

Dear Family and Friends,

I had traveled to Wayzata beach for a concert with a high school friend. I decided to stop by the farm where I grew up. I drove through the country side from Isanti to St. Francis and enjoyed seeing hay wagons and corn fields. I also paused to reflect on how much has changed in these 36 years since I graduated at 18 and the farm was sold.

It seemed every mile had numerous memories. The fields we farmed, the café we visited after grinding feed and barn cleaning. The woods we played hide and seek on horses. The dirt roads in every direction that led to homes of parents and grandparents you know. The farm house where you always received a full sized candy bar on Halloween from Arlo and Lucille. The rodeo we attended every year. The blackberry patches where mom and I picked for hours to make jam. The plum tree where I kicked a hornet nest at 15 years old and was stung so many times my foot swelled like an alien. The long horse rides and crossing the river to swim with our horses. The many horse races we had in the fields every fall after harvest. The houses my parents built on their land after selling the farm. The house where my brother and his family lived adjacent to our family land. The bungalows my grandfather hauled in from the cities in the 60's when freeways were built.

There were moments I pulled over to soak it all in and give thanks to decades of memories. Naturally, I cried, but the tears were peace and joy for the opportunities. I had the opportunity to know and love so many great people. In these moments, time stood still and I thought nothing would change. Of course with each decade, life and opportunities do change. I have learned from those I care for that it is essential to adapt quickly to the "new reality" and the next decade, because life marches on. They are right. I know they too still remember their parents, grandparents, and childhood memories like it was yesterday.

Once again, I was reminded that even though I may walk around the parking lot looking for my vehicle time and time again, I may never take the extra seconds to study the lane I parked in inside my brain. However, when my heart is touched, I remember every detail for years. I'm glad we are all wired to remember what really matters. Our lifetime of joy, celebrations and people. Sure we miss each other when jobs take us to new places or retirement takes us to warmer states. However, we remember the joys of our time together and all the more.

When I pulled into the family farm I grew up on, I was so nervous to get out of my vehicle. I knew they didn't know me and I didn't know them. I explained it was my 52nd birthday and I had not seen my childhood home since I was 18. I told them my married name and they didn't recognize it. However, as soon as I mentioned my maiden name they quickly said "You must be Mike and Kathy Wyatt's daughter". It's amazing the things that can be remembered thanks to a small town.

I approached the red barn where I hung out for 9 years with my horses, and the roosters that chased me. He did not deter me from seeing the stall and the silo. I climbed the ladder to see if the rope was still there where I would swing with my brother. Yes, somethings do stay the

same. Boards were missing and there were holes in the hay man. Then I saw the stall where a pitch fork went through my hand. We were cleaning manure out so fast, I didn't even know it happened until my dad turned my hand over. No doctor visit was necessary, I just washed and disinfected the wound and continued cleaning.

Within those barn walls had hundreds of stories. I could still hear my grandpa's laughter as he was always smiling. There were no kittens to play with this time. However, an inquisitive nine year old girl watched me while I was looking at the barn. I mentioned to her that I was 9 when I lived here too, and, I hope you love it like I did. We stopped to take a photo with everyone and then I drove away.

Time flies when you are having fun, then next generation comes through. Many of the people I knew have passed away, but, I will never forget them. Now to honor Arlo and Lucille I will buy full size candy bars for those who come trick or treating at my house.

Happy Halloween!

Natalie Zeleznikar

Chief Executive Officer