

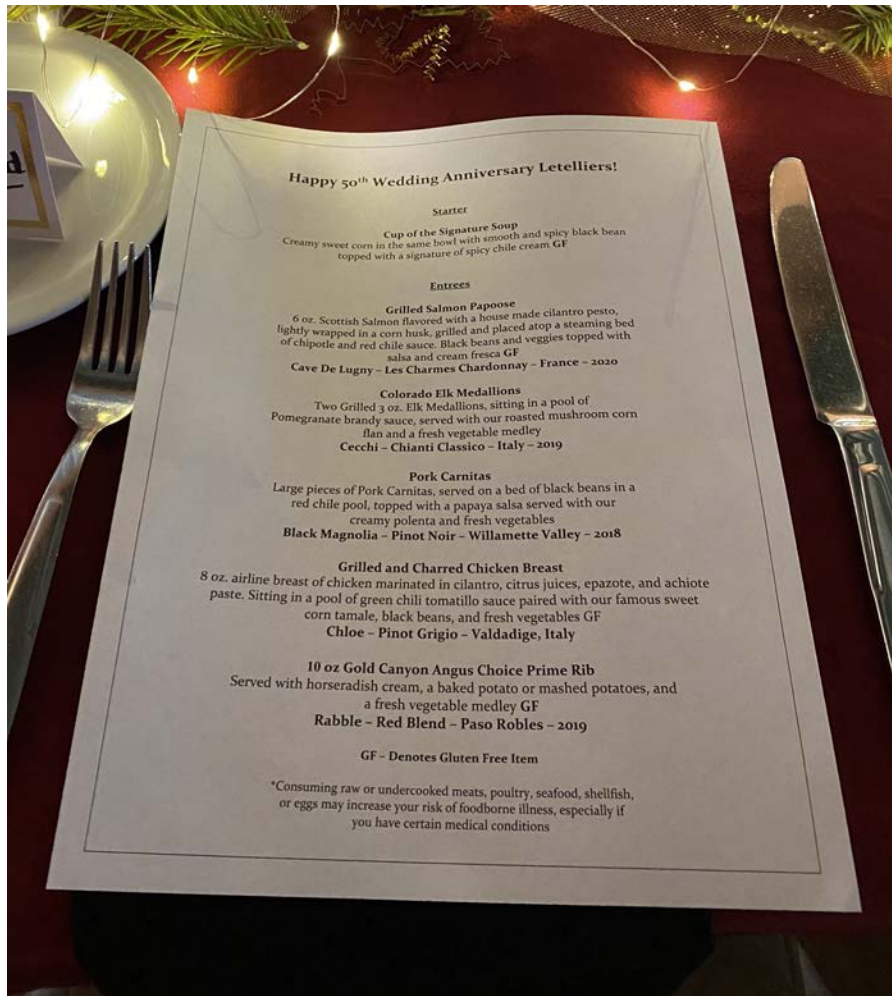
It was a grand celebration that included family and friends from all over the country and from every chapter of our lives. While it was in fact my idea, it was completely out of character for me, I've never been fond of large parties, much less being the focal point of a celebration. But God knew, and those two days with new and old friends made treasured memories for us.



LaPosada Hotel, Winslow Arizona



The happy couple



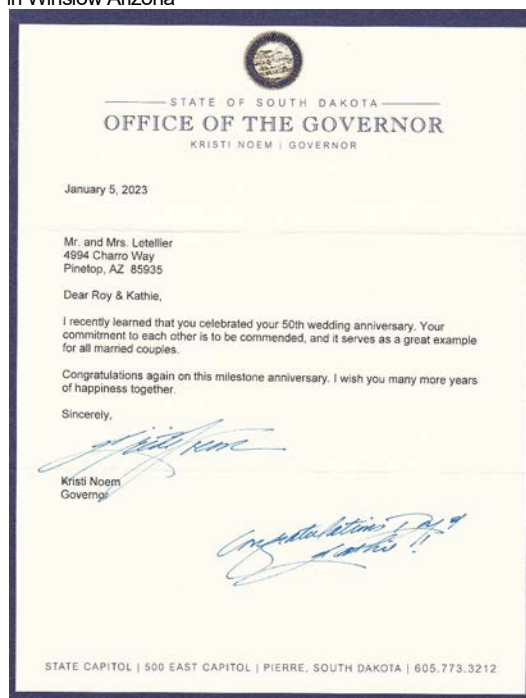
The lovely menu



Listening to someone saying nice things



Standing on the corner in Winslow Arizona



Congratulations from Governor Noem





In honor of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Kathie's siblings gifted us with a hot air balloon ride. I'm glad Kathie was able to cross that off her bucket list in April, before her illness.



Anna graduated from SBA May 2023 she is a third generation Crusader

Little did we know when we left Pinetop on May 15<sup>th</sup> that we would not return for more than two months and what heartbreaking information we would learn. Kathie had a scan done before we left Phoenix on our way to South Dakota for Anna's high school graduation. While there we received a call that her scan results had been sent to an oncologist because there was evidence of a tumor. Kathie in her selfless way refused to tell anyone so as not to ruin Anna's special day. When we returned to Phoenix we met with the oncologist and he sent us directly from his office to the emergency room and surgery was performed the next morning. Just before they took Kathie in for surgery, we were shown the scan image. Even to my untrained eye I knew it was likely to be bad news. After 5 hours or more the surgeon confirmed my fears and Kathie's final journey began.

What follows are our Caring Bridge posts. I will insert commentary when appropriate.

## May 29, 2023

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — May 29, 2023

This is a tough update, and, I'm afraid, not at all in the vein of what we've gotten used to with Roy and Kathie and their miraculous survival just a little over a year ago.

Mom has had some troubling symptoms for a few months now that seemed to be caused by digestive distress....until a couple days ago, when imaging revealed a huge abdominal mass and many smaller masses as well. She had emergency surgery on Saturday, and the surgeon said when he opened her up he couldn't even see any organs. The tumors had



grown into and impacted almost everything. Her colon has been removed, so she will have a colostomy bag for the rest of her life. They were able to get about 90% of the mass out, but she has a lot of healing to do with so many organs affected. It will be at least a week before we have pathology reports to tell us exactly what we're dealing with.

She has no intention of going through chemo and radiation, and wanted me to tell you all that while this was utterly unexpected, she is absolutely at peace. She says she's been having lots of talks with God, and she's completely content to go to heaven any time.

For those of us that love her--and we are many--the idea of this world without her in it is a tough thing to contemplate. She is, of course, in a lot of pain currently, but she does look much better than yesterday already. We live in hope that she will regain some quality of life and that we will get to keep her quite a while longer, but we can only pray and hope. Please pray for our family during this rough time, as we strive to cherish every minute we still have her. We do rejoice in the certainty of a paradise for her beyond this world.

We would love your prayers that our family will all be able to arrange things so everyone gets a chance to see her again in this world. I am not in Arizona myself yet, and I do covet your prayers that many things....and people....will fall into place for me to get there asap. We need your prayers for strength and solace, too...this is very, very hard.

I know the tremendous outpouring of love that all of you have for Mom. I don't think I know anyone else quite so universally adored, so much a force of nature, and a joy to be with. Rest assured that she'll be saving a seat for all of us in heaven, even if we don't see her again on earth.

## June 1, 2023

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — June 1, 2023



Mom has been acting and sounding a lot more like her self the last couple days. Her attitude is SO positive, even in the dark moments. She has made lots of friends among the hospital staff, as she does everywhere she goes.

They've had her up and walking quite a bit, which keeps her a lot more comfortable. She has even been doing real estate business on her phone! She also has said what she really

wants is to clean the hospital room....she says housekeeping only "sort of" mops. Classic Kathie, for sure.

She had hoped to go home today, but the opening from her body into the colostomy bag is very swollen so she can't pass any waste. We do understand that with surgery this extensive, there is a lot of healing to be done, but please pray for God's healing hand on all her organs but especially the swelling at the colostomy opening. She can't go home until it's working right and she will be so much happier and more comfortable at home.

The outpouring of love and prayers has been incredible... thank you all so much. We are honored to have such a vast network of family and friends pulling for her.

Photos: Mom on her phone doing real estate; Occupational Therapy; fuzzy socks brought by wonderful friend for the chilly temps in the ICU.

## June 3, 2023

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — June 3, 2023



Hello, much loved friends and family!

Yesterday we got the pathology report. It's uterine cancer behaving like ovarian cancer,

so pretty vicious. The doctor gave her an estimate of 3-6 months with no chemo or radiation, 6-12 months with conventional treatment. She asked me to tell you all, that yes, the doctor has a timeline, but God has a plan for her, and she will be here as long as He wills it.

She is very busy scheduling her remaining time. She's got bucket list goals, what she calls "death clearing" to do at home (she will give nearly everything to the Crisis Pregnancy Center thrift shop) and she plans to do a lot of visiting and being visited. She was almost giddy filling up her calendar when we spoke. She does not intend to waste one minute. She is full of excitement and so incredibly positive.

There is still a problem with the colostomy, and she can't go home until it's working right, so please, please pray that it will be resolved and she can go home by her birthday on the 4th.

As always, we are honored and touched by your support and prayers. Mom has touched so many lives, and it means a lot to see her impact on people reflected back. We love you all and are so grateful.

## June 3, 2023

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — June 3, 2023

Special request from Mom that I post this prayer:

A new Catholic friend in a 'coincidental' meeting just gave me this prayer. Will you, please, pray it for me?

***Heavenly Father, we call on you right now, in a special way. It is through Your power that we were created. Every breath we take, every morning we wake, and every moment of every hour, we live under Your power.***

***Father, we ask you now to touch Kathie with that same Power. For if you created us from nothing, you can certainly recreate us. Fill us with the healing power of your spirit. Cast out anything that should not be in us. Mend what is broken. Route out any unproductive cells. Open any blocked arteries or veins and rebuild any damaged areas. Remove all inflammation and cleanse any infection. Let the warmth of your healing love pass through our bodies to make new any unhealthy areas so that our bodies will function the way you created them to function. And Father, restore us to full health in mind and body so that we may serve You the rest of our life.***

***We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.***

## June 05, 2023

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — June 5, 2023



Good morning all!! This is probably a one-time post from me. Kaitey is so much better at this and I'm beyond thankful for her creative writing skills. ♡ She is very busy preparing to fly to Phoenix tomorrow morning and we look forward to her arrival. I had an early birthday gift in being released from the hospital on Saturday!! 🎉 I'm very thankful. That day was busy with the flurry of details to cover before discharge and the 45 minute ambulette ride here to the home in Mesa where we are staying, again! (This was our 'Healing Hacienda' following our auto accident a year ago. I told my friend Shirley that she should just put our names on the deed.) 🙏

I am very thankful to be here and so happy that Mandi and Roy didn't have to spend another night on the chair 'beds' in my hospital room. They stayed with me the full eight nights after my surgery! Roy might be taking that 'in sickness, and in health' to the extreme. I sure love him, though, and am so grateful for his care and that of Amazing Mandi.

So I am resting and healing from surgery while learning a new normal for me. And we are researching treatment options while seeking advice from two doctors who are very special to me. We will update you as we make decisions.

Thank you all for your numerous birthday wishes in many forms and, especially, your prayers. I love you dearly.

## June 7, 2023

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — June 7, 2023

Greetings from Arizona!

I flew in yesterday morning and we are very pleased to be all four of us together. It's wonderful to have this time together as a family.

We have a few prayer requests for our wonderful army of prayer warriors....



First, that Mom's nausea would resolve and she'll be able to eat and take meds without throwing up. She has done a bit better with this today, so we're hopeful for a good outcome.

Second, that as we search for the facility with the best treatment options for her, we will get a call back from her best option even sooner than expected. It takes some time to get an appointment to even have a phone appointment to talk with these places, and it feels pretty nerve racking for time to continue ticking by as we wait and wait for responses from them.

Third, we continue to struggle with the colostomy bag.....we're told that everyone has a hard time at first, but Mom is having a lot of discomfort and Dad is pretty frustrated. Just pray that everything will fall into place and the process of changing the bag will become routine and easy for Dad, and even for Mom to do herself.

Mom is very positive today and she has gotten a lot of good quality sleep, which means so much for her healing. She is, of course, so positive in her attitude that she puts the rest of us to shame, but there are some really tough moments all the same. We thank you all for your kindness, support, and prayers. It means a lot to have so many people supporting Mom.

## June 12, 2023

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — June 12, 2023

Hello, dear friends and family!

We have had some amazing answers to prayers. The colostomy bag is working as intended, which is wonderful, as it was a huge source of stress and really miserable for mom when and dad both when it failed.

We have gotten preliminary calls back from nearly all the treatment facilities we are looking into. The gears of the medical world grind slowly, so there are still roadblocks before an actual appointment. Please pray that within the next week we will be able to discern the best option and actually get started on a treatment plan. Mom has high hopes for our call tomorrow morning with Hope for Cancer, which would mean going to Mexico for treatment. Please hold tomorrow morning in your prayers as we seek God's guidance in deciding what options are best for Mom.

Mom's nausea has also improved hugely. She doesn't always have a lot of appetite, but the nausea is pretty much gone.

We love and appreciate you as always. We know that your prayers are powerful, and we see their effect daily. Thank you so much for your faith in God and your love for Mom.

## June 16, 2023

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — June 16, 2023

Hooray! We are all very excited here. We have found an AMAZING treatment center in Mexico called Hope 4 Cancer and Mom and Dad will be traveling there next Tuesday, the 20th.

Mom will be put on a 3 week program of therapies 9 hours a day, 6 days a week. All the treatments there are non-toxic, and she will have support for a year even after she returns home. She will be sent home with everything she needs to continue certain therapies at home, and will have calls with her doctors on a regular basis.

The center also will feed both Mom and Dad three meals per day, chef cooked and designed specifically for Mom's needs. They'll provide a private room with a private bath for both of them as well. Everyone we've spoken to has been beyond kind and so very helpful without overloading us with technical details.

I will post more about specific therapies once she's there, or you can go to [Hope4Cancer.org](http://Hope4Cancer.org) to learn more.

Thank you, as always, for all your prayers...we were feeling a bit frustrated with the other facilities we have been looking into. Hope 4 Cancer is everything we prayed for and more. God is faithful!

## June 21, 2023

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — June 21, 2023

Mom and Dad made it safely to Mexico last night. Their driver, Jesus, picked them up at the San Diego airport and took them across the border to the Hope4Cancer campus. They had a gluten-free, dairy-free, vegan dinner which Mom said was delicious and even Dad enjoyed.

Today, Mom starts treatment! We'll be sharing more info about her specific treatments and therapies in the days ahead.

Thank you, as always, for your love, support, and most of all your prayers. We are so grateful to have found Hope4Cancer, and appreciate your prayers that Mom's treatment will be effective.

Love always,

*Roy says: The food at H4C was much different than I was accustomed to. Fish was the only meat served and that only at the noon meal. I planned to eat at one of the local food establishments until I had a conversation with another patient companion that told me he had lost 20 pounds during their three week stay. I thought "I could lose twenty pounds." I did lose about 15 but it came roaring back after we returned home.*

## June 24, 2023

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — June 24, 2023



Arrival at the San Diego airport and waiting for our shuttle driver, Jesus!! He was invaluable in helping us obtain our permits at the border crossing.



Breakfast on the sun-drenched terrace.



A beautiful lunch plate!!



Relaxing during a B-17 infusion.





Roy's view on a morning walk along the Pacific shore.

Good morning, family and friends.

This is my fourth day at Hope4Cancer. They keep me very busy with various treatments and therapies. I have been able to see my doctor three times and the nutritionist once. As, we reported earlier, the meals here are quite good. My diet is now tailored for my specific needs, while Roy enjoys the companion meals. Originally, he expected to be out and about enjoying the local cuisine, but he has decided to share mealtimes with me.

He does go out for coffee and a 2-3 mile walk after breakfast while I begin my routine in the clinic. (He was lucky to see dolphins at play this morning!)

Most of my therapies involve heat, light, oxygen, or vitamin infusions. Right now, I'm in a UVBI session, Ultra-Violet Blood Infusion, in which they draw 5 vials of my blood, infuse it with UV light and send it back into me to fight the cancer cells. We continue to be hopeful and prayerful and trust that God has brought me to this place for healing.

We spent our first 3 nights in a hotel close by, but we were able to move into a clinic room yesterday. The rooms are small and simple, but meet our needs. And we are blessed with a balcony which gives us extra time in the sun and views of the ocean across the street.

Thank you for your continuing love and prayers. Right now I am struggling with appetite, again, and would appreciate your prayers for that. I need to eat to promote healing and gain a little weight. Fortunately, I have been able to drink my afternoon protein shake and most of the daily juices. And there are tea bars which appeal to me.

Thanks for visiting with us. I'll be back, again, in a day or two.

**June 29, 2023**

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — June 29, 2023



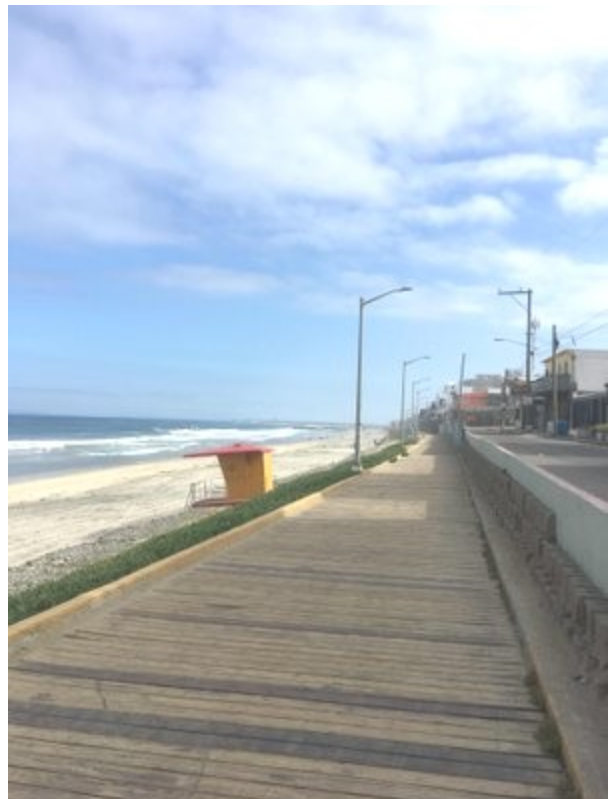
This sign is by the dining tables on the terrace. I am blessed by it each morning.



The nurses here are amazingly kind, compassionate and caring!!



These are the best fish tacos I have ever eaten!!!



Roy enjoys this boardwalk each morning. I hope to go with him soon

and head down to wiggle my toes in the sand!!



Yes, that's Roy under the red cap and at his coffee stop each morning. They've even given him a frequent drinker card! ☺

Good morning. This is my 9th day at Hope4Cancer, so I'm nearly halfway. I'm encouraged by all your messages, prayers and love. Thank you from my heart to yours.

First of all, thank you for your prayers for my appetite. It is much better!! I can't eat much at a time, but I'm pretty sure I'm getting enough. Besides 3 meals a day, I have healthy juices twice a day and a protein smoothie.

The clinic continues to refine my treatment and adds therapies and supplements that my doctor feels will benefit me the most. I'm so very grateful for their kindness, professionalism, and compassion. Roy and I feel that this is definitely the place God has led us.

We've enjoyed meeting new friends and are establishing some lifelong connections. Of course, we're all here for the same reasons, either healing or to support someone we love. I can't imagine doing this without Roy! He has been my greatest encourager and is always by my side unless he's headed out for his daily cup of coffee, taking walks or working on a jigsaw puzzle in the library/game room.

A complimentary visit to the dentist was scheduled for both of us. It's a very pristine and state-of-the-art naturopath facility. I will go there for a cleaning and to have some mercury fillings replaced if we can schedule it during my visit here.



Finally, we are privileged to have Dr. Tony, the founder here for a few days. He only visits this clinic a few times a year as his travel and teaching schedule allow. He did a group session with us today and I will see him for a personal consultation tomorrow. I highly recommend his book to all. 1 in 2 men and 1 in 3 women alive today will experience cancer, so please be ready. I wish I had known all this years ago. Still, I will not look back, but forward to all that God has for me.

In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation. Psalm 5:3

## July 03, 2023

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — July 3, 2023



Let freedom ring!!

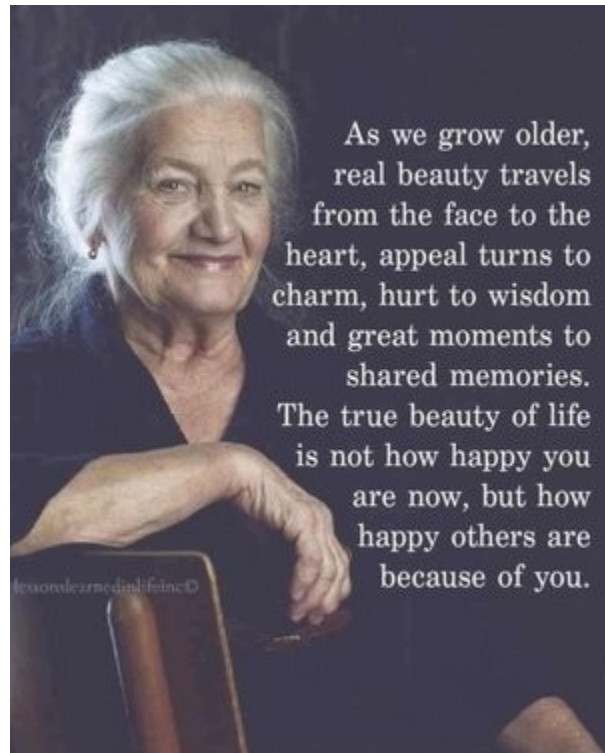


Heather has become a dear friend and has 'adopted' me as her 'mom'. She is a delightful

46- year old from San Diego. She will go home tomorrow and we will miss her.



Our dear neighbors are gathering mail, blowing off the porches, watering plants, and clearing our driveway of pinecones and branches. So thankful that they can be rewarded with a few cherries from our trees. ♥



A Spearfish, SD, friend gifted me with these words of wisdom.



Celebrate today!!  
Happy 4th of July to all.

I'm starting my 14th day at Hope4Cancer, and looking forward to our return to Pinetop in less than 2 weeks! I'm scheduled to have a PET scan soon and that should tell much about my progress. Then the doctors can refine and adjust the treatment therapies, as necessary.

Many of you have asked what sort of treatments I am getting. I won't list the actual names of the therapies, (I had 11 therapy sessions yesterday.) but they, mainly, involve heat, light, or oxygen. I'm learning much about what cancer does and doesn't like. Interestingly, cancer grows best in a cool environment, so we plan to continue the heat therapies when we are home. We may have to turn the bunkhouse into a treatment room. And, of course, nutrition is a key in fighting cancer. My diet will change and Roy's, as well, though he will still enjoy foods that I can't. Controlling cancer requires physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual elements. We are working on all of these here.

We continue to meet fascinating people from across the US and Canada. Sharing the common bond of a cancer fight makes us instant friends. The youngest patient I've met here is 27 years old and the oldest is nearly 80.

We were privileged to have Dr. Tony, the founder of Hope4Cancer, with us for a few days last week. He met with each patient, individually, and we found him to be a very compassionate, caring, and determined man who has dedicated his life to treating cancer patients and saving lives. It was especially meaningful to end our session in prayer as he is a man of great faith, as well.

I am joining Roy for walks each day and often make it about a mile. I hope to increase that this week. His 'puzzle partners', a mother & daughter team from Michigan & Wisconsin, left today, so I may have to start a puzzle that he will feel compelled to finish. I am busy most of each day, so he has hours to fill. We are both happy that he was finally able to get Roku to work with the TV in our room, so now has access to Netflix.

I know so many of you are supporting us in prayer, so here are my specific requests. First, I'm still struggling with my appetite and getting my digestive system accustomed to this new 'normal'. The doctors are going to try a new medication and I'm praying they will find the answer. And, secondly, please pray that I will be able to have a PET scan this week.

We love your comments here, texts, emails and calls, but especially appreciate your prayers. Thank you so much! ♥🙏♥

## July 09, 2023

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — July 9, 2023



Our sweet Joaquina, my weekend nurse, administering an ultra-violet blood infusion . She is so very caring and works really hard.





Luis is my weekday nurse and I truly love him. He takes such great care of me. Here he is with me in the 'pizza oven', my least favorite therapy. I so appreciate Roy who comes to distract and encourage me each 45 minute session.



Dr. Tony is very relational with the patients. We appreciate his dedication.



Just before we came to Tijuana, my college roommate and dear friend of nearly 53 years, Judy Woodford, came to Arizona from Ontario, Canada, to visit me. ♡



Roy decided he had to visit a pizza oven, as well. I sure can't blame him.

Homeward bound!! We will fly to Phoenix on Wednesday and drive to Pinetop on Friday morning. Though we have appreciated our healing journey here, we are both ready to be in our own home.

The last two days at Hope4Cancer will be busy with continuing treatments as we can fit them in among Roy's training to give me shots and administer ongoing therapies for the next 3 months and beyond. I also have a dental visit scheduled on Monday and the long-awaited Pet-scan on Tuesday! We have to travel a couple of hours to the hospital where that will be performed, but the clinic provides a driver and vehicle.

I've had reactions to IV's 5 times. It's not unusual they tell us, but I think I'm "first in my class" with the current group. They have medicines to help me, but I lose valuable time while I deal with severe shivering and pain, and sleep off the exhaustion. I'm really petitioning the good Lord to spare me any more episodes and my nurses are slowing the rate of the IV's. That seems to be helpful. I continue to struggle with my appetite, as well, and am looking forward to choosing what I eat and some home remedies to make food more appealing.

We continue to be amazed at how the locals party. I've tried to attach a video, but not sure it will work. There is daily - and nightly - music and partying on the beach. Roy said they are elbow to elbow tonight, so we are likely to have trouble sleeping, again, tonight.

Thanks, all over again, for your continued prayers and messages of love and encouragement.

## July 11, 2023

Journal Entry by Katie Zollinger — July 11, 2023



Hello, friends and family,

We have an urgent prayer request as mom has developed a serious infection, possibly from the port they put in to do her infusions. Her liver enzymes are off the charts as well, so we are very concerned. She had been having some adverse effects after infusions in recent days, but unfortunately it looks like there are some more serious issues. Currently she can't sit or lie down without a lot of pain, so please include her comfort and ability to rest in your prayers.

She's having a PET scan today in Tijuana, and tomorrow will fly home to Arizona and go straight into the hospital to have her infection treated and address the issues with her liver. She asked that we share photos of these signs posted in the facility where the PET scan is being performed.

Thank you, as always, for being prayer warriors ready to intercede on Mom's behalf. Your love and support mean so much.

Yours in faith,

**July 14, 2023**

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — July 14, 2023



Aubrey is a dear young woman from Dallas that we both just 'fell in love' with. We plan to stay connected and support each other during the months ahead.





One of my favorite verses displayed at Scantibodies in Tecate.



The beautiful grounds at the imaging center!



Eduardo was always there to help. His English was as good as his ability to insert IV needles!



Luis and I became great friends while he nursed me for so many days. He loved to remind me that he was 'good-looking, charming, and muscular'. He was!

Thank you all for so very many prayers and expressions of love and support. Roy and I are beyond happy to be 'home'! We arrived safely at Sky Harbor late on Wednesday afternoon and will spend 3 nights in Mesa before heading to Pinetop on Saturday morning. And I have no pain currently!!

We did spend 6 hours in the ER at Honor Health/Thompson Peak in Scottsdale on Thursday. They checked me out thoroughly - seems the only test they didn't run was for pregnancy! - and I am fine. No further signs of infection and most blood test markers show normalcy or improvement. The only area of real concern was my potassium level, so I received 2 rounds of IV's plus a prescription to take over the next week. The remaining concern is the considerable swelling in both feet and ankles which the ER PA

thinks may be due to the many IV fluids I've been receiving over the last month. So I'll elevate, rest, and stay hydrated by mouth.

Roy was very busy while I was in the ER managing 2 phones and all your texts and phone calls. There is very poor reception in that facility, so please accept this update and our gratitude for the outpouring of love and encouragement we both felt yesterday.

We went to Tecate on Tuesday to the amazing and beautiful state-of-the-art facility where the pet-scan was performed. I especially enjoyed the many Scripture verses displayed throughout the facility and was surprised when a beautiful acapella voice blessed us with the hymns of my childhood - Amazing Grace; Jesus is the Sweetest Name I Know, The Old Rugged Cross and many more.

We received a disc and excellent photos of my scans before we left the facility, though we still have to wait a few days to get the full report. The photos show me 'lit up like a Christmas tree', but our doctors reminded us that this race isn't a sprint, but a marathon. Many patients have gone home after the first 3 weeks with similar images to improve dramatically by their 3-month follow-up and live years beyond their original prognosis. Though it's hard not to be fearful, we know that God has a plan for me. I am truly content in that reassurance.

The challenges ahead are managing the home program over the next 3 months and the many supplements, all labeled in Spanish! (Thank you, Google!) Our team at Hope4Cancer will continue to support us. We just need to wrap our brains around the many components and implement them into our daily routine. Roy is concerned about our abilities to handle this - and I am, too, but I feel we need to just take a deep breath, say a prayer, and manage one day at a time. We will be talking with our doctors at the center and learning to use the home therapy tools that will be arriving soon.

Thank you for your continued support. You mean the world to us! Please enjoy the photos I've added. We met so many very special patients and staff during our 3 weeks in Tijuana.

## July 24, 2023

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — July 24, 2023



I could not capture the full beauty of this huge flower arrangement that greeted us on our arrival home. Thank you to four dear Pinetop girlfriends.





Another neighbor planted this solar Star of Hope that comforts us every night.



Here I am in my own personal 'Pizza Oven'.



Former neighbors and recent clients, Mike and Lorraine, came up from the Valley to visit.



Betty was one of three neighbors who came to help with kitchen chores. Thanks, gals!

Happy Monday to you all! So many of you have been asking for an update and Roy keeps gently reminding me. I really appreciate this venue for keeping so many of you in the loop. It's easier on us and helpful for you, I know.

Yes, we are so happy to be in our own little mountain home! We are adjusting to a 'new normal' as Roy is managing the myriad of supplements and daily shots I need, as well as assisting me with the 'pizza oven' and the daily red lamp therapy which incorporates castor oil. (Our grandmothers would approve!) I love the daily soaks with epsom salts, baking soda and hydrogen peroxide. And I'm trying to make juices and protein shakes palatable while following my nutritionist's guidelines. Fortunately, Mandi and Gabe are arriving in a few hours. Both Roy and I will appreciate their help in so many ways.

I'm struggling with energy, though some days are better than others. Roy is a valuable 'watchdog' to see that I don't overextend myself. I'm limiting myself to 1 or 2 short outings or visits a day which seems manageable.

Our neighbors, Betty and Victor, greeted us nearly as soon as we arrived home to help unload the car and the coolers. Many friends here have offered help in any way we need, and we are accepting, gratefully, this time around. A year ago we were in recovery and felt we could manage. Now it's great to have a bit of kitchen and laundry help and the encouragement of visits and errand running. Thank you!!

And thank you for the myriad of cards, gifts, flowers, prayers and well-wishes. We love and appreciate you all.

**August 07, 2023**



My Kitchen Magician transforming fresh produce into cancer-fighting juice.



Don and Mary, dear Gold Canyon friends of nearly 25 years made a special trip to Pinetop to visit with us. What a treat!

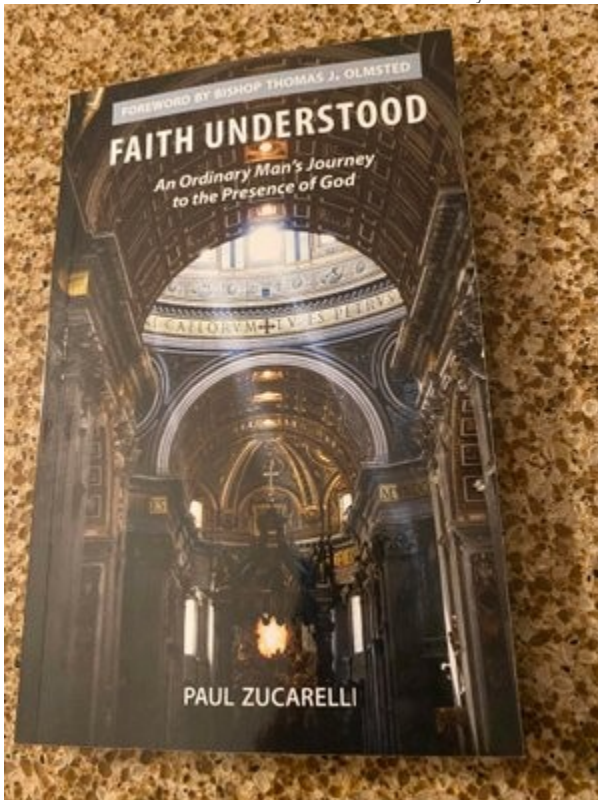


So many lovely bouquets fill our home with your love and caring.





Backyard church on Sunday mornings with dear friends is a special blessing.



This book, shared by special friends, was read by all three of us in just a few days. It is an amazing story of miracles and grace. I recommend that you go to Amazon and order your own copy. You won't be able to put it down and you will be inspired!!

Hello to all our dear people! Your messages, many prayers, cards, and phone calls continue to encourage us. Thank you. Mandi and Gabe's time with us has been so special and loving. Gabe had to leave last Monday, but Mandi has stayed and will be with us until Friday morning. Besides being

invaluable as a cook, housekeeper, laundress and sweet companion, her organizational skills have transformed things around here! We took 3 carloads of ‘stuff’ to Hopeful Treasures, my favorite thrift shop, and 6 boxes of books to The Friends of the Library. This is all part of ‘freeing me of earthly bonds’ and it feels very good.

Friends come and go bringing pampering gifts, treats and vases of flowers!! Cards and gifts arrive by mail nearly everyday, to remind me of the blessing of relationships that stand the test of time. Sweet conversations grace my days. Thank you all!!

I am feeling quite well most of the time. I have an initial visit with an oncologist in Show Low tomorrow with the goal of having a professional close by when I need one. My appetite is fairly good and I have almost no pain. Praise God!! We have adjusted to life at home quite well, but soon will set out on a 3-week journey to visit family and friends in 3 states. I’ll keep you posted along the way. Thank you for your continued prayers and love which sustain us.

## August 18, 2023

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — August 18, 2023



Nathan and Jeanne in Frankenmuth, Michigan, friends since the guys were 15.

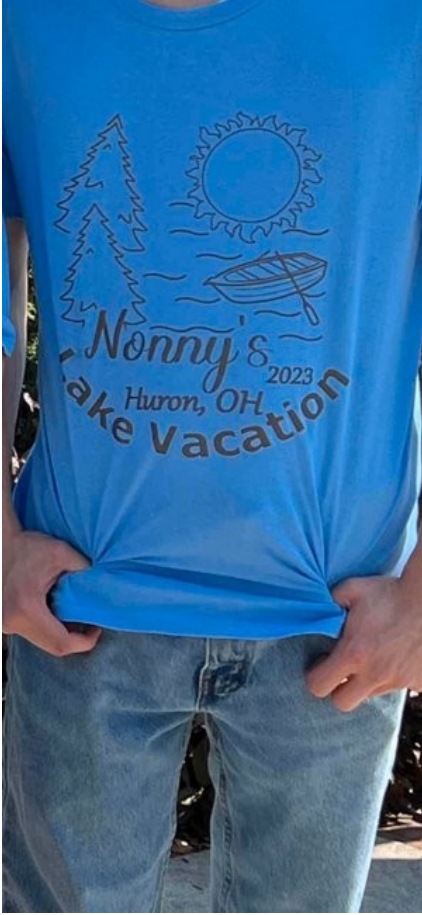


Frankenmuth is a beautiful Bavarian town where it is Christmas year-round. The flowers are especially beautiful in summer, but I have a special affinity for this topiary chicken.



Cedar Point was a highlight for the younger adults!! All day long, miles and miles of walking and long waits followed by rides that were over in minutes or less!! They loved it!!





The 'kids' designed special T-shirts for the event!!



Mandi and Amanda designed a special blanket as a gift for me from all of them. I love it!!



We are well into our ‘family & friends’ trip and having a great time. We flew into Detroit last Saturday and spent 3 nights with longtime friends, Nathan & Jeanne, at their lovely home in Frankenmuth, MI.

Then on to Huron, OH, where the whole family gathered for lots of special fun and togetherness. We arrived to a flooded B&B right on Lake Erie which was a bit discouraging, but Mandi & crew found a larger and better home in town where we had 8 bedrooms in a lovely setting with a heated pool and spa. Things just work out!!

Our family gathering included 12 of us and we shared so many laughs, special memories, sweet tears, great food and lots of fun! The ‘kids’ were thrilled with a day at Cedar Point, the largest and second-oldest amusement park in the world. We’re sure glad they had so much fun and the ‘old folks’ could head home early while the kids stayed until closing at 10 pm.

The rain held off yesterday morning to give us a perfect photo shoot opportunity on the lovely grounds. Then we all just enjoyed being together, sorting through old photos, laughing and crying sweet tears, playing games and enjoying pool and spa time in between great meals.

I have done well during the trip. When my energy wanes, I take a nap and have felt quite well which is such a blessing. I’m so thankful for this very special time.

## August 21, 2023

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — August 21, 2023



Such a special reunion with Roy's brother, Glen, his sister, Dorothy, and brother-in-law, Fred. So good to spend time with family. Niece Ronda and Steve along with daughter Valerie joined us, as well.



Uncle Glen brought lots of delicious produce from his garden along with homemade bread and delicious butternut squash pie!! Mandi asked for recipes!!



Uncle Fred gave Mandi a private tour of the cabin museum. So many memories!!



Mandi and I were treated to tube rides around the lake!! Again, remembrances of so many waterski and tube rides years ago!!



Hard enough to leave all the rest of the family in Ohio, but it sure was bittersweet to leave Mandi this morning.



Hello from beautiful Minnesota. We are blessed to be here at Roy's sister's lake cabin where we spent so many summer vacations while the girls were growing up. It's a place filled with memories for all of us, lots of water- fun, soaking up the sun, peacefulness. It's a perfect place for me to heal. Thank you, Fred and Dorothy!!

I have a special request of you all. Please join your prayers for me with extra petitions for our dear friend, Karen. We just received news yesterday that she is going through something very similar to my illness and, in fact, is seeing my surgeon/oncologist today. Please pray that her mass is contained and operable, and that we will have a hopefully promising report soon.

In the meantime, I am feeling well most of the time, able to eat and enjoy visits with our family. Thank you for blessing me with your friendship and prayers.



**Karen M. and Eric**

*Roy says: Karen sadly succumbed to her affliction just 45 days after Kathie left us. It was a terrible blow since the medical personnel continually provided promising updates. Eric and Karen were Kathie's real estate clients and my customers, who became dear*



*friends. Eric and I have shared many tears in the weeks and months following the loss of our soul mates.*

## August 31, 2023

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — September 8, 2023



Here's a crazy, fun shot of 6 of the Marks' kids at my sibling reunion. The guy in front, along with his wife, (Thanks, Tom & Kathy,) hosted the day of reconnection, a special way to end our trip.



Roy relaxing at the charming Essenhaus Inn in Northern Indiana, after a long day of driving.



My dear childhood friend, Sharon, and her daughter, Bethany, welcomed us to Indiana, for a special time of catching up.



We were able to visit Roy's sister, Alice, who lives in Michigan.



Our amazing and dear Conrad friends blessed us with hospitality.

Hard to believe we've been home for 4 days already, but it sure is good to be here!! The 3 1/2 week 'Family & Friends Tour' was such a special time with so many who are very dear to us. It was a very important part of the emotional path in dealing with my cancer, and brought me much joy and comfort. Yet, home is where we love to be!!

We are adjusting well while I'm working on getting back into the routines of therapies that I couldn't travel with, and 2 new ones, as well.

So, how am I doing? Everyone wants to know. Well, I had CT scans yesterday and will let you know what they show after a visit with the oncologist next week.

I struggle with morning nausea many days, some fatigue and poor appetite, but still am able to enjoy life. I had a short & pleasant work appointment yesterday and then enjoyed visits with neighbors. I lasted all 4 rounds of Hand & Foot today with my neighborhood Game Gals. Tomorrow I anticipate a cooking class and the weekend will bring South Dakota visitors! So I'm very thankful to enjoy good quality of life, having passed the 3-month mark of my surgeon's prognosis. I fully expect to pass the 6 month mark, as well, while remaining content and confident that God is in control. Of course, so much credit goes to my amazing Roy who is the 'wind beneath my wings'. And to all of you who continue to shower me with your love and prayers. Thank you.

I want to let you know that my dear friend, Karen, is having chemo to reduce the size of her tumor. In spite of all she has endured, she is doing quite well and I'm looking forward to seeing her tomorrow! Please continue to pray for her as you think of me.

I'll post a few photos of our travels with each journal entry and hope you enjoy them. ♥



## September 20, 2023

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — September 22, 2023



The Pfeifles and the Humbrachts drove all the way from South Dakota to spend a few days with us. What a treat!! Janie & Lonnie pretty much brought their garden, so we had wonderful fruits and vegetables to enjoy. Mostly, it was such a blessing to bask in the love and care of longtime friends who have become family to us.



Roy does so many things for me including juicing. He's a man of many talents and is constantly learning to do more 'new' things. Thanks to our dear friend, Jeanne, of Frankenmuth, Michigan who provided the juicer.



We've had a bumper crop of peaches from our backyard tree!! They are delicious. I'm hoping I can get my sister, Judy, who is just arriving, to help me bake a pie for Roy.

*Roy says: That tree has never before or since produced a crop. How fitting that it did just for Kathie.*



We have the best neighbors!! Betty & Victor are always finding ways to help us and she checks on me everyday to see how I'm feeling and what I might need.



It was only appropriate that our neighbor, Chris, from just around a couple corners was the first to arrive at my Friends giving celebration. She is constantly cooking and baking healthy food for us.

Fall is in the air and I welcome it as I send an update on our journey.

We very much enjoyed our visit with 2 special South Dakota couples, Joyce & Duard and Janie & Lonnie, who have been longtime friends. Joyce and Janie allowed Roy a welcome break from kitchen tasks and all of them helped set up a special time for me to welcome mountain girlfriends and share mementos of our friendship. It was a sweet time.

When they left a week ago, I experienced a significant loss of energy which I couldn't contribute to overexerting myself. I saw my Show Low oncologist that afternoon to discuss results of recent tests. Though he wouldn't compare recent CT Scans to the Pet-scans I had done in Mexico, he told us that my cancer marker numbers had decreased. That's good news! Other news was that it seemed as if I needed a blood transfusion. So, after testing over the next couple of days and the insertion of a PICC Line, I finally received 2 units of blood on Friday afternoon. That has made a significant difference in my energy level and allowed me to be much more active in my daily routine. I will have further scans in a few weeks which will give us a better indication of where I am on my healing journey.

We look forward to a return to Hope4Cancer in Tijuana on Oct 1st for a brief follow-up visit during which they will tweak my therapy program.

We had planned to be in South Dakota this week for Roy's high school reunion and were looking forward to special times of reconnecting with his classmates. However, he decided that the trip would be too hard on us and cancelled our flights. Though there is an



element of disappointment, I agree I was not up to the trip, which would have made it very difficult for him, as well. So, home is our haven for now!

Thank you for the continued caring and prayers, your phone calls, texts, personal visits and cards, flowers and little gifts. Each of them reminds me that I am immeasurably blessed.

## October 2, 2023

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — October 2, 2023



Jim & Robin



Dan & Jess



Brandon & Gina

Today you have a new writer. This is Roy. We can always tell when its time to do another CaringBridge post because our phones begin to ring. While we appreciate and enjoy our conversations, it isn't practical to call and text everyone one of our dear friends.

A couple of weeks ago, after a routine appointment with the Show Low oncologist, Kathie was determined to be very low on hemoglobin and was given 2 units of blood. That seemed to be the solution for awhile. Last weekend she became very fatigued and somewhat lethargic. We went back to the Show Low hospital on Monday; her hemoglobin was, again, quite low and there was an obvious problem with her kidneys. They advised us to get to the Emergency Room in Scottsdale ASAP. Tuesday around noon we arrived and after several hours of tests, they determined that the ureters were being restricted, probably by the growing tumors. Consequently, the kidneys were essentially being drowned. They successfully inserted stents in the ureters and took care of that issue.

However, there was still the matter of the loss of blood. They had tested for blood in the stool at Show Low and determined that there was, in fact, blood present, and this was confirmed in Scottsdale. Thursday, she had an endoscopy as well as a colonoscopy. They revealed no sign of blood loss. The next step was what is called a capsule-camera. It is an acorn size camera that is swallowed. As it makes its way through the digestive tract for the next eight hours and sends continuous images to a receiver. Those images revealed a minor area in the small intestine as the probable source of the blood loss. The Dr. recommended simply monitoring the situation as these problems often correct themselves. As of this morning, her hemoglobin has remained stable, and she has no sign of bleeding. So far, the camera has failed to reappear, but aside from that she's doing as well as can be expected.



Mandi flew in Tuesday evening before the stent procedure and has been great help and emotional support for both of us. Kathie was released from Thompson Peak Medical center on Saturday about noon, and we arrived home in Pinetop about 6:00 PM. Kathie received excellent care while she was hospitalized and we can't say enough good things about the staff at Thompson Peak.

We had planned to go to my class reunion in Sturgis SD from September 18-25.

Unfortunately, we thought it better to remain here and we are glad that we did. While we were sad to miss seeing old friends, we realize it was best not to travel. They honored us by calling during the Sunday morning service and praying for us; it was a special moment.

We were also scheduled to have the three-month follow-up at Hope4Cancer starting October 1. Again, we have decided that it's best not to travel at this time. We will communicate with H4C and we may return to Mexico at a later date.

I know how much you enjoy pictures, but we haven't had much to photograph the past couple weeks. I think I'll just post a few from our 50th wedding anniversary celebration.

## October 5, 2023

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — October 6, 2023



The ER in Scottsdale was the temperature of a cold storage locker.

Kathie is shown holding a hot air blower, as you can see she's very pleased.



Nurse Christinne discharging her patient.



Beautiful flowers from Victor & Betty.



Our trooper.

Today's post is dedicated to the lives and memories of Wayne, Bonnie, Debbie, Dean, Kurt, Leslie, Brad and Chris, all neighbors and friends who each lived within walking distance of our home and all of whom passed from this life in the last few years and months due to some form of cancer.

Early Wednesday morning, we had Kathie transported by ambulance to Summit Hospital in Show Low. She had been vomiting for several hours and had become severely dehydrated. She was re-hydrated intravenously over the course of several hours, her condition stabilized, and we returned home mid-afternoon. We came to understand that Kathie's symptoms are her body's way of giving notice that it is beginning to shut down.

Later that afternoon we spent a couple of hours with hospice personnel getting her back in the hospice system. We have come to the conclusion that while the end may or may not be imminent, her condition is best addressed by the services that hospice provides. Ever since her surgery and diagnosis our prayer has been for her to be pain free and have quality of life for her remaining days. Thankfully, God has answered those prayers, as she continues to be pain free and as you can tell from our posts, she has been able to maintain near normal functions.

During this journey that you are sharing with us we have tried to be as transparent and informative as possible. As we have learned from the various journeys of our friends, each person's path is unique. We also realize that cancer is rampant and that regrettably, some of you reading this are in your own battle and others surely will be sometime in the future. Our hope is that some might glean something from us that will be of help.

I started this update yesterday (Thursday, October 6) and she proceeded to have a great day. We met with the hospice nurse and enjoyed a visit from a couple of neighbors. Kathie, as is her normal, was cheerful and chatty throughout. She was able to drink a protein shake and a couple cups of tea. She also ate a piece of toast and a scrambled egg, neither of which she enjoyed. Mandi and I are trying to see that she maintains a good level of hydration.

Later today, Kathie's sister Judy and our daughter Kaitey will arrive for a visit. While we welcome and look forward to visitors, however, visits are taxing for her. So, if you do wish to visit let me know and we'll set a time, also, please limit the length of your stay. As you know Kathie is a "long visitor" and it's hard for her to shorten a visit, but please understand the limitations of her stamina and keep your conversation to thirty minutes or less.

We continue to feel and appreciate all the love and prayers on our behalf. "Thank you" seems inadequate to express our gratitude for all of your kind words and comments.

Finally, we would ask that you remember in your prayers, our two friends named Karen who are engaged in their treatments for cancer.

We love you all,

**October 14, 2023**

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — October 14, 2023







This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24 In the days since our last post, Kathie has had nearly all "good days". We are blessed that she remains pain free. The incidents of nausea seem to have lessened, and sometimes has a bit of an appetite. She occasionally has cravings for random foods, which we try immediately to accommodate. We just finished breakfast and she consumed three pieces of French toast as well as some eggs, that is literally more food than she has eaten at one time since her surgery. She still tires easily and continues to lose weight. In spite of everything she continues to be in good spirits and enjoys the visits of friends and neighbors. In addition, Kathie in her unique indomitable way, listed and sold a home this week. She says this is her last deal.

We are savoring the days with our girls and Gabe. Gabe and I have been preparing our place for the coming winter and the girls have been sorting through hundreds of photos from the pre-digital era. They serve to remind us of the rich full lives that we have been blessed with. Those images stir up laughter and tears as we reminisce of days gone by. We are reminded that the years pass quickly.

Mandi and Gabe return to their home Monday and Kaitey will leave here next Thursday. While we will sorely miss them, we look forward to time together with just the two of us. We are blessed that after more than fifty years we still enjoy each other's company.

As mentioned in an earlier post we have placed Kathie in hospice care, they have been incredibly responsive, caring and cooperative. We are in possession of a hospital bed, oxygen concentrator, bedside commode and a shower chair. None of which she needs, or uses. We have had visits from an admission nurse, a social worker, two chaplains and three visits from our regular nurse. As you can tell they are being very attentive.

Each day Kathie receives cards, letters, emails and texts from people who are appreciating her for the investment that she has made in their lives. These tributes are truly gratifying to her and are a testament to a life well lived.

We received good news regarding our friend Karen M. this week. Her tumor continues to shrink, and surgery is scheduled for late November. Thank you all for your prayers.

*Roy says: Kathie received the following letter from our bonus daughter Jess. It is too special not to share. During her illness she received many many notes and letters from friends that expressed appreciation for the impact she'd made on their lives. These messages surprised her and through her sobs she would say "I was just being me." God doesn't ask us to do something he hasn't already prepared and equipped us for.*

**10/24/2023**

**Dear Kathie,**

***Some words are meant to be spoken, but if I tried to tell you all of this at once, I wouldn't be able to get through it. I also feel I'm better with writing deep emotional things down (so I don't go off on a tangent). I'm looking forward to a few more conversations on this earth when I come to visit later this month. But we also know life is short and are unsure of what each day brings. And just in case I don't get the opportunity to express this in person, I wanted to take a moment and tell you how you've positively impacted my life. I also know we will have lots of time for lengthy conversations in Heaven when we see a better picture of our lives and the past but felt it important to reflect on a few things now.***

***I know you know this, but I am so very thankful for you as my bonus mom. God knew I was going to need a strong wife & mother as a role model and He chose you! I feel so blessed for this. At many of the mom conferences I have attended they've talked about how God specifically picks a child for their mother & vice versa. God knew what he was doing when he picked a bonus mom for me! And although I love my mother, God knew I was going to need more and you filled in and were an important extra that showed me so many things about life.***

***There are so many memories, and my very first one with you was when you remodeled your lilac kitchen. It was the most beautiful kitchen I had ever seen at that time and you made a special dinner, maybe it was a holiday, and I got to be there. I remember helping clean up afterward and I didn't wring the dishrag out very well. I dripped water***

*all over the floor and I remember you didn't correct me in a way you would correct a kids' friend, you showed me what to do as my mom. I knew right then that you were there for me and you always seemed to take extra steps to show me the way.*

*Thank you for making me Easter baskets. I now know they weren't from the Easter bunny. The many Christmas gifts (who's going to send me caramel corn!?). For the time you let me borrow an outfit (a pink blazer) to go to Lincoln Day dinner. Including me in your church family. For taking me on road trips and family vacations. Our time in Pierre on various occasions. For helping me at Sunshine, for letting me live with you multiple times, for putting me to work, helping me through some hard moments in my life, for letting me know it was going to be OK and I could start new, for helping me buy my little condo in Arizona and getting it ready. These are definitely the things that a mom does for her child.*

*Even as I write this, I'm out at a park looking at the beautiful changing leaves and I think of how much our lives have changed, grown, and become more beautiful. I'm not a lost, little girl anymore, or a confused young lady, I am a strong woman of faith, a supportive wife & a good mom and I know so much of it is because of your help, support, encouragement, and prayers over the past 35 years.*

*Thinking of you not in this world hurts my heart (phewfta, I'm really crying now). You are a steady supportive Christian role model. And you probably don't know it, but you're the very first person in my life to be excited to go to Heaven and to see Jesus, and that strengthens my faith more than I can explain. I know your body is hurting and failing but, I do hope & pray you can hold on until I can get there in a few weeks. But just in case, please know I love you, I thank God for you more often than you might know, and I will do my best to be there for Mandi. Oh how she is going to miss you. Thinking about it makes me ugly cry. I won't have as hard of a time as her because, jokingly, I say she's turning into you so I'll always have a little bit of you (that should give you lots of comfort that Mandi is becoming you and there will be a mini Kathie for me).*

*When I think of all of the memories, it reminds me of the saying by Chuck Swindoll, "Each day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children."*

*Thank you for making those deposits and the valuable investments of your time and energy into my life.*

*And if for any reason, you ever doubted the value, I'm sorry. Sorry if I ever hurt you, embarrassed you, or disappointed you, for any and all of my misgivings. You're one person in my life I never wanted to let down. Know that when you're gone, I'm going to make you proud and continue to be a Godly wife and mother, and maybe even help others in some ministry or way. Who knows what the future holds but I do know that I'm going to host people in my home and gather us all around the dinner table like you did and pull up an extra seat at the table when needed. And at the holidays, I will also think of you, forever.*

*Thank you for investing in me.*

*Thank you for shaping me.*

*Thank you for sharing your life and family with me.*

*Thank you for teaching me how to bake, clean, host and having an inviting home for friends & family.*

*Thank you for teaching me as death nears that there is beauty and glory, as we get closer to meeting Jesus face-to-face.*

*I pray that your final days on earth are filled with only peace and love. And I know when you meet Jesus, He is going to wrap up in His arms, hold you tightly and tell you well done...especially with helping with that little Karinen girl.*

*With all my love...your bonus daughter*

*Jessica*



## October 25, 2023

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — October 25, 2023



1958



1972



2022

I am pleased to report that Kathie continues to generally have "good days". She has, however, had some "not so good days as well". She has had bouts of intestinal cramping and nausea, both of which we have medicine for that helps the symptoms. Her appetite has stayed about the same. She is pretty faithful to consume a protein shake each day, and I try to get her to eat a little solid food as she is able to tolerate it. That being said, she has continued to lose weight and stamina. Kathie remains her cheerful and positive self and so enjoys the visits of friends and neighbors.

As the season begins to turn toward winter most of our seasonal neighbors have returned to their homes in milder climates, so our neighborhood is pretty quiet. We are settling into somewhat of a routine. We (especially me) have enjoyed the baseball playoffs and are very excited to have our Diamondbacks in the World Series.

Gabe and Mandi returned to South Dakota a week ago Monday and we traveled to Phoenix and took Kaitey to the airport Friday morning. While we were in the valley we attended to a couple of appointments and had an enjoyable visit with our friend Karen M. We are happy that she is responding well to treatment and that her chemo dosage has been reduced. She is feeling much better as a result. Thank you for your prayers on her behalf.

Since our return we have enjoyed visits from Gilbert friends Ron & Jill, longtime South Dakota friends Duard and Joyce, as well a number of local friends. We continue to host "Sunday morning at the grill" which is a small gathering of friends to do church together. With the cooler weather we have moved inside, however.

Friends often ask me how I'm doing. It's a fair question, but difficult to answer. I usually say that it depends on the day. I am grateful for the encouragement of friends who have traveled this road. Not for their words as much as for how they have picked up the pieces and continued with life. I am inspired by my brother, who after Linda passed, taught himself to cook and bake by studying her cookbooks. And John, who had never even loaded a dishwasher, has turned himself into a self-proclaimed gourmet cook. Life can force us to adapt, and to that end I find myself undertaking tasks that are new to me. For example, while we were in the valley, for the first time in my life I went grocery shopping solo at Trader Joe's, Sprouts and Costco. While my cooking abilities are limited, so far, I've been able to keep from starving, and if I do say so myself, I manage to keep the kitchen in pretty good order. I will confess that I get a bit irritated when I find dishes in the sink. I have to remind myself that I'm the lazy slug that's been putting dirty dishes in the sink for the last fifty years. Let me just say "the dishwasher is a few inches away, and no one's time is so valuable that we can't spend the few seconds it takes to load something in the dishwasher."

Thank you all for your friendship that you demonstrate in so many ways. We appreciate you more than words can say. Know that we feel your thoughts and prayers for us every day.

## October 26, 2023

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — October 26, 2023

I ran into this article on the internet. It's very affirming for our situation.

Story by Diana Franchitto, Rhode Island Current

I saw a [clip](#) last month of President Jimmy Carter, now 99 years old, taking a ride with his wife through a peanut festival in their hometown. That's a happy story

for many reasons. As the former president approaches his eighth month on hospice care, it's also a chance to clear up a common myth. Back in February, when the president's family announced he was ending curative treatments and beginning hospice, it was perhaps natural to assume he wouldn't live much longer. Instead, President Carter has spent the better part of a year not just holding on, but truly living — in the ways that matter most to him, like with a celebratory drive beside his sweetheart.

Like many others, I was grateful to President Carter for publicly sharing his decision to begin hospice those many months ago, because it helped us raise awareness about this crucial type of care. Now, his long run on hospice gives us a chance to spotlight a truth that many find surprising: Some patients actually live longer on hospice.

We sense this regularly in our work at [HopeHealth](#), as the region's largest and oldest non-profit hospice and palliative care organization. We have the privilege of supporting patients and families through their final time together, and we care for patients who get an extra summer with their loved ones, who are able to attend that big family reunion, who defy all expectations and live long enough to meet their grandchild.

His long run on hospice gives us a chance to spotlight a truth that many find surprising: Some patients actually live longer on hospice.

Several landmark studies back up these personal observations with research, including a [2007 report in the Journal of Pain and Symptom Management](#) (00724-X/fulltext) and a [2018 report in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology: Heart Failure](#). These studies offer several theories for why patients may live longer on hospice than if they had remained on curative-focused care. In general, they come down to this: Hospice offers extra support at a time when it often matters most.

For example, as part of his hospice care, President Carter has had access to experts who can help with difficult medical decisions, and coordinate between all his doctors. He has a doctor who specializes in making sure he is on the right medications to feel his best, and a medical team that comes out regularly for home visits, noticing and managing any problems early. If he experiences a difficult symptom at any time of day or night, his family can call a 24/7 nurse to come to his side, instead of rushing to the hospital. They have the extra support of a hospice aide for activities of daily living, so they can focus on quality time together. They have access to chaplains and social workers, for spiritual and emotional support.



Above all, President Carter and his family have a team who helps them identify and honor the ways they want to spend their precious time together — like, for example, a pleasant drive through a local peanut festival.

All of these services are available to every patient and family on hospice, not just former presidents. Whether it lasts months, weeks or days, that's the value of this type of care: It helps us fill our final chapter with comfort, hope and meaning.

I know that President Carter's final chapter will be every bit as full and meaningful as the life he lived. As in every other chapter, he is leading from the heart.

## November 6, 2023

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — November 6, 2023



L-R Bekka, Tabor, Amanda, Chris, Roy, Kathie, Gabe, Anna, Mandi, Josh, Kaitey





The Girls



Zollingers





Vandusseldorps plus Abram



Old folks

Since our last update 12 days ago, we have been on the normal cancer patient roller coaster; some days good, some OK, others fair and some downright bad. Fortunately, there are still more better days than bad. Kathie continues to be relatively pain-free. She has had bouts of abdominal cramping that are very uncomfortable, but her episodes of nausea seem to be a little less frequent. We have effective medicine for both symptoms. Her weight has, for the time being, stabilized. For those who haven't seen her recently, she has lost about one third of her body weight in the last nineteen months. Recently, she has had days when she actually has had a bit of an appetite. It's exciting when she will actually eat a couple small pieces of toast and a scrambled egg. One day last week Kathie had a longtime friend visit. In all the excitement, I neglected to monitor her fluid intake. As a result, she became dehydrated and was pretty sick that evening. We called the hospice nurse, and she came and got her leveled out. So, lesson learned. Kathie's stamina remains on a downward trend. She typically rests several times a day in her hospital bed. Hospice has provided an oxygen machine which she uses while she rests during the day. The hospice personnel have been so gracious and attentive, we are very grateful.

We've been honored with visits from friends, both near and far. Jack and Sheryl from Kentucky spent a few hours as we shared precious memories. Randy and Shirley from South Dakota spent parts of two days with us. They have been so gracious in opening their Mesa home to us the past year and a half. Duard and Joyce, long time South Dakota friends stopped for a quick visit on the way to their winter home in the valley. We were overjoyed that the suspicious spot seen on Joyce's lung is not a reoccurrence of cancer, but rather the remnants of valley fever. Kathie also enjoys the company of several local lady friends that join her for Mahjong on Tuesday afternoon each week.

This week, we are looking forward to visits from two of her brothers and next week dear friends Tim and Kristie will be here for a couple days. Bonus Daughter Jess and her family along with Mandi, plan to join us for Thanksgiving. Our friends Roger and Ramona are generously allowing our overnight guests to use their lovely home. We are so blessed by the graciousness of our friends.

I continue to adjust and learn. I have come to realize that there is a "right way" to do things. Strangely, the "right way" seems to always be the same as "Kathie's way". Even when I fall short of the right way of doing things, Kathie remains grateful and cheerful. She daily keeps me encouraged with her positive outlook. As always, your prayer and comments encourage and sustain us. We appreciate each of you.

*Roy says: As Kathie's condition continued to deteriorate, one evening after supper the girls and I were cleaning up and loading the dishwasher when we heard this weak voice from the bedroom say "Don't forget to check the vinegar level in the dishwasher." We burst into tears and laughter as we realized we would remember her admonitions the rest of our lives.*

Finally, we would ask that in your prayers you continue to remember our friends Karen

M. and Karen K. Also, please pray for another friend of ours who is currently undergoing treatment at Hope4Cancer.

## November 20, 2023

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — November 20, 2023



Brother Reinie & Dee





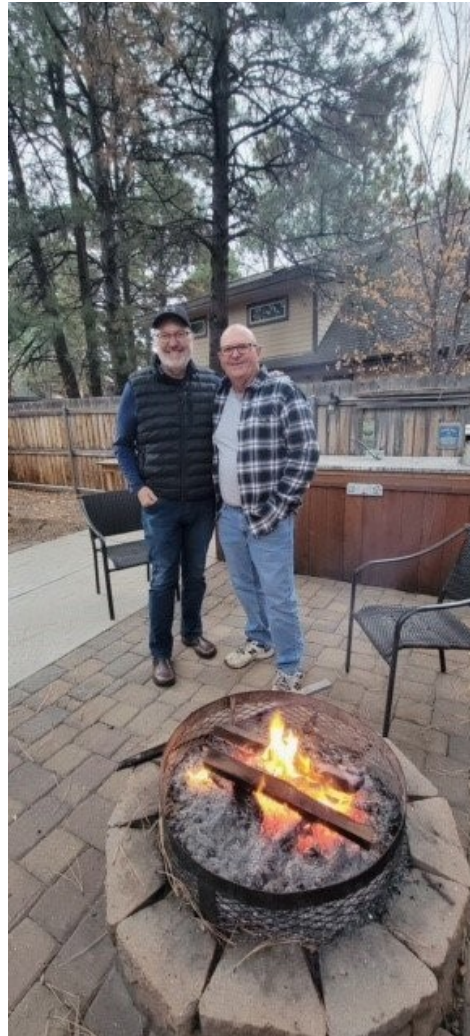
Brother Dave



Tom & Jody



Kristie



Tim

As we enter Thanksgiving week, we bring to mind many things that we are grateful for. Our weather has been very mild during the past two weeks. We finally had a slight dusting of snow last night that made rooftops white, as I write this it's just above freezing. Rising temps are predicted for the rest of the week, so our Thanksgiving visitors should enjoy comfortable temperatures.

Mandi and Gabe will be here along with Jess and Dan and their family. We will also welcome neighbors Victor and Betty back from Tucson. Jess and Mandi will relieve me of kitchen duties so I'm thankful for that.

The last two weeks we have enjoyed visits from a number of relatives and friends. Two of Kathie's brothers, Reinie, and his wife Dee from North Carolina, and Dave, from Texas spent time with us. Kathie directed me in meal prep for them. We had elk chili that was pretty good, apple pie, which was passable, and of all things, grilled cheese sandwiches that were burned. Overall, I rate my effort as "edible". I have lots of room for improvement. Tom and Jody, from Montana spent parts of three days with us and Kathie and I so enjoyed that time. The following week Tim and Kristie from South Dakota came. As you can tell we have been blessed with the gracious visits from longtime friends. Kathie is energized by our visitors, and all have been pleasantly surprised at how well she is doing. Last Thursday was an amazing day; Kristie accompanied Kathie to her neighborhood ladies card group. They played for three hours, and she held up very well. I feel like that day was perhaps her best day in many weeks. We are thankful for the good days.

Six months ago, we were in South Dakota celebrating our granddaughter, Anna's high school graduation. It was a particularly special event for our family. Anna is a third-generation alumnae of Sunshine Bible Academy, a Christian boarding school located in rural South Dakota. SBA was founded by a small group of farmers and ranchers led by a visionary, Mill Seaman. My Dad was part of that original group, and our family has been continuously committed to the mission there since 1951.

Upon our return to Arizona from that trip Kathie was diagnosed with stage 4 uterine cancer and underwent surgery. After her surgery, we were told that she had 3-6 months to live, without treatment, and 6-12 months with chemotherapy. Kathie has always been competitive, and goal driven and she has been determined to exceed the Doctors prognosis. Our desire from day one has been that her remaining time on this earth be comfortable and glorifying to God. We are blessed as she continues to have only intermittent pain that is manageable. She is cheerful, grateful, and so enjoys interacting with her visitors.

We are so thankful for the many acts of kindness directed to us. From neighbors who let our guests use their homes, neighbors who run errands, the encouraging comments, texts and phone calls; but most of all, your continual prayers. We are overwhelmed by your graciousness. Thank you for your prayers for our friends who are battling cancer. I'm happy to report that Karen M. continues to respond well to her therapy and that surgery to remove the tumor is scheduled for early December.

Our wish for each of you is that you have a blessed Thanksgiving with friends and family. Know that Kathie and I cherish your friendship and that we are thankful for you.

**December 2, 2023**

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — December 2, 2023



Mertz family



Gabby



Victor and Betty





Lunch with Mary, Sandy and Robin



Mandi the Chef

Thanksgiving has come and gone, and we hope that each of you had a wonderful celebration with family and friends. As has been our custom, we had a full table. Jess, our bonus daughter and her family made the trek from Rapid City, SD. They brought much joy and laughter to our celebration. Gabe and Mandi, Kathie's sister Judy, and our dear neighbors Victor and Betty made up the twelve around our Thanksgiving table. We so appreciate our neighbors who have graciously opened their homes to house our many out-of-town guests. The Mertz family left Pinetop Saturday after Thanksgiving in their rented motor-home. They were able to visit the Grand Canyon and Four Corners on the way home. Mandi and Gabe left Monday, but Mandi is returning tomorrow after visiting a cousin in Arkansas. We are looking forward to an early Christmas with the Vandusseldorp family next weekend. After they all leave our house will be quiet again for a while.

This past Monday Kathie and I traveled to Scottsdale, and Tuesday morning she had the stents in her ureters replaced. This was a scheduled and routine procedure. The Doctor advised us that everything including her kidney function is very good and that because of how well she's done, he feels that they won't need to be replaced for 3 1/2 months rather than two months. Kathie handled the trip well and without incident. Her condition in general is in very gradual decline. She has a bit more pain, but it remains at a very manageable level. Bouts of nausea occur regularly, but we have learned to stay ahead of them with medication. We've learned the hard way how important it is for her to stay hydrated, so that is a daily focus. While her appetite remains tiny, I try to get a few hundred calories in her each day. We have been successful in maintaining her weight for the last several weeks. She is frustrated at her lack of energy, but she continues to enjoy



visits from friends and neighbors. This week we enjoyed a visit from Mary, a longtime friend from South Dakota days. Most days she uses oxygen for a couple of hours and that seems to make a big difference in her energy and general comfort. We are grateful that our desire for good quality of life has, so far, been met.

We continue to be blessed by your prayers and kind comments. Please don't be afraid to give either one of us a call or text, sometimes we may not be able to take your call but be assured that we treasure every one of you.

Thank you for your prayers for our friends Karen K. and Karen M. Karen M. met us at the surgery center last Tuesday and stayed with me during the procedure. We had a great time of catching up and it was a welcome distraction for me. It seems as though it's not good to be our friend and have the name Karen. We received word that Karen C. has been diagnosed with colon cancer and will under-go surgery on December 11th. Please continue to pray for each of our Karens.

**December 19, 2023**

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — December 19, 2023



Tabor reading the Christmas story



Bekah, Mandi and Anna



Christmas Dinner



Nonny & Tabor



Lunch with the Scheele's

Imagine with me for a moment the exhaustion you feel at the end of your hardest day of work. You have no more physical or emotional energy, and you just have to stop and rest. Unfortunately, that is where Kathie is after getting out of bed, getting dressed and walking out to the family room. In the last two weeks I have noticed significant decline. Her pain and nausea symptoms, while still manageable, are increasing in frequency and severity. Her appetite is minimal. I consider it an accomplishment to get her to ingest something over 600 calories in a day. It's remarkable what constitutes a success now. Naturally, she continues to lose weight. To say that it's hard to see your loved one slowly fading away is a massive understatement.

Mandi returned to Pinetop on December 3 and stayed until the 11th. Tabor and his wife Rebeka, along with Gabe and Anna joined us for an early Christmas the weekend of the 9th and 10th. It was a wonderful weekend. Last Friday, Jim and Deb Scheele and Barb Scheele traveled from Phoenix for a quick visit; it was great to see old friends we first met in Belle Fourche in 1980.

We will be here at home in Pinetop for Christmas and New Years. Kathie's sister Judy will join us, along with neighbors Victor and Betty for Christmas dinner. Kathie is quite proud that I have arranged to have it catered. December 30th will mark our 51st wedding anniversary. If Kathie is up to it that day, we'll try and get out of the house for some type of little celebration.

My sister and brother-in-law, Fred and Dorothy recently sent us a book entitled, "Life of the Beloved", written by: Henri Nouwen. At Kathie's request I am sharing the following quote:

***"Am I afraid to die? I am every time I let myself be seduced by the noisy voices of my world telling me that my "little life" is all I have and advising me to cling to it with all***



*my might. But when I let these voices move to the background of my life and listen to that small soft voice calling me Beloved, I know that there is nothing to fear and that dying is the greatest act of love, the act that leads me into the eternal embrace of my God whose love is everlasting."*

## December 31, 2023

Journal Entry by Kathie Letellier — December 31, 2023



Holiday Table



Yummy!!



Sourdough for Kathie





December 30, 1972

Here we are on the last day of 2023, a year that I, Kathie, did not expect to see beyond.

It is truly a privilege to look forward to a New Year. Yesterday was our 51st wedding anniversary, a miracle all in itself! 7 months and 3 days have passed since my oncologist gave me a grim prognosis of 3 to 6 months. You have walked this path with us and we are so thankful for your words of encouragement, your generous tributes, your inspirational cards and gifts, your phone calls, texts and personal visits, your smiles and hugs, your homemade foods and treats!! And you have paved that path generously with LOVE and PRAYERS! Thank you so very much.

51 years ago, neither of us had any idea what we had 'signed up for'. We were two young kids and Roy often comments about how we raised each other. I'm sure he never thought about the reality of 'In sickness and in health' or he would have turned and run as fast as he could! He has astonished me as he has taken on tasks that neither of us ever imagined he would need to do. He has become my personal nurse, cook, shopper, dishwasher, laundryman, a-housekeeper in so many ways!! He even set a beautiful Christmas dinner table with my grandmother's dishes and had the wisdom to order a delicious prime rib dinner catered in. What a man!!

I met Roy in the late summer of 1971 and, by Thanksgiving weekend, we knew we wanted to spend our lives together!! He became my best friend, my soul-mate, my lover and more.

My intent was to tell you about all the ways in which Roy has been a wonderful husband and father these past decades as well as a businessman, encourager, supporter, handyman extraordinaire, home craftsman, and the list goes on and on and on. I could list so many more accomplishments, but I know you get the idea. And many of you have been on the receiving end of his abilities. Just in case you are under the impression that he is perfect, let me assure you he isn't. We even had a rather heated argument a few days ago about the differences in a skillet and a saucepan and the proper use of both. Mostly, though, his support and care over the past 7 months has been nothing short of amazingly sacrificial. I am truly a blessed woman.

Roy posted an excerpt from the book, Life of the Beloved, by Henri Nouwen last week. I am privileged to share another of his thoughts that has made me very excited about the next chapter of my life.

*“Even though I often give into the many fears and warnings of my world, I still believe deeply that our few years on this earth are part of a much larger event that stretches out far beyond the boundaries of our birth and death. I think of it as a mission into time, a mission that is very exhilarating and even exciting, mostly because the One who sent me on the mission is waiting for me to come home and tell the story of what I have learned.”*

I can hardly wait to tell Him all about You and our extraordinary friendship here on earth.

## January 12, 2024

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — January 12, 2024







It's approaching a month since we last updated you on Kathie's condition. Those of you that monitor our posts probably realize that I try to update all of you a couple times each month. It's not always easy to think of what to share, and it is always emotionally draining, so Kathie's post on December 31 was a nice break for me. The accolades she shared were undeserved and unnecessary.

While we continue to be able to manage her pain and nausea, her strength and stamina has drastically lessened. We are now using the Hospice provided wheelchair to move her from the bedroom to her chair. Often, she is unable to make the less than ten steps from her bed to the bathroom without assistance. Even though she now weighs less than 90



pounds, I am finding it quite physically taxing to give her the help she needs. This past week she hasn't had any "good days", she now has some "good hours". She is sleeping more and more during the day. Those of you that have called or texted recently likely have not received a response, simply because she is not up to conversing. As you know Kathie is joyously looking forward to eternity, and her hope and prayer is that each of you dear friends, who are following this journey of hers, will have the same blessed hope. Eternal life in Heaven is available to all who will simply accept God's gracious gift of salvation.

Kathie's "good hours" have recently followed short visits by friends and neighbors. While these visits energize her, they do sap her limited energy, usually it's a price she willing to pay, but it's certainly a two-edged sword. We continue to be blessed by great friends and neighbors who have brought meals. I especially appreciate them.

Our hero daughter Mandi has again joined us to lend a much-appreciated hand. She and Gabe arrived late Wednesday. They are providing me with much needed physical and emotional support.

Some of you may not be aware of the fact that not all of Arizona is hot and dry desert. Today's photos show our home as of this morning. Last winter we received well over 100 inches of snow, so far this year we are substantially less, but clearing the snow provides me with a brief respite.

## January 25, 2024

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — January 25, 2024



Ron & Paddy



Kaitey





5 Girls

Another two weeks have passed, and we approach the end of the eighth month since Kathie's diagnosis. She has had many difficult days when we thought the end was near. We discovered that she had a UTI and following a short regimen of antibiotics, her condition improved. Her energy and stamina have decreased to the point that she no longer walks or stands on her own. She sleeps the majority of her days. She does wake easily and continues to enjoy visits from friends and relatives. Her pain, nausea and occasional anxiety are still able to be managed easily and effectively.

Through the generosity of friends in the neighborhood, we have been able to have housing for our many visitors. We are so grateful. Mandi has been here for the past two weeks; she is such a blessing to both of us with all the help she provides. In addition, our older daughter Kaitey joined us for about a week. Granddaughter Anna made a quick trip from South Dakota to see her Nonny, and Kathie's brother Reinie and sister Judy spent time with us. Dear friends Ron & Paddy stopped on their way from Washington State to Gold Canyon and we had a great visit with them as well. Unfortunately, some unidentified visitor blessed us by sharing their cold with us. Mandi, Kaitey and I have all suffered for several days. Miraculously, Kathie was barely miserable for a day.

Kaitey wrote down some of her feelings so eloquently that I feel it's appropriate to share them with all of you:

***What is there to say...***

***When faced with losing someone we love, one who has given us more love in this life than any soul deserves?***

*I say this:*

*My beautiful Mother is living in a profound state of grace.*

*She is in continuous communication with her Creator.*

*...and the almost unbearable beauty of it shines from every pore.*

*Her body is weak, and it is frail,*

*but her soul becomes ever more luminous as she begins her ascent to glory.*

*May we all live in the hope of shining so brightly someday.*

Our Hospice team continues to be so kind and helpful as we make our way to the end of Kathie's journey here on earth. Our nurse Kara now visits three times each week and on her last visit she left a booklet that includes the following excerpt from a 19th century funeral sermon:

*Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!" There are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout: "Here she comes!"*

*And that is dying...*

**February 7, 2024**

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — February 7, 2024





May 2022



August 2023



Kathie and Marge January 2024



Still in love



Taking a "walk"

Since our last post Kathie's condition has continued it's slow but sure decline. Thankfully we are still able to manage her pain with micro-doses of morphine. She does have occasional nausea that is also manageable. She has minimal strength or stamina. On occasion, she will walk the seven or eight steps from her bed to the toilet much to my chagrin, without assistance; most of the time though, she needs help to change locations. Her days are spent either in her bed or recliner. The hospice nurse comes three days per week now and always asks how much she is sleeping. We estimate that she is actually alert, something less than two hours each day. She regularly dozes off during conversations with visitors. In addition, she has difficulty remembering day to day and is often confused. As you can imagine this is frustrating for her. Last night we were watching the Phoenix Suns game. At halftime we were both falling asleep. About Four AM, we were both awake so watched the rest of the game. I asked how she felt, and she replied that she felt really good. She said, "I was pretty sure I was going to die last night." She's having a very good day, playing cards as I write this. I thought our nurse said it well when she said: "Kathie is not following the classic path." Are we surprised?

We have recently enjoyed visits from dear friends Pat and Marge from our South Dakota days, Jay and Delores from Gold Canyon and our bonus daughter Jess, from Rapid City, SD joined us this week.

Many hospice patients experience a great deal of anxiety as they approach the end. Kathie is truly at peace. Daily, she expresses her gratitude for her blessed life. All of you are parts of the mosaic that represents her life, and she is so thankful for each one of you.

## February 15, 2024

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — February 15, 2024



Valentine's bacon and tomato sandwich, a favorite meal



Coke and Cards, satisfying unusual cravings



Randy and Shirley



Kathie and Shirley Scotland 2005

I would like to begin this post by thanking each of you that read our Caring Bridge updates. One of the features Caring Bridge offers its authors is a list of folks that visit the site. We are constantly amazed at the sheer number of visitors. Recently, I printed out the list, it took up nine pages. What an encouragement that was to us. We are truly blessed by your words of encouragement, acts of kindness and your faithful prayer support. I would be remiss if I didn't mention two neighbors who have so kindly blessed us with many delicious meals. Caryn J. and Chris M. both great cooks, thank you, thank you, thank you!!!

Last Monday, Randy and Shirley Hansen traveled from Mesa, to spend a couple precious

hours with us. It was great to remember many of the great times and experiences we've shared. Our neighbor Traci also visited a couple times while they were here in Pinetop enjoying the snow this past weekend. Mandi and Gabe continue to provide us with greatly appreciated support. Neighbors Ron and Jeri have allowed us to use their home, and it has been a huge gift, we can't begin to thank them enough.

Kathie continues to "transition". Our wonderful hospice nurse Cara is now visiting every day. While Kathie's physical changes are unmistakable, thankfully her pain continues to be easily manageable. More disturbing to her is her mental acuity, especially frustrating to her is her difficulty navigating the use of her phone. As a former English teacher, she has always been irritated by the rampant abuse of grammar, punctuation and misspelled words in texts. She still wants to send error free texts, but it's extremely taxing for her. If you should happen to receive a text from her that doesn't make sense to you, it's probably because it simply doesn't make sense.

I'm sure you understand and will extend the appropriate grace.

*Roy says: I can't say enough good about our Hospice nurse. Cara was thorough, compassionate, encouraging and instructive. She told me that near the end patients often see departed loved ones. Two days before Kathie passed she awoke and casually said to me, "I saw your Mom last night, she's okay." Now, Kathie too, is "okay".*

I'm closing today by sharing the following eloquent words penned by daughter Kaitey. Grab a Kleenex.

***In my head, this song has been building itself:***

***Over 50 years they walked together  
Promised it would last forever  
Every moment, she was his and he was hers,  
'Cause they made that vow,  
For Better or For Worse  
But they never did forget that Faith Came First.***

***They were really just kids when they made that vow  
Taught each other to love when they didn't know how  
They kept the promise, she was his and he was hers  
When they made that vow,  
For Better or for Worse  
They knew right from the start that Faith Came First.***

***They built a life, they made a home  
Had a family of their own  
Hearts full of love and a lot of hard work  
They kept that vow,  
For Better or for Worse  
And they showed us every day that Faith Came First.***



*Well they hit the ice on that mountain road  
Twisted metal and broken bones  
Might have given up and left this Earth  
But they'd made that vow  
For Better or for Worse.  
Even in the darkest hour  
Faith Came First.*

*They both had to learn to walk again  
Kept each other strong right through the pain,  
Held each other tight however hard it hurt,  
'Cause they made that vow  
For Better or for Worse  
Carried on and trusted that their  
Faith Came First.*

*In the 50th year the cancer came  
Her soul burned bright while her body waned  
In the long hard night he battled that curse  
'cause they made that vow  
For Better or for Worse  
And she showed us all to trust that  
Faith Came First.*

*Over 50 years they walked together  
Eternity calls out from beyond Forever  
He never dreamed that she'd be bound for Glory first  
When they made that vow,  
For Better or for Worse.  
In the end, we only trust that  
Faith Comes First.*

**February 22, 2024**

Journal Entry by Roy Letellier — February 22, 2024





Kathie's last picture, one week before she passed from this earth. Still smiling....

Today Kathie reached the inevitable conclusion of her earthly journey. Eight months and three weeks ago we were given her three-to-six-month prognosis. Since then, our prayers have been two-fold: that her pain would be minimal and that when her time came, she would simply go to sleep and wake up in heaven. God graciously granted our requests. During her final hours she remained peaceful and comfortable.

Kathie's death leaves a gaping hole in all of our lives. We take joy in knowing that her disease is now gone, and we can only imagine the splendor of eternity with our Savior. The apostle James writes in chapter four verse fourteen: *"What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."* In the mist that was Kathie's lifetime, she leaves an enviable legacy. She never met a stranger, and she was a friend to everyone.

We will not be having funeral services at this time. We will, however, celebrate Kathie's life the last week in May, in Pinetop, and the following week in South Dakota. Should you wish to honor Kathie's life with a memorial we suggest either: Black Hills Christian Academy or Sunshine Bible Academy. Kathie founded Black Hills Christian Academy over thirty years ago and was rightly proud of that schools ongoing success. My parents were some of the founders of Sunshine Bible Academy seventy-three years ago. All of my siblings and I are alumnae as well as Kaitey, Mandi, Gabe, bonus daughter Jess, and our granddaughter Anna.

We are grateful beyond words for the love and support that has been poured out on us during this journey. Your visits, words of encouragement and prayers are a treasure to us. We have been richly blessed by the loving care of our hospice team. I have no doubt that Kathie's time here on earth was extended and enhanced by the care she received.

I will post details of Kathie's celebrations as we finalize those plans.

Kathleen Ruth Marks Letellier, 71, died February 22, 2024, at her home in Pinetop, AZ, of cancer. Kathie was born in Benton Harbor, MI, to Adolph Marks

and Louise Waldeck Marks. She grew up and attended school in rural Michigan along with seven siblings and graduated from Wayland High School in 1970. Following high school Kathie attended Miami Christian University in Miami, FL. It was there that she met and fell in love with Roy Letellier. They were married December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1972, and started their life together in Chadron, NE. Together they had three daughters the first, born at Chadron, died at birth, Katie, also born at Chadron and Amanda, born at Gordon, NE.

Over the next fifty-one years they lived in Gordon NE, Belle Fourche SD, Gold Canyon AZ, Mesa AZ and Pinetop AZ. Kathie left her mark with the friends she made and her community and professional achievements. She was the founder of Belle Fourche Christian School, now known as Black Hills Christian Academy. She was proud of the legacy of Christian education that vibrantly continues. Kathie was a successful Realtor in Arizona. She professionally served buyers and sellers for over twenty years. Her success transcended the business transaction, the relationships she established with her clients were her priority and it is evidenced by the huge number of clients who became life-long friends. Kathie loved to cook and bake and entertain in her home, she was well known for her cooking and baking skills. She was always willing to share her knowledge with others and did so by conducting cooking classes as well as willingly sharing her tips and recipes with anyone who asked. While she will be remembered for her many skills and accomplishments, her legacy is the countless friendships that she made as a result of her genuine interest and care for others.

Kathie is survived by her husband Roy, daughters: Katie (Joshua) Zollinger, Amanda (Gabriel) Vandusseldorp, grandchildren: Amanda Marshall, Christopher Marshall, Tabor (Rebekah) Vandusseldorp and Anna Vandusseldorp. She is also survived by brothers: David Marks, Reinie (Dee) Marks, Robert Marks, Thomas (Kathy) Marks and Philip Marks and sister: Judy Sink. She was predeceased by her parents: Adolph and Louise Marks, brother: Timothy Marks, sisters-in-law Anna (Dave) Marks, Judy (Robert) Marks, Amber (Philip) Marks, and brother-in-law Thomas Sink.

Kathie will be greatly missed by all who knew her. Celebrations of her well-lived life will be held both in Pinetop and in South Dakota in the spring. Memorials may be sent to:

Sunshine Bible Academy, 400 Sunshine Dr. Miller, SD 57362, or Black Hills Christian Academy, 630 S. 32<sup>nd</sup> St. Spearfish SD 57783.

Those that knew Kathie fully understand that she had her hand in the planning of her memorial services. Her most fervent wish was the God's plan of salvation be clearly shared. Kathie knew with certainty her final destination and it was her hope and prayer that her friends and loved ones would one day join her. Our dear friends and former



pastor Chris and Mary Conrad graciously joined us to make the day complete with message and song. Several weeks before she passed I overheard Kathie talking with our friend and neighbor Chris regarding the location and make up of flowers and plants. After giving Chris her wish list she said “It’s got to be nice.” We held the Pinetop service in the driveway of our home and afterwards served a nice lunch, hopefully catered to Kathie’s satisfaction. Kathie specifically requested that one of her memorial services be held on her birthday June 4<sup>th</sup> and that Fred Peterson bring the message. We were able to accommodate that wish with the Belle Fourche service. We were greatly honored with the large crowd that was a testament to the many lives she had touched, even though we had been absent from the Belle Fourche community for more than twenty five years. The following day we placed her remains in the Letellier family plot in the Norris Cemetery. We then enjoyed a meal with Norris friends and family in the same building where our wedding reception was held more than 51 years earlier.



Full driveway



Chris and Mary Conrad



Jess, Mandi, Roy, Kaitey



Kaitey worked her magic with the flowers



The hostess, a girl after her Mom's heart

Like most couples Kathie and I had some personal inside jokes that we enjoyed. One of Kathie's was the "Magic Step". She would leave full trash bags on the step outside the back door even though the trash container was only twenty more steps. Somehow those full bags would disappear, not unlike the way meals would magically appear when I was hungry, that dirty dishes would magically find their way into the dishwasher and then to the cupboards, and the magical way clothes were laundered. Sadly, the magic is gone. Each time I complete some household task I think to myself, "You had a good run you lucky slob."

## Epilogue

The past is prologue. We can wonder what the future holds, but only God knows. We can wonder why we're still here, but only God knows. We wonder what our purpose is and we can but trust God to put us where he desires. The words of this old hymn express my sentiments.

### **I Know Who Holds Tomorrow**

I don't know about tomorrow;  
I just live from day to day.  
I don't borrow from its sunshine  
For its skies may turn to grey.  
I don't worry o'er the future,  
For I know what Jesus said.  
And today I'll walk beside Him,  
For He knows what lies ahead.

Many things about tomorrow  
I don't seem to understand  
But I know who holds tomorrow  
And I know who holds my hand.

Every step is getting brighter  
As the golden stairs I climb;  
Every burden's getting lighter,  
Every cloud is silver-lined.  
There the sun is always shining,  
There no tear will dim the eye;  
At the ending of the rainbow  
Where the mountains touch the sky.

I don't know about tomorrow;  
It may bring me poverty.  
But the one who feeds the sparrow,  
Is the one who stands by me.  
And the path that is my portion  
May be through the flame or flood;  
But His presence goes before me  
And I'm covered with His blood.

*Music and Lyrics by Ira Stanphill (1950)*



## Miscellaneous Family Photos



Dorothy Peterson, Esther Letellier, Roy Letellier 2005



Uncle Melvin Marousek, Roy Letellier



James, Glen and Roy Letellier 2021





Fred & Dorothy Peterson 2024



Don Letellier 2024



Alice & Gary White 2024



1974, 1985 and 1999



1984, 1991, and 1996



2000



December 30, 2022





Our last photos together