

Laughing Is Living

By Pete Clark

I believe that, with very few exceptions, if you are somewhere you cannot laugh, you should not be there. One of those exceptions is a funeral. My wife, Norma, passed away Friday June 4, 2004. Her funeral at Newcomers Mortuary and interment at Fort Logan National Cemetery were Wednesday, June 18th. Norma was late for everything and we all told her she would be late for her own funeral. The private viewing was to begin at 10:00am that morning and Norma was nowhere to be seen. A Newcomers employee told me that Norma was tied up in traffic at I-225 and Mississippi Avenue. We roared with laughter, as even in death, Norma continued with her own way of doing things.

After Norma blessed us with her presence and the viewings were completed, the service began with Moe Bandy's *Till I'm Too Old To Die Young*. Norma's daughter Karen presented a eulogy that was hilarious, but factual. For instance, she told of Norma's reaction to the Newcomer TV ad when they first moved into the Denver Market. She thought they were a rebranding of Aurora's Welcome Wagon she had worked with back in the Sixties. The list went on and we laughed more than we cried. It was a celebration of her life. Norma had said that she wanted to be buried in a red dress with a best seller and a bottle of scotch. Those wishes were fulfilled. She was a hyper Bronco Fan and a friend had made a very nice Bronco Jacket for her. I had looked at the jacket and thought, *I could sell that for a couple of hundred dollars*. Then I thought, *No I can't*, and let her take it with her.

Another exception occurred when I visited a schoolmate whose family had moved from northwest of Riverton, Wyoming to a farm in Colorado. While I was there, I learned more about farming and the chores relating to the care of livestock. The family had a small herd of dairy cattle which were milked once a day using a pneumatic milking machine. I helped by putting out rolled oats for the cows to eat while being milked. The milking machine had four sucking cups and held more than six gallons of raw milk, but getting all of the cows finished still took a while. One evening my friend, his father, and I were in the barn at milking time. The job was progressing and a few of the cows had been finished. His father was standing near the wall, behind one of cows, studying the animal. The cow had diarrhea and coughed. In early grade school the teachers had us cut out paper silhouettes of famous people and holiday birds and animals. There was a perfect silhouette, but it was not cut from paper. It was on the wall and my friend's father was covered with green stuff. I did not dare to even smile, let alone laugh, until I was on my way back to Wyoming.