

The job of journalism and newspaper production in our area is to cover all of the highs and lows of what goes on in the communities that surround us.

We never know from week to week what might take place. Obviously, there are the usual items—weather, sports, classifieds. Then there are the unexpected—the accidents, the fires, the “spot news,” as we call it.

There are the upcoming events and the past events that each community hosts during various seasons throughout the year.

Nearly every week we publish an obituary. Out of 52 weeks of the year, very seldom is that area on the front page left blank.

This week's name hits a little harder. It is the name of a friend. But not only a friend, a co-worker. Our friend and co-worker Colleen Bengel lost her hard-fought battle with colon cancer Saturday morning.

Traditionally, we gals here at the Trib go out for lunch on our birthdays. Plans last August were for all of us to go to Madrid for lunch to celebrate two August birthdays—Colleen's and mine, which were a week apart.

Being women, and being the planners we are, this topic had been discussed multiple times! We had things in place well ahead of the week we were actually going to make the trek east for a special lunch.

The day arrived, but sadly, Colleen was unable to make it. She had been to the doctor three days earlier for discomfort and pain. The bad news from the results of tests was revealed to her on her birthday—the day we were going to be celebrating life.

She had gone to the doctor early in the week just to be checked out—she never returned to work. Not that day, not ever again. Her desk, her personal belongings, photos of the grandkids, scribbled notes, everything left just as if she'd be back in a few minutes.

Life is so precious and so fragile. We take for granted all of the blessings we're given every single day.

I thought of Colleen every time I dragged my feet over something challenging, or on days I didn't want to get out of bed and go to work. Instead, I gave thanks for the health and ability that enabled me to do it, and said a silent prayer for her comfort and healing.

The unpredictable life we lead can at times be very painful. Memories are what we're left with—a person's voice, their laugh, their mannerisms, their body language. It's all we have for the moment.

This week's issue will have a name in the obituary column that hits too close. A woman whose middle years were filled with the joys of kids and grandkids, of juggling home life with working. A life that was cut short.

We women working at the Tribune are tight knit—we share our lives every single day. We know each other's families, we share our joys and our sorrows, we laugh and get silly, we become serious and focused, we can practically read each other's minds.

Our souls are intertwined. And they're that way for a reason. I believe everything happens for a reason and I continually try not to second guess God. That's the hardest job of all.

Jan Rahn

