

Doug Bauer The Lewiston Tribune

I've always had a lot of respect and admiration for the teachers, coaches and school administrators who helped shape who I am today, and there were a lot of them:

Nick Menegas, Dave Harrington, Jay Henry, Jim Wicks, Brian Larson, Earl Trigsted, Ron Karlberg, Jim Wilund ... the list goes on and on.

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But none of them had a bigger impact on my life than Marian Adams.

Mrs. A, as she was affectionately known by her journalism students at Lewiston High School, died Thursday at age 80. She'd been in poor health for quite some time, but was still as feisty and witty as ever during a recent visit I made to her home at Juniper Meadows in the Lewiston Orchards.

My first encounter with Mrs. A came during my junior year, when I decided to take journalism after hearing how much fun my friends were having in the class.

Truth be told, I was a lot more interested in having fun than anything to do with journalism.

That quickly changed.

Mrs. A's style was noticeably different than other teachers, most of whom lectured while their students listened and took notes. She didn't teach so much as push and prod. She challenged us to do our best work and then stepped back, allowing us to make mistakes and then showing us what to learn from them.

She was also quick to dole out the discipline when students got out of line, docking points from us on a routine basis.

"That's five!" she'd shout, thrusting and extending her open hand with all five fingers displayed for emphasis.

Sometimes, when we really needed it, she'd dock us 10 or more points for popping off or being disrespectful. The loss of points was trivial to most of us; getting an A in her class quickly became easy as I dove into the subject matter and determined that I wanted nothing more than a career in journalism.

Many of my closest friends were in Mrs. A's class, and we still talk and laugh about our experiences with her every time we get together.

She was one of the first people I called when I was named managing editor at the Tribune. I thanked her profusely for all she'd taught me and the inspiration she'd provided, and she responded by telling me she didn't deserve any of the credit. I was the one, she said, who made it all happen.

It was vintage Mrs. A.

Although she's gone, her mark will continue to be seen throughout the Tribune, where she once served as a reporter before moving on to the Salt Lake Tribune for a spell. Editor and Publisher Nathan Alford was a year ahead of me in her class, and Sports Editor Matt Baney was a few years behind.

Alford and I dropped in on her unannounced about two months ago, wondering if she'd even recognize us.

I asked how she was doing, and she responded in typical sarcastic fashion.

"I'm dying. How the heck do you think I'm doing?"

We all laughed, and then went downstairs to have lunch. She remembered all of our stories, and most of the people we talked about. Her short-term memory wasn't as good. She asked us to tell her time and again how many kids we had and whom we married. We gladly obliged, telling her over and over about our great kids and our smart and pretty wives.

She loved every minute of it, and so did we. When it was time to leave, she walked us out and stood there waving as we drove off.

I knew it was the last time I'd see her, and was happy to have told her in person how much she meant to me.

I'm fairly certain the feeling was mutual.

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