

editorial opinion

Tom Riordan writes

Farewell to a dear friend

By TOM RIORDAN
Executive Editor

An old friend of mine was buried a couple of weeks back.

Pat Byerlein, 55, of Farmington Hills, was a victim of leukemia.

Until last December, Pat was a vigorous, athletic guy who never came close to running down.

He worked for a sales motivation firm, which provided trips all over the world for sales personnel who met or exceeded their quotas.

Pat was perfect for the role. First, he'd fire up the troops. Then he'd gather them with a giant bear hug and off they'd troop to Australia, Japan, or Germany.

He loved his job and was great at it. Salesmen and women who motivated themselves after listening to Pat loved him too.

In fact, it turns out, an awful lot of people loved that guy.

The funeral home was jammed every night. St. Fabian Church on Twelve Mile was used to overflowing for the service. The lineup of cars to Holy Sepulchre Cemetery on Ten Mile seemed never ending.

All of this showed an outpouring of love for one man, who in his last nine months of life fought his illness with a grin and merry a complaint.

Through that sad Friday of the funeral, a completely unexpected and truly beautiful thing happened.

Pat and Julie, who was his constant companion and pal, had five children, all grown.

Two of their daughters, Mary Pat and Beth, asked to say a few words of tribute during the funeral mass. When they finished, there wasn't a dry eye in St. Fabian.

Let me share with you some of their thoughts.

First, Mary Pat, age 31:
"A lot of people loved our dad. We were very proud of him. He was strong and he was sensitive and he wasn't afraid to show you that he loved you."

"People respected him. If our dad touched your lives, you were lucky."

"He loved so much—and that's what it's all about, loving each other and being concerned about each other."

"I think that's how our dad would like to have us remember him—sharing the love we all have with those around us and passing it on."

"The example my mother and dad gave each of us as two people who truly cared for each other and a family strong and loving, is a gift that can never be matched."

"I don't know how you get over this. I'm sure the pain, as intense as this, will ease. But I know that there won't be a day that passes that I won't think of him and wish he were here."

"Thanks, dad. Thanks for more than you'll ever know."

"Send us some of your strength."



PAT BYERLEIN

And from Beth, age 22:

"The thing about his dying is that we all feel a little 'ripped off' because we didn't get to say one more thing. But don't think about that because you know Pat Byerlein isn't thinking about what you didn't say to him. He takes you as you are."

"Everybody has got something nice to say about the guy—and that's no accident. He was a first-class planner. He knew that you get so much more when you give."

"Let's follow my dad. Reinforce your faith in the good of human nature. Work harder on this year's bazaar, don't pass the Red Cross without giving a pint, help someone stuck on the road. Be more loving. Now."

"Somehow he touched all of our lives. And do you realize that somehow we touched his life and isn't that special? Because we shared together, we helped make him who he was just as he helped to mold all of us."

"You can always say, 'But I should have.' 'Wish I'd...' 'If I only...' Well, just pick yourselves up and go at it full tilt with everyone you touch from here on out."

"That's dad's example to us. He never stopped giving."

"Word is that Pat Byerlein, known as 'Mr. Motivator' to his CB pals, is up there trying to sell a few trips to two Popes."

The Flip Side by craig piechura



Is the Pinto worth beans?

Hanna Landes has a used Pinto that she dearly loves but is trying to unload in the classified ads.

Consumer concern about the possibility of a flaming explosion should the Pinto be struck in the rear doesn't bother her. She's more concerned about finding it a good home.

"Besides, the worst she would do if someone struck her in the rear is kick," says Mrs. Landes of Milford.

The Pinto in question is the four-legged variety; a pony trained in the dainty art of dressage.

But eight out of nine people trying to sell four-wheeled Pintos in the current edition of the Trading Times report that they are experiencing unprecedented "resale value trouble" thanks to the devastating publicity about the Pinto's alleged propensity for undesirable ignition.

Seven of the nine Pintos up for sale are still unsold after three weeks worth of advertising.

Bill Kassab of Southfield sold his car quick. It was advertised on the front page of the paper as a "transportation special." In layman's language, that means the car moves—barely.

Kassab said the car was probably worth about \$250 after he had an accident in it.

"I WAS LUCKY. I got hit in the front end."

But with the bad publicity circulating around the Pinto, Kassab figures \$125 for a banged-up '73 Pinto was a fair price and he grabbed it.

Like everyone interviewed, Kassab had made no arrangements to have the car taken to a dealer to put the required safety modification equipment in it. Installation of the recall equipment began Oct. 2 at all area Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealers.

Kassab's not the only one who hasn't made arrangements to get the chrome gas cap, fuel filler pipe and seal and a

new polyethylene plastic gas tank shield installed.

Even my editor, who owns a '74 Pinto, is taking his time about making an appointment for the one-hour installation. That's probably because he subconsciously hopes that on a slow news day he will fill the paper with the news of his own demise. Complete with action photos.

While we're on the subject, the dream accident for investigative journalists would be to have a Firestone 500 series radial tire explode on the front wheel of a Plymouth Horizon, causing it to steer erratically and slam into a Pinto which bursts into flames and ignites a passing double-bottom tanker.

To give this dream story a happy ending, let's say everyone, miraculously, escaped injury (no sense being a ghoul about it). Besides, that way we'd have eyewitness survivors to quote in the paper.

WHY DID THE nine people decide to sell their Pintos?

"I think about it (burning) every day I drive to work," said Linda Cummings of Detroit. "I could croak on the way."

Linda's asking \$1,500 for a '76 Pinto with a stick shift and so far, she says "I haven't had any bites to talk about."

Nobody's come out to look at the car that cost her \$3,300 new. "They're gonna come and get it if I don't sell it soon. I just can't make the payments on it."

She said she went to a car dealer or Grand River who offered her an "insulting" \$800 on a trade-in, telling her that they had to drop the price \$800 to sell a similar car on the lot.

Nancy Overhall of Redford Township has had better luck unloading Pintos. The '73 Pinto advertised by her daughter, Lisa, in the current edition of Trading Times sold for \$750 and three weeks ago another daughter,

Karen, sold her Pinto for \$418—\$400 for the car and \$18 to cover the classified ad.

Safety was a concern to Lisa, Mrs. Overhall said, but Karen just preferred to drive another car, an Austin American.

"My daughter Lisa had been in a serious accident in a station wagon, not a Pinto, where the gas tank blew up. She was a passenger in the car at the time and narrowly escaped. So safety was a factor in her deciding to sell the Pinto."

SOME PINTO owners have developed a black humor about their vehicles. Don Wellman, dispatch driver for the Observer & Eccentric, saw a Pinto weaving through suburban streets recently with a giant orange "Flammable" sticker on his trunk.

I'm sure FoMoCo fails to see the humor in that, black humor or whatever color you call it. In fact, the word "fire" appears only once in the recall letter sent to area Pinto and Bobcat owners.

The wording of the letter is more carefully diplomatic than the menu at Howard Johnson's. It somehow makes it sound like Ford is being hounded by the federal government, but they're glad to comply.

"The (National Highway Traffic Safety) Administration concluded that the defect involves an unreasonable risk of substantial fuel leakage in low to moderate speed rear-end collisions as a result of disconnection of the fuel filler pipe from the tank or punctures in the forward face of the fuel tank," writes S.P. Geoffrey, service engineering manager of Ford Parts and Service Division in Livonia.

"In the presence of an ignition source, fuel leakage can, of course, result in a fire that endangers persons in or near the vehicle."

He forgot to add that it apparently also shoots the "resale value" all to hell.

"Around the edge"

by Jackie Klein

TV 2 views three decades

It was a typical autumn day in Michigan—Oct. 24, 1948.

Smoke billowed from factory chimneys as Detroit area auto workers were striving to keep up with demands of post World War II consumers.

Interest in the coming election was high. President Harry S. Truman was railed the underdog against Thomas Dewey in many polls. G. Mennen Williams, flashing a broad grin above his green polka dot tie, conducted a tireless campaign for governor.

Suburbia was still a dream of the future although first signs of urban sprawl could be seen in subdivisions rising beyond the city limits.

Trains roared in and out of Michigan Central, Union Station and Grand Trunk Depot. A few scattered commercial airliners dived into City Airport. Bells clanged incessantly as streetcar conductors reminded motorists that they had the right-of-way on more than a dozen major streets in Detroit.

In a small control room in Masonic Temple technicians flipped switches introducing the newest member of the

motor city's media family to a small, but eager audience.

There were few in the room, recalls WJBK-TV's Tim Rocha, director of advertising and creative services who supplied the memories recounted in this column.

OF IMMEDIATE concern was programming to fill slightly more than seven hours, including live commercials produced in the small studio.

"As with any fledgling industry, television experienced frequent difficulties," Rocha said. "Directors were prepared, at an instant's notice, to switch to a camera focused on a sign reading 'Stand By Please.'"

Images were fuzzy more often than not, cues were missed and tapespees, used to project reel upon reel of film, required careful attention.

Such was television in the late 1940s. Plans were being drawn for improved equipment and programming.

"TO THOSE now over 35, progress in television may have appeared pain-

fully slow," says Rocha. "The wonders of color TV, remote coverage of distant events, and instant pictures from any place in the world are taken matter-of-factly by the younger generation. But to us, they were as astonishing as the initial glimpse of moving images projected to living rooms on small-screened receivers called television sets."

In 1971, Channel 2 moved to Southfield. Rocha notes that one of the station's "firsts" was the team concept of reporting news, sports and weather. Others were live telecasts of football and baseball games, a live documentary on the birth of a baby, use of computers to tally election results and on-air courses offering full college credits.

"TV2 exists to inform, educate and entertain," said Bob McBride, station vice president and general manager. "But over the past 30 years, Channel 2 and its viewers have formed a successful partnership. For three decades, we've seen it all together."

Pat La Croix writes

In the dark of the morn

Spring ahead, fall back. Amen.

As far as I am concerned, the fall time change simply could not happen soon enough. This is the magical phenomenon by which all of us—through no doing of ourselves—are awarded another full hour in the middle of the night.

A complete 60 minutes—ah, the wonder of it. In this hour, we can all get some extra sleep and not feel the least bit guilty about it.

The event is scheduled for late October, yea, only a few mornings away.

I'M WAITING.

But the gift of another hour is not the only fantastic fact about the time change. The biggest and best by far is that sooner or later it will again be light in the morning—just like it is supposed to be. How wonderful.

Now, I don't know who screwed up the whole mess in the first place. It is probably due to some theory of revolution, since as the world turns it is cock-eyed and the time gets messed up or something.

But the important thing is that someone had the decency to straighten the mess out. Whelpver. But this does not change the fact that it is now dark in the morning. I must be honest, though.

Getting up in the dark doesn't really bother me, because my eyes are always shut until after my shower anyway. It would take a veritable crowbar to open them, so I don't even bother.

But after my shower, I am into the nasty habit of peeking out the drapes—you know, to see what I should plan on wearing. This is when the rude awakening comes. I can't usually see, past the bushes, because, yes, it is still black out there.

Seeing the morning shrouded in black is simply too much to handle. My mind is set so that when I

see darkness outside, I think it is time to go to bed. One can easily see the trauma of this when the person has to be to work in about an hour.

That crucial moment of drapery opening, in fact, can make all the difference in the world. That moment can set my whole mood for the whole day.

Nine times out of 10, looking out on a gloomy, foul morning (which is what darkness is) can, logically, put me in a gloomy, foul mood.

As it is now, it usually gets light when I am halfway to work. But by that time, I am far away from my (still warm, so inviting, fluffy) pillow, and it doesn't do me 't least little bit of good.

Quite frankly, I need to wake up, open the drapes, and voila, see the sun at high noon position.

Precious little good this is at 7:15 a.m. I suppose I shouldn't even be complaining, because some poor souls have to get up to go to work by 6 a.m. How they do it, I'll never know.

Of course, the obvious solution to my dilemma is to not open the drapes. But there is something about a closed curtain that just cries to be opened, or at least peeked through. Besides, there is the problem of knowing what to wear.

Perhaps it is just a sick perversion that pulls me to the windows so early every morning. Perhaps it is just habit. It could even be simple curiosity.

But whatever it is, it is strong enough for me to put myself through the mental anguish of seeing darkness.

It's simply ridiculous. But if these self-destructive tendencies continue, I may have to resort to not opening the drapes. All I can say is that the time change had better hurry.

While this is all well and good, I know that there is a basic law apparent: The "spring ahead" part, when they steal the precious hour back. It's a crazy, mixed up world.

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