

It is sometimes difficult to come up with a good personal story for these columns. I think I have written about 170 of them since becoming president. Those who have been my loyal readers over these past 14-plus years know that I often talk about my mother-in-law, Judy. And why not? She is quite the colorful character. Now when she does something outlandish, she says, “Don’t put that in the paper!” But she knows I will, so I’m not even sure why she says that.

Recently, I was stopped by someone who reads my column, and they asked for more stories about Judy. Well, this column is for you!

My mother-in-law likes to write letters. These are not the old-school, “news of my family” letters or “thinking of you.” Rather, she believes it to be very important that she let people in power know what she thinks about the various goods and services she uses, and even a few goods and services that she doesn’t use.

She has written to the grocery store on the subject of their check-writing policy and why they ask for additional identification and authorization even though she’s been a customer there for 50 years and they know her by name.

She has sent a letter to the good folks of Lipton Tea to inform them that their loose tea is now ground too fine and slips through her steeper. Yes, she still makes her tea with loose tea. She did get a letter back and they said they would address it. So good job there!

When she first got satellite TV, she fired off a letter to the Disney Channel because she thought they aired the movie, “Honey, I Shrank the Kids” too often. It turns out that it was a TV show of the same name, and they were running a “marathon” of episodes. Of course, she doesn’t watch the Disney Channel. She just thought they ought to know her opinion.

My personal favorite is when she wrote the people who make Mr. Potato Head about something she perceived wrong about the product, and she ended the communication with, “Mr. Potato Head is very important to me.”

When my wife, Jen, heard this, she confronted her mother. “Mom! Why do you care what Hasbro does? We NEVER had a Mr. Potato Head. Ever!” To her credit Judy said, “You’re right. We never did. I guess Mr. Potato Head really isn’t that important to me, huh?”

Now, when someone in the family seems to get worked up about something that really shouldn’t matter that much to them, and we realize that, we end that rant with the phrase, “Mr. Potato Head is very important to me.”

I love Judy very much and with her goes hearing her opinion on just about every subject, both positive and negative. It’s important to have your say about things that are in your world and let your opinion be known. Perhaps the information will be heeded, perhaps not, but at least you expressed yourself. Judy also sends letters of thanks and appreciation too, but those aren’t as funny for my column.

Often, these opinions are not solicited. She just feels compelled to deliver them. Well, now I’m asking for YOUR opinion.

Every four or five years we at Neosho County Community College conduct a community survey, often called an Environmental Scan. It's a short survey, just nine questions, that seeks your opinion on what the college is doing well, what we need to work on, and ways we can help meet your educational needs.

This survey is part of our Institutional Effectiveness process where we see how well we are meeting our mission of "Enriching Our Communities and Our Students' Lives." We look for ideas to improve, but also for positive feedback on things we are doing well so we know to continue and possibly strengthen those things.

The last survey done a few years ago was incredibly helpful in giving us some ideas for new programs. Many people reported that they liked the direction we were headed with career and technical education programs. Since then, we have added MANY new programs and expanded the locations of others including our new Mitchell Career and Technology Center in Chanute and adding HVAC and Diagnostic Medical Sonography to the Ottawa Campus.

If you have the time, I ask that you take a few minutes and complete this survey. You can find the link on the college's Facebook page. I would love to hear your thoughts on what we are doing well and what we need to improve or add.

Judy is not shy about offering her opinion as I hope you are not. And I hope the college means more to you than Mr. Potato Head.

If you have any questions, or want to give me your opinions directly, email me at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).