

# Grandma's legacy, lessons live on for senior

By Matt Brown

NINETY-NINE percent of my time spent at the Collegian office has been happy. Fun work, good friends, good people — I've had a blast.

Oct. 10, 2007, encapsulates the other 1 percent.

That day, I sat at a computer, a quiet sports reporting candidate trying to help out with football research.

My phone vibrated on the desk in front of me. I knew what was coming before I even heard the first crack in my mom's voice.

My grandmother was gone. We didn't call her "Grandma," she was always "Ahnne." We called her Ahnne because, well, for whatever reason, my brother

said "Ahnne" instead of "Grandma" when he learned to talk. For more than 20 years, it stuck in the family. The name was out of the ordinary, but Ahnne was never ordinary to begin with.

Diabetes confined her to a wheelchair, then to her bed. It took both of her legs. It took most of her vision. It took her kidneys.

But never in my life did I hear Ahnne complain. Never. She always made the best of whatever challenge was thrown at her.

She was a frequent hospital guest, but she made the most of it. She'd keep a drawer stocked full of candy from the gift shop for visitors and frequently played pranks on nurses.

That was Ahnne. She loved to have fun and make others smile.

Ask my Pop-Pop, who opened his lunch on "Grandparents' Day" at my elementary school to find a card-board-and-pepper sandwich.

Ask my brother, who unwrapped a Christmas present a few years ago only to find his \$100 bill frozen in a block of ice.

Or ask residents of the town of Wind Gap. Back in the 1960s,

there was a wild rumor going around that martians were set to land. So, on that day, Ahnne decided to have a little fun. Dressed in a white sheet with a colander on her head and aluminum foil antennas, she walked into town. Two women got scared, swerved up on the curb in their car and proceeded to call the police on her. Of course, the police found her prank to be hilarious.

The stories could go on and on. She loved life, and she loved her family and friends. Even when things got bad and then got worse, the simple ability to get into the kitchen and cook for family and friends kept her going. That's all she needed: to make people she cared about happy by

doing things like sending home-cooked meals to a college student whose idea of cooking is hitting "reheat" on the microwave.

She loved sports, particularly baseball, and tuned in to the Phillies game just about every night. She had to be my first call when the Phillies finally made the playoffs in 2007. I'll always be thankful I dialed the number.

For a last conversation, that one was about as good as it gets.

It's been two-and-a-half years since then. In that time, I covered several Penn State sports at the Collegian, including the men's basketball NIT title season. I landed a couple internships and served as the Collegian's Football Editor and Opinion Editor, and now, I'll graduate and spend the summer at the ballpark covering the Cincinnati Reds.

When she left us, I had one Collegian story under my belt. There are more than 100 now. I'm

sure she would have loved to read each one of them. Family meant everything to her. And she meant everything to our family.

Whenever something goes wrong, I know I shouldn't complain. Ahnne wouldn't have complained. The little negatives that happen here and there, they don't matter in the grand scheme of things. Be happy and enjoy life. Make others happy. That's what matters. That's how you leave a legacy and live forever.

That's what Ahnne taught me. So thank you, Pop-Pop, for all the sacrifices you made to provide her the best care imaginable.

And thank you, Ahnne. When I look back at my college career, all I hope is that I made you proud.

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MY OPINION

# Past mistakes can resurface in information age

By Matt Conte

SOME OF US are fortunate enough to make our mistakes in private. Others of us make them in open forum. An unfortunate few make headlines when they slip up. And those few are lucky if a print headline is as far as it goes.

Unfortunately for us, the men and women of the information age, the measure of a person's integrity might be gauged by little more than search returns from Google, Facebook and YouTube.

Never majorly messed up? Maybe you just made an impulsive comment or expressed an opinion or were involved in some unfortunate matter of circumstance. It can all be used against you in the information age.

Privacy runs quite a premium today. America is the land of freedom of speech and the press; however, more importantly, it's the land where you have the right

to remain silent because anything you say can and will be used against you in the Court of Public Opinion — arguably more treacherous than most courts of law.

From an honest opinion to a dubious tweet to a seemed-like-a-good-idea-at-the-time demonstration to Facebook evidence of last night's party, all the way down to sexting, the simple fact is that when we members of the information generation act, it can go viral in an instant. Our words and actions can spread faster than anyone can suppress or correct them, and people may (perhaps unfairly, perhaps reasonably) form opinions of you before even the best spin doctor can help you.

Then, how must we adapt to our own time? Well, it begins with an unwillingness to judge on one end (because we all make mistakes) and tact and personal integrity on the other. Integrity has always been rare in its pure form, and now, in the information age, it's harder to fake.

Personal integrity used to mean doing the right thing even when there is nothing in it for you, even when nobody is looking.

But how rare is a blind eye, today? If your darkest days escape the camera phones, that's a bit of solace in itself.

The Daily Collegian fields requests all the time from people who want their names removed from the Collegian's Web archives, for one reason or another. With the growth of the Internet, their college mistakes and mis-statements have resurfaced online. Some people were connected to crimes or dubious circumstances; others just wish they'd kept their opinions to themselves. I feel for some of them, because who could have foreseen that the Internet could foster such consequences?

The Oracle of Omaha came close. Warren Buffett once said it takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. This was before Twitter. Nowadays, it takes fewer than 140 characters and as much time as it takes to type them. And the message is going much farther than can be reached, historically, by the community newspaper's headlines. But the papers have Twitter now, too.

I've never admitted it publicly, but, in part, I joined the Collegian as a way to hide. While my passion for writing and editing is sincere, I always felt comforted knowing that if I'm writing the headlines and crafting the articles, I'm considerably less likely to appear in them — not as a matter of underhandedness, but for the simple tradition that we in the newspaper world haven't traditionally spent much time talking about ourselves.

Indeed, I hate that my name and picture appear in the Collegian today. I went four years with little more than a couple bylines and the inconspicuous printing of my name on the Board of Editors listing as evidence of my engagement with the Penn State community.

I hate that by some measure, I'll forever be linked to this column through Google and Collegian archives. I know there is much more to my character than what is reflected in this opinion piece, but it will be the piece of me that gets broadcasted.

By the time this goes to print, I'll have no idea whether publish-

ing this column will ultimately prove to be a good idea. But I had something to say and a forum to say it, so I said it. Don't get me wrong: I've come to realize that there's nothing to fear in taking action, speaking up or otherwise engaging your community, but now more than ever, it is necessary to make sure we act with tact and integrity and, at the same time, recognize that we are more than our Facebook profiles.

Whether you're a freshman reading this in print in the HUB or you're an HR rep who Googled my name and is wondering if you should give me an interview, you've found me, and it probably wasn't very difficult. I hope this piece makes you think I'm a genius, but if you think I'm an idiot and I've just made a cynical, pessimistic, dramatic ass of myself, it's something I'll have to live with. That would be unfortunate, but I suppose it proves my point after all.

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MY OPINION

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