

## Joy, courage, loss and maple syrup: From a year's worth of columns, memorable quotes



By [Sean Kirst, The Post-Standard](#)

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Max Leonard and his great-grandson, Gunnison, take a break for lunch after a morning's work on the Leonard farm in Tioga County. Gunnison's father, Dan, was a farmer who worked with Max on his maple syrup business until Dan died last January in a snowmobile accident.

Mike Greenlar/The post-Standard

After more than 20 years as a columnist for The Post-Standard, this annual tradition remains a favorite yuletide task: On New Year's Eve, I offer a few of the memorable quotes gleaned from a year's worth of columns:

- Jan. 2: "To us, she was a saint long ago. What the church did, it's just a formality." — Eleanor Edwards, 80, a Mohawk woman who spent much of her life in Syracuse, [on the canonization of Blessed Kateri \(GOTT-a-lee\), the first native saint.](#)

- March 5: "You can't go out with him anywhere without someone coming up to say something to him about it." — Anne Tzivani on her husband, Harry, 87, a General Electric retiree and a

courtside attendant at Syracuse University basketball games [who's achieved fame because of his distinctive orange coat.](#)

- March 12: "What we're having is the kind of weather they usually have in Philadelphia." —Horticulturalist Terry Ettinger, [reflecting on one of the mildest Syracuse winters in recorded history.](#)

- April 7: "Think before you speak. Spend less than what you make. And whatever happens, try to make the best of what's going on." — Mike Leonard, on the philosophy of his 87-year-old grandfather, Max Leonard, a Tioga County maple farmer and a Regional Market regular [who kept the business going despite family tragedy.](#)

- May 4: "They were amazed, but I thought it's good that we show them we can care about each other, as we want them to care about each other." — Rabbi Daniel Fellman, on the reaction of children from Temple Concord to the [rabbi's friendship with Imam Yaser Alkhoody and Mohamed Khater, leaders of the Islamic Society of Central New York.](#)

- May 23: "You can't take everything. That's the problem." - Nick DeMartino of Syracuse, [on the quiet ordeal of emptying a Wadsworth Street](#) home where his parents had lived for more than 60 years.
- June 6: "You have something that belongs to us." — Gregg Tripoli, executive director of the Onondaga Historical Association, recalling the words of the late Dorothy Webster, an Onondaga Nation clan mother [whose persistence led the OHA to voluntarily return native remains and sacred artifacts to the Onondaga](#).
- June 11: "My son, on his 14th birthday, didn't say, 'I want to get picked on, I can't wait to get pushed around, so I'm going to tell people I'm gay.'" - Tracy Rodemeyer of suburban Buffalo, [speaking about her son Jamey, who committed suicide at 14 after being taunted about his orientation](#).

- June 25: "The whole deportation system thrives on secrecy." — Aly Wane, 35, of Syracuse, who was born in Senegal and raised in the U.S., on why [he went public with his status as an undocumented immigrant](#).

- Aug. 6: "A lot of these young people, no one's ever taught them how to hang a curtain or start a lawn mower, but they know how to shoot a gun." — Sandy Cooper of Elk Street in Syracuse, [where frustrated neighbors rallied to stop gunshots and other acts of violence on their block](#).



Harry Tzivani: In his late 80s, the "man in the orange coat" has become a Carrier Dome legend.

Dennis Nett/The Post-Standard

- Aug. 10: "You're tired? Well, I'm tired, too. Three hundred years' worth of tired." — The words of the late Sandra Smokes, a longtime columnist and editorial writer with The Herald-Journal and Post-Standard, [from one of her columns, written in 1992, that we reprinted following her death in August](#).
- Sept. 5: "Every time he saw me make a mistake, it left a little burn mark on him." — former Gov. Mario Cuomo, [speaking of why he believes his son Andrew does a better job as governor](#).
- Sept. 23 — "I've never once heard you say, 'Why me?' Not once, ever since you got this, have you complained." — Lori Ruhlman of Skaneateles, speaking across a table to [her husband Tom, a former business owner now in treatment for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and a related form of frontotemporal dementia](#).
- Oct. 3: "To suffer all she suffered, and to still be successful, that is the one message we want to convey to every child in the neighborhood." — Otis Jennings, former Syracuse parks commissioner, on why he organized [an effort to erect a sculpture of Libba Cotten, a folk music legend, on Castle Street](#).



•Nov. 7: "I've seen a heart turn to stone over the period of a summer." — Timothy Jennings-Bey, director of trauma response for the United Way of Central New York, speaking [to how quickly children can be hardened by cruelty, neglect and despair.](#)

•Dec. 5: "These guys are living and breathing what happened to them for the rest of their lives." — Lori Casler of Union Springs, [on the importance of remembering the amputees and other wounded at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center,](#) where Lori's son, Kyle, was admitted after losing a foot and part of his leg to a bomb in Afghanistan.

•Dec. 21: "Goodbye, Annie darling, I'll always love you." — Dr. Fred Roberts, 92, after the Dec. 11 death of his wife Ann, whom he married before World War II. [Fred, a revered Syracuse pediatrician, died five days later.](#)

[Sean Kirst](#) is a columnist with *The Post-Standard*. You can read his [memorable quotes from 2011](#) [here](#).



A new sculpture of folk music great Libba Cotten, dedicated this year at the Libba Cotten Grove in Syracuse.

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