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These past weeks have been difficult in this office, and in our community. The death of loved ones is a hard burden for those left behind, and it takes a toll on the physical and spiritual senses.

Death makes each of us take stock in our own lives, in how we are living, in what we are and are not getting done, and things we should be changing. It is a natural occurrence, and a lesson that we should all be aware of.

None of us will live forever. That's a fact...and we have to get used to it. But because of that fact, we must be aware of where we are in our lives. And that can be a humbling experience.

All of us could do better. We could be kinder, more generous, better friends and neighbors, doing more volunteering, sharing more of our resources. Those also are given facts...and we need to think of them and actually try to do better.

And while we are trying to live better lives, we need to remember those who have left us behind. It is good to talk about them, remembering how they touched our lives, how they are missed in the family and community. That is one tribute you can give to the families and friends, being willing to share the memories you have.

If, however, you have had a grudge with that person, it is best to just keep your mouth shut, and forget it. Life is way too short to carry on those petty gripes, so just get over it. Something else will come along that you can get in a snit about...if that's the kind of personality you have.

We have had many conversations in our office about Jon and Barb's loss of their oldest son, Kevin. It will take a long time for them to get used to his absence, and the ache will continue for a long time. But in the same breath, we can visit about his life here, and share good stories of his happy outlook on life. And, somehow, the pain seems to ease a bit....at least for a moment or two. That seems to be the way it is with death - the harsh reality and then the memories that bring warmth to the spirit.

Bill Holm's death was also a shock to the community. He had many more stories to share with us, as his life was cut way too short. So now we revere the stories that we have, and remember the eccentric character that he was. For he was one-of-a-kind, a great storyteller who could also explode with venom when politics became the topic...or when his car was sideswiped one more time parked outside his home. And then he could be mellow, talking about the landscapes of his homeland, Iceland, and his little town of Minneota.

And I think of Emily Ufkin's death by a car accident just a year and-a-half ago. It is still so hard to realize that she is gone from among us -a bubbly teenager with so much of life ahead of her.

Each of us will deal with death differently. There are times when death comes naturally, or is welcomed after a long and hard illness. But the sudden, untimely deaths of loved ones will always be the toughest to take. And we've had enough of them here in Minneota.