

Publisher's note

Mom's 'fun' is just beginning...

My mother Audrey Lyke used to talk about driving the family station wagon up from “kiddie car row” in suburban Chicago to this strange new world of Ripon, Wis.

She was excited, I'm sure, at this new chapter in her family's life and at her husband Doug's opportunity to publish a weekly newspaper. But she also was unnerved by the uncertainty of it all.

“It was raining,” mom recalled, “and I'm not sure if there was more water in the car from my tears or on the windshield outside. We had absolutely no money, lots of debt and a town we knew very little about.” That was in 1962.

For the next 57 years, Audrey and Doug, and later, the 8-, 5-, 3- and 1 1/2-year olds in the back of that station wagon hitched their financial futures to a newspaper plant on Blackburn Street that moved to Douglas Street, where it steadily grew to become among the top-100 commercial printers in North America.

The ride had bumps, for sure, with



DOUG AND AUDREY Lyke founded Ripon Printers after buying the local newspaper in 1962.

remind us, implicitly sending the message that we should feel free to let go when the time was right.

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For years I have hung on to an editorial my dad wrote in the July 13, 1989 edition of *The Ripon Commonwealth* Press.

Headlined “We won't sell out,” the editorial explained that “it's getting more and more difficult to remain independent” — with big fish swallowing the guppies in Ripon (e.g. R-Line Foods, Speed Queen) and all over the country. “We're not selling out. Not the newspapers. Not our exciting and growing printing company.

“Oh yes, there are suitors waiting in the wings. But we're not interested. We want to remain independent. We want to fashion our own destiny.”

Dad assured readers that “as long as we can, we'll hold our ground and to hell with the love songs.”

I loved that. So it became the only editorial dad wrote that sits, now yellowed and curling, on the bulletin board next to my desk.

* * *

This week we announce that we are entertaining not one but two love songs.

We do so with no regrets, no apologies.

These are fine “suitors,” Walsworth and O'Rourke Media Group.

Both understand that the way to customers' (catalog publishers, advertisers, readers) hearts is through the quality of product/publications put in their hands.

Both are committed to their communities and to their employees.

Andy and I, along with our absentee-owner/teacher sisters Kim and Sue, decided that we wanted to sell our businesses while we were healthy so that no duress could force us to offload to buyers less committed to the Ripon community or to the workforce we credit with 57 years of superior craftsmanship.

So with dad's admonition to “fashion our own destiny” ringing in our ears, we chose to sell to the right people at the right time.

No regrets, no apologies.

And by the way, Mom. It's been our fun, too.

— Tim Lyke

mom and dad working long hours, having more than a few fitful nights and once when mom consoled dad as he was in tears, fearing the business would fail.

But the joys of working with talented people committed to their craft far surpassed any disappointments. They loved the people at Ripon Printers.

When Andy joined the company in 1985 and I followed in 1990 — our sisters took a harder road; they became teachers — mom would occasionally check on us to make sure we weren't toiling in the family vineyard out of duty. “Dad and I have had our fun,” she would

