

Game night...

Well it has been quite some time since I played Dungeons and Dragons. Even longer since I played a Paladin. And I found out that sometime between the time I last played one to the current time, the Paladin (Holy Knight) went from being a scourge to all that is evil, to a joke commonly referred to as Lawful-Stupid.

If you are familiar with the game, it is one that takes place in the minds of the players. One person sets up the location/world/adventure, the others take their generated characters through this world. There are many different types of "Role Playing" games. Some take place in modern times, others in the realm of comic book heroes. I've played both of these types and many more. My favorite by far has been the realm of fantasy fiction dealing with Swords and Magic. That is the realm of Dungeons and Dragons.

I played at the time when many religious groups thought this was nothing better than evil incarnate. I had many conversations with them in my college days. What they never knew was that good generally triumphed over evil. Good characters of the "worlds" were generally more powerful than the evil. Good characters would band together and stay together more easily by the very rules of the game. Playing evil characters could be fun, but you generally ended up playing alone, or you hid your evilness from the others of the group. After watching many games, movies and reading a whole lot of books, my general rule for life is "Never work for the Bad Guy". That only gets you a really short life. In the realm of Dungeons and Dragons, evil rarely prospered. This did change occasionally from group to group, but for the most part the rules stayed consistent in this.

Now back to the Paladin character. They were the protectors of all that was lawful and good. And if played well, they could

become the most powerful characters in the game. They would have the backing of their order, followers and religion to help conquer evil. As I was saying, somewhere from the time I last played this type of character and today, they became a joke in some circles. From what I can gather, and have seen this was true in a lot of cases. The people playing this character did not know what it was to be Lawful and Good. The character from this ended up somewhere between "Dudley Do-Right" and the "Super Friends", without the dumb luck of Dudley, or the massive power of the Super Friends. The name "Lawful-Stupid" was a good fit. Hopefully I can play this character with a bit more flair...

This of course got me wondering why would someone have a hard time playing a character that was "lawful-good". By definition this is someone who obeys orders, follows the rules, deeply devotional, regimented in all they do, looks out for the poor, helps the needy and cares for the weak. All in all sounds like a good type to be around. But this was not somebody who 'blindly' followed the rules, or obeyed corrupt orders. They should help the poor, needy and week, but not just by charity. Teaching them to fend for themselves, lifting them out of their need and weakness would be the best choice. Too much devotion to the spiritual can make you blind to the world around you. If you have this spiritual calling, it is best to share it with those around you, at least by example. Regimented life can also go too far. Being too picky about the order of the day, can make you miss out on opportunities to help others. Sometimes this can be very difficult, especially with peer pressure. Do you then scale back your beliefs, or follow them to an extreme. In either case you have warped them from what they once were. You are no longer a person of conviction, but one of wishy-washy behavior. In other words somewhat of a joke.

Now in the preceding paragraph was I talking about the game, or real life? I don't think that matters a lot. People have a

hard time playing a Good character, and some have trouble being Good in real life. It is all in how we view the world. I am trying to play a “good” character in a game I get to play with my oldest daughter and her (dare I say my?) friends. I try to be a “good” person in my daily life. I’ll let you know which one is easier...

It is Apple Butter Time

Or should I say it was?

Last Sunday, two of my daughters, 1 son-in-law, and a few friends went to the Apple Butter Festival in Grand Rapids Ohio. It was a wonderful fall day, sunny, warm and the smell of gun powder filled the air.

Gunpowder? Yep, gunpowder. Part of the Apple Butter Festival are various re-enactments. Solders from the Revolution were parading in the street. Civil War solders were shooting across the river. Every so often a Tank would fire off a round. Yes, there was the smell of gunpowder. I was talking to one of the Civil War solders, who kept in character the whole time, about his life and the things he did on a day to day basis. Very interesting stuff. As I was leaving I commented how well he stayed ‘in character’. He kept in character for that too, but I had to remind him that a civil war soldier would not have had a tongue stud. Oops, forgot to remove that one. Hee, Hee!!

Then there was the food. Good food. Brats, buffalo, apple dumplings. I didn’t get to sample all of it. I was looking for one place that last year sold some of the best salsa I’ve tasted. I couldn’t find them. The spot they were in last year was occupied by a person selling stuffed animals. Oh well.

My youngest and I did lose my oldest and her group. We were going to communicate by cell phone, but only one of our phones got decent reception in the town. Stick with the carrier that gives better service where you live. I don't think the "Can you hear me now" guy was ever in this town.

I imagine a good time was had by all.

Feeling no pain...

I did something to my shoulder to re-aggravate an old injury. For the first three days of this work week, I was unable to lift my left hand over my head without pain. Back to starting the old rehab exercises. Turn my head one way then the next, lifting up that ol' soup can (1 lb weight to start). Keep stretching and moving... Not too much weight, you can re-injure that thing. Trouble was I forgot them.

Yep, all that stuff used to be in my head. There was a sheet of exercises that I was supposed to do to keep the shoulder in shape. Me, I stopped doing them when the shoulder felt better. I kept up with a couple of the stretching routines, because they helped with headaches too. I did the ones I remembered, but I know there were another couple on the routine. Oh well, I guess I can try to find the list again. Maybe the rehab place has a website? Or I can just stop in and ask for another sheet...

Anyway with a bit of patience, lots of heat applied, and a few exercises, I was able to function at around 90% today. I was able to pull on a shirt, brush my hair with my left hand, type all day at work. and my shoulder is only starting to complain. I think before dinner, I'll apply a bit of heat again.

I would say that this is a getting old problem, but mostly it is an out-of-shape problem. I move wrong, or sleep wrong and I put the shoulder out of whack. I am hoping that my trips to the "Y" will help with this, but I haven't been able to get much exercise in since I joined. Just after I joined, I pulled some leg muscles that kept me from doing a lot there, and now this. I know I can't push myself on exercise equipment, when it just hurts (like crazy) to move. I can't say the "Y" did it either, I wasn't there both times I was injured.... Just plain dumb luck and my body trying to move like it was in better shape than it is....

Maybe next week....

And this was the reason why there hasn't been a post since the weekend. I have one more post started, but never finished it. I'm not a one handed typist.

Giving Memories...

I just got back from a gathering of friends. This gathering was celebrating the 2nd birthday of a wonderful little girl. Now of course the parents said that gifts were not required, so I didn't buy any. Instead, I handed out memories to the 4 children of my friends. These were very specific memories for me and my children. It is hard to pass on memories when only one side knows what they are. So I am writing about those memories so, if the parents desire, these memories can be passed on to their children.

My wife collected three things during our marriage. One collection was pets, mostly chinchillas. Another was raccoons. When it got tough to find different raccoons, she started collecting Eeyores. Yes, that little gray (blue) donkey that

Disney made so popular. The one from the Pooh Bear stories. For those who don't know it, Eeyore was a gloomy little donkey, who had the most down to earth, sad, outlook on life. Except for the rare occasions when he found good in the bad things that happened. It is that rare gift to find the good during the bad times that captivated my wife with this character, other than the fact she thought he was just soooo cute.

Our house was filled with Eeyore things. Eeyore jewelery, clothes, dishes and cups and of course the stuffed Eeyores. There was an Eeyore for winter, Christmas, Summer, Fall and spring. There is even a Halloween Eeyore. Eeyores of every shape and size. These filled the house and our lives.

After my wife died, some of the Eeyores went to family members. I gave her sister a dress Eeyore watch, since she likes Eeyore too. I gave some stuffed Eeyores to my daughters and niece, so they could have something to hold on too. I gave at least 1 Eeyore sweatshirt to each daughter, so they could have something warm to wrap up in. Most of the stuffed Eeyores I kept and I held onto them for me. The Eeyores never left the family until today.

I gave 4 small donkeys to the children of my friends. 1 was especially for babies, so their youngest could have one too. Two were identical donkeys, (not quite Eeyores) that were bought by my children (ok, it was Dad's money) to give to their Mother for some special day. A fourth was one my wife would carry with her to give a little comfort in times of stress, this one was given to the birthday girl.

These were gifts of fond memories that we had as a family. These were not expensive, but they are gifts most rare. These were gifts of the heart. From one family to another, a shared blessing of the good things in life: Love, commitment, honor, trust and just a bit of pessimism.

Always looking for hope, and sometimes I happen to find it

Warm Fall Days, Cool Fall Nights

These are days I now enjoy. Just a couple of years ago, this time of year was devastating to me. It was a time of year I called the beginning of the end. Somewhere around this time of year is when my wife started having neck and shoulder pain. No known cause, it would come and go. Sometimes severe, and sometimes not. It wasn't until mid November that we actually knew the cause of the pain was Cancer. I don't dwell on that as much now, I am now able to see some of the good times from that last year and other fall days and nights.

This was always the time of year for hot beverages in the evening. Tea, hot cider, coffee on occasion, and when it got just a touch of frost in the air hot chocolate would be made. This was also a time for Chili, Stews and Soups. The heat of the summer was fading, and hot meals were more desirable. Cooking didn't seem like the chore it was in the summer. Sitting close on the couch huddled under a throw, because we just didn't want to turn on the heat just yet. Making that first fire in the fireplace. Sharing wine, laughter and our own comforts. These days are fondly remembered.

Walking in the fallen leaves, breathing in that fall smell. Listening to the crunch of the leaves. Watching animals prepare for winter. Taking in a corn maze or two. One more trip to the local zoos before we had to bundle every one up. Unscheduled days off, just because the weather was beautiful that day. Memories of a special time of year.

This year finally removed some of the shadow that had fallen hard on this time of year. Maybe, just maybe some of the shadows will be lighter as the year comes back to that one fateful day.

Life goes on and some peace makes its way back in.

Could you send in a plumber?

They are having more [toilet problems on the International Space Station](#). Seems that the Russian made space toilet is not working. I realize that the water hunger, gravity fed toilets that work on earth would not work very well on the Space Station, but to break down twice in a short period of time is not good at all. I would really reconsider working on the space station if the main toilet is going to break every 4 to 6 months. Seems like that would be a vital function. Especially when some of the water used on the Space Station comes from recycling the waste collected in those high-tech privies.

Oh well, that massive water recycling program in use on the space station would also give me pause to send in my resume for Space Station Tech.

Where are the days when the astronauts would just play with their food in the micro-gravity situations. I miss the Jello floating in the air.

Children of the night...

What music they make...

In keeping with the Halloween season, I thought that line was appropriate. Bela Lugosi's role as [Dracula](#) still is one for the ages. Today, that movie seems quaint and common, but in 1931 it terrified the audience. I've been told and read that the 1922 silent movie [Nosferatu](#) was even more chilling. Someday I must see that film.

Other versions of Dracula were horrific, bad, funny and just plain campy. There was Dracula vs Frankenstein, Dracula vs Batman. There was a Son of Dracula (Young Dracula) and an Old Dracula. Dracula was even [Dead and Loving It](#). He even discoed in [Love at First Bite](#). Today there are many more vampire stories out there, they all started with Dracula.

Why this fascination? Hard to say. Terror lurks in dark places. We as a society gather in light areas. We bring light into the dark. We try to chase away all shadows. Vampires, werewolves and their ilk are creatures of the shadows and dark. They strike a nerve with us. They chill our bones. They the moral of a story. Live a good life and evil will not happen to you. Stay with the group, do not go off alone after dark. There is evil out there and it has a name.

Today, we try to scare ourselves and we call it fun. We have horror movies, haunted mazes and houses, horror books. Things designed to get a bit of thrill in our lives. Things designed to get our blood flowing.

I do love the Halloween season. I wish that our haunted theater had been a reality, now I have no plans for Halloween. I'm too old to go "Trick or Treating" and I know of costume parties yet. Last year, even without the party, I put on my Dracula cape and went around the local area. Maybe this year, I'll shop at Wal*Mart.

And what brought all this up...

The Children of the Night, what music they make... Owls in the trees, a dog or coyote howling in the distance on a chill dark night. Yes, the children of the night make music, and to my ears there is nothing better...

And yes, this is a [play](#) our theater should do... if we don't do a haunted house in October, we should at least do one themed play...

Wonderful Fall Day

Since I joined the YMCA (Anyone Feel like dancing here???, not me thanks!), Thursdays has been one of the days I stop after work to get a little exercise in. Today I just could not see dropping in. It was just too nice out. Still I needed to get a little exercise in and still enjoy the fall evening.

My youngest and I took a quick trip to [Harrison Lake State Park](#) and took a stroll around the lake. Roughly 3.5 miles of hiking. Not a bad way to spend the afternoon. There was a cross-country meet going on, so we had to find an out of the way spot to finally park. We were able to avoid most of the runners (not get in their way) and we had a good time walking.

The walk around the lake reminded me of the last time I took the full trip around the lake. It was quite a few years ago. My daughters always liked picnics at the park for birthdays and such. Since 3 out of 4 were born in months when picnics are in season, we did it quite often. Harrison Lake was one of the many parks we went to (They have swimming there). My wife and I made the trip around that lake once. That was some 15 or 16 years ago. I'm not sure why we never made the walk again,

but we didn't. I remember that walk because I had 1 of my daughters in a baby carrier on my back. One of the best ways ever devised to carry children (except for the hair pulling). When the 2 in the middle were young enough, I remember having one in the back pack and one in a front carrier. That actually made it easier to walk. More balance.

Anyway back to the first walk some years ago. I remember we didn't know the park very well, and at one point we thought we were going through peoples' back yards. At the time we may have been, but as of today, the park seems to own most of the trail around the lake. There were two stretches of the walk when we had to walk on the roads around the park. Slight safety issue for those trying this walk with children, but it is minimized.

One more thing on the runners, that will never be me...

Hauntings down for the count...

It is official, the Haunted Theater is officially canceled. The hard work and planning that went into this fund raiser is all for naught. I can't see why people would want to throw away a fund raiser. Even if it only raised \$100, it would be \$100 that they didn't have prior to the event.

I won't say more other than this may affect my future involvement in the theater. I'm not sure at the present time. They want money, but I guess there are only one or two ways to get it. This wasn't one of them. Too bad, the other ways aren't working, as far as I can tell.

Overweight???

There have been recent stories in the news about some extremely overweight people. One is the world record holder over 1000 lbs, another hit the scales at over 900 lbs. Sadly, the 900 lb man died from heart failure today. It simply astounds me that they could get that large.

I have a problem with both of these men reaching such weights. Both men were bed ridden, they could not get out of their beds. Both men gained weight after being bed ridden! I can see how they got to the point of being bed ridden. They could feed themselves at that point. I do question how the people taking care of them would not get help to make sure these men lost the weight once they could no longer move. Did they pay people to feed them?

No, you wouldn't want to starve them, but calorie content could be reduced. I'm not sure I would ever want to take care of someone who put themselves into that situation. Hard decision that. Once the person is stuck in their bed, they become wards of someone else. Should we as a society hold these people responsible? Who would make such a call?

Just some thoughts as I try to get this nearly 50 year old body back into shape so I can at least play one more game of softball.