

Lost a post...

I really don't know what happened to it. I finished a post, and was sure I pressed the publish button, but it is gone. I typed it so fast it didn't seem to have time to save a draft copy either??? Oh well, it was only electrons.

Another blog got me thinking about security. As children we carry blankies, have our favorite stuffed animal or something else we just won't part with. Our parents can also give us a sense of security. They hug when we aren't feeling well, the kiss to "make it all better" are ways we feel secure. Then we grow up.

In our high school days being part of a group can make us feel secure. You may be surprised how many students have a favorite book, pen or key chain. Little things they can hold to make them feel better.

As we get to be adults, different things give us security. Money in the bank, a good car, a cell phone, a good job, the lock on the front door, your SO or spouse. Just losing one of the things that make you feel secure as adult can be a life altering blow. Some people never find their way back to normal when they lose their security blanket. Cases of depression can be caused by lack of secure job, being robbed (that lock didn't work), losing your money, getting in a car wreck, losing a loved one. And then we, as adults, wonder why our children don't want to give up their blankies.... Just food for thought.

Family and the calendar

I used to have a very good head for dates and numbers. I can remember all sorts of birthdays, anniversaries, phone numbers and other such stuff. Somewhere along the line my head got full. I can't seem to remember a lot of dates that I should.

Let's see. I can remember all the birthdays of my brother and sisters. I can remember birthdays of my children, parents and even get close on most of the in-laws. I definitely remember all the important dates that occurred in and around my marriage. I remember my oldest sister's phone number, even though she hasn't had that one in years. I even remember the birthdays of my best friend in grade school, and the first girl I had a crush on.

Things I can't remember... Birthdays of my daughter's husbands and children. Anniversaries of said children and their spouses. Dates that specific bills are due. Dates for Drs. appointments. Dates of the next show one of my girls is in. Dates of the next show that I'm in... Dates set up longer than 1 week away. My cell phone number. My desk extension at work. Hmm a pattern is forming....

These dates are all more recent than the dates /numbers that I can remember. Maybe my mind is filled up with dates and numbers that I don't need anymore. If there was only a way to replace the numbers I remember with the new numbers I should remember. If I could bottle that, I'd make a mint.

semi high speed

I'm moving up in the world. I now have semi high speed internet. I have a internet connection through my cell phone company, and it works!!!

For those who don't know, I live out in the middle of nowhere. I have no chance of getting cable, DSL, Fiber Optic, and even our local wireless. I could get satellite, but I would need to cut down a few trees, since I live in the woods and have no clear southern skies. I've been using a dial-up connection for years. Now have speeds at least 4 times as fast, sometimes more. I think if I get a good external antenna for the receiver, I will approach DSL speeds most of the time. I am just impressed by this.

I'm going to be checking some things out over the next few days, and if all works out, I will be getting rid of my dial-up account, or at least going back to the free 10 hour deal with ads. If I get rid of the dial-up completely, I may get rid of my land phone at the same time. That would more than pay for my high speed connection. Cool stuff, no install fee, the hardware was free with rebates, and I didn't have to cut any trees.

That time of year

Today was the day for my yearly review at work. In the past, I've dreaded these conversations with my supervisors. I'm never quite sure why, since in all my years working, my reviews have never dropped below a good review. I've even had some outstanding reviews. Now in my old age, or maybe after all the years I've had on the job, I don't really pay much

attention to the whole review process. Yes, I'll make my views known, and I will listen to any constructive criticism my supervisor has, but that is all I get out of it. I don't get super excited about excellent reviews, or down over the just good reviews. I imagine the only review that would bother me is a poor review, and I would hope I see that one coming before it happens. If I don't see it coming than I deserve the poor review.

I think another part of not paying too much attention to the whole review process, is that for the past 4 years, I haven't had my sounding board. I would talk with my wife about my self review and then again after the supervisor's review. This made the review, and my input to it more real (if that makes any sense??) This lack of discussion with someone who really knew me makes the whole thing seem like a dream. Maybe so, but then some of the last four years has a dreamlike quality (mostly the nightmare type). Such is life. After typing this, I feel that this may be a big part of my current feelings.

In case anyone is interested, I had a good review.

Family, Fun and Charlie Brown

One of the things I remember from my childhood, is reading the comic strips of Charles M. Shultz. The Peanuts strip. I read them in the paper, I read them in book form. At one point I even had a Snoopy dressed in a space suit. To this day I will occasionally pick up and re-read one of the books I have, or put in a video of one of the seasonal specials. My wife and I had both liked the Peanuts Characters. And now, I assume my children like them too.

Today with family I saw a theater production of "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown". This is the second time I saw this show. The first was over 25 years ago when I was in College. My roommate played the part of Snoopy. Seeing this show with my youngest daughter, my dear wife's parents and sister, and a young niece was a trip to the past for me.

For those of you who don't know the show, it is a full musical filled interspersed with "panels" almost straight from the funny pages. Of the show I saw 25 years ago, the only thing I could remember was the "Supertime" song that Snoopy sang. My roommate was blessed with a very fine singing voice, and wonderful acting ability. He was one human who could make you believe he was a dog. Not just any dog, but the one and only WWI flying Ace beagle. The Snoopy of today's show at the point of "Supertime" had me re-living that one short segment of my life. Good memories.

As good as the show was, the best part was seeing and being with family. My In-laws are some of the best people I know. Not always perfect, but who is? For my children reading this, of course I know who is perfect. That was a rhetorical question. Back to the family... In the years after my wife's death, I have come to appreciate the good relationship that I developed with them over the years. So many times people treat there spouses family as outsiders. I tried to treat my wife's family as my own, and I hope they treat me the same. When I got married so many years ago, my wife and I decided that we would accept both families as our own. That didn't mean there was always smooth sailing. There were many "disagreements" between various members, but I bicker with my natural family, why should the same go on with the in-law side. The point here is that even today, four years after the death of a wife, daughter, sister, and aunt they are still my family, and that my friends is something to be happy about.

Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match

No, I'm not going to write about "Fiddler on the Roof" or small things used to start fires. I'm talking about the past, present and future dating world.

Now a very long time ago, or in other countries even today, you had arranged marriages. At some point in time, the girl's family would get in contact with the boy's family and the marriage would be set. When the dowry price was met, or a certain age was met, or some other condition. All well and good, but not always a happy match.

In another age, you had the major courtship ritual. You get introduced, meet social in groups for a time, and finally you ask permission to "court". Usually this was done in the house of the girl under full supervision of her family. Usually slow, but it must have worked, the human species survived.

I never did any of that. I didn't date much before I got married. I had 2 or 3 'girlfriends' in College. None before that. College dating (at least for me) was lots of hanging out in each other's dorm rooms. Maybe a dinner off campus every once in a blue moon – cash was tight. After College, I spent almost a year working. I had a few dates after college. My sisters were kind enough to set me up a few times. I would say, that after the 1st date, I had fun. I never did like that first date feeling. Then I finally got my own place. I had a small apartment warming when I finally got furniture for people to sit on. One of the people that came to that event was my future wife, – we just didn't know it at the time. About 1 month later we had our first date. I still remember

what we did, even though I can't remember the name of the restaurant, if it was still there I could take you right to it. Unfortunately it is long gone. We went out to eat, to a movie (Return of the Jedi) and stopped afterwards at a Dunkin' Donuts. In less than 1 year we were married. We liked the first date so much, we did the same thing on our wedding weekend. I went from someone who had very little dating experience to a married man in very little time, but it felt right. My feelings weren't too far off, since we spent 20 years together, and would still be together except for a beast called cancer.

On to now. Four years after my wife's death, I find I may be ready to date again. I'm not 100% convinced of this, but the feeling is that it is almost there. Now I'm quite sure that I could live the rest of my life with that almost there feeling. I hated the initial dates that much. I'm not sure I want to go through that routine again. However, it is what it is.

Now onto how dating is done today. Most of what I've heard is that you go "online" to find a date. I guess that is a possibility, but it doesn't seem right for me (more on that in a bit). I don't go to bars, so I don't think I'll ever find someone through that route. There are also people who go to church just to find a date. Hmm, on that one, something just doesn't seem right there... My big social events seem to revolve around a small little community theater I where I tend to hang out. Some of my closest friends were met there. But I know the people there, and I can't see myself dating anyone I've met so far. Not that they aren't nice people, but I know a connection when I feel it, and that hasn't been there. My other activities are mainly things I do by myself, so meeting anyone interested in my hobbies will be difficult at best.

That is unless... There is always that... Come on you can type it. Ok, that internet dating route. There are any number of dating sites popping up on the internet. It seems like there is a new one every week. Some you have to pay for, some are

free. Some are free and pay, but you can only send messages if you pay. Some do "Scientific" personality profiles to get your perfect match. Others are like on line supermarkets for dating. And there is probably everything in between and farther along on each side. I've seen add for dating a specific race, religion, occupation, location and there are plenty of other qualifiers. For some reason, none of this appeals to me. I get a little freaked out over the thought of putting anything out in a dating site. I'll blog, or visit boards for specific talking points, but a dating site? Am I just someones bit of data that goes through hundreds of personality profiles, or a slab of meat waiting to get checked out? Or worse, am I the shopper looking over those cuts of meat? It just seems like a foreign world to me, and I really don't want any part of it.

Now back to my title... I knew a matchmaker. Shortly after I was married, we lived near a lady who took it upon herself to find the perfect match for everyone. She knew people from all over the area and then some. She would make sure that certain people were introduced. And she wasn't above getting in there to push things together or pull them apart. Maybe that's what I need. A real live honest to goodness matchmaker. Do they still exist? But then again, not for me.

My best bet is to get a new place, have a house warming and see if lightning strikes twice. Or not. Maybe I'm not ready after all. I guess I won't really know that until I take that first step. For me, there are days when I still feel married to that lovely lady I met at my first place. There are days when I think she might be walking in the door. The next person I meet will have to be willing to take on those days. I don't think they will ever go away.

Widowers in the Movies

***** Movie Spoiler Alert *****

I took my girls to see “Nim’s Island” last week. Good movie overall, but I can’t help to think of how they portray widowers and their families. (something personal here). This is the second recent movie that I’ve seen that has a widower as one of the main characters, the other was “Enchanted”. By the end of both movies the widower dads were attached/married. Hmm, if only real life was that easy.

In “Nim’s Island”, the father hooked up with his daughter’s favorite author. A dad and daughter out in the middle of the ocean, and an agoraphobic author from San Fransisco meet. Wow, that was easy. This was computer dating at its very best (worst?). The daughter seems to set them up too. (Come on girls get your acts in gear... ☐)

Now all I have to do is set up some sort of research on a south sea island (doesn’t sound too bad), and I will be able to find a future Mrs. Somehow I don’t think things are ever that easy.

And on to “Enchanted”. I enjoyed this movie, and all the ins to other “Disney” shows. Cartoon characters come to life in New York. Of course the beautiful princess meets up with the widower, thanks to his daughter (again, girls, you aren’t working things right!!!). Singing and Dancing ensue. At the end through many trials and of course defeating the “Evil Stepmother”, the widower and princess are together. One happy little family.

Then of course there is another widower meets girl picture. Can anyone say “Sleepless in Seattle”? This time the son of the widower calls up a radio talk show to get dad a wife. Cross country trips occur, and they walk off to what is assumed another happy family, Hollywood style.

I will admit that “Sleepless in Seattle” did a admirable job of actually portraying what a widower goes through, at least if you have enough money to pull up roots, and have the luck and or skill to get another high paying job in another city. Yes, there were many a night that I didn’t sleep, even less than my normal sleepless patterns. Yes, I’ve daydreamed about talking with my late wife. Yes, I had to get up every morning and remind myself to breath. I don’t normally need to remind myself of that anymore, but it was there. There were many things I have gone through that were in that movie. This in itself gets my vote for a good movie. Most movies I’ve seen with widower or widows don’t even touch the problems with losing a spouse. It is for good reason that losing a spouse is on the top of most lists of traumatic life events.

My last question. Why are a lot of movies about hooking up widowers? Doesn’t that fly in the face of all the “Evil Stepmothers” of fairy tale fame?

Telescopes, an introduction

If you’ve been reading through the entire blog, you will notice I talk about my family and telescopes. I will try to make the titles very specific, so you will know what you are going to be reading...

Eventually, I will answer the question: “What telescope should I get?” For now I want to talk about various kinds of telescopes. There are really only two types of telescopes. If you’re a die-hard astronomer, just wait. This is for beginners. □

There are telescopes that use lenses (called refractors) and those that use mirrors (called reflectors). The refractors

are the telescopes most people think of. A pirates spyglass, 1/2 of a binocular are examples of refracting telescopes. Reflectors are generally the big boys. Most observatory telescopes are now reflectors of one type or another. The space telescope is a reflector.

Now for some there is a third group of telescopes that combine the mirrors and the lenses. I don't differentiate in that manner. I will admit there are different types of reflectors. Some have corrector lenses somewhere in the light path that correct different deficiencies in the mirrors. More on that in a latter post. Lets just say that all telescope types have there problems, and various ways are used to correct those problems.

Now more on the introduction. The first telescopes were refractors. But the strength of any telescope is how much light it can take in. Refracting telescopes with big front lenses get very big and awkward quickly. And there is also a limit as to how big you can make a piece of glass and only support it on the edge. So some bright people invented reflecting telescopes. Theoretically, there is no limit as to how big you can cast a mirror because it is supported across the entire back. In practice, once a mirror gets too big, it is very hard to support in something that can move and take in the entire sky. And glass does have a problem with deforming under stress, and big mirrors under gravity are under stress.

The biggest refracting telescope is in the Chicago area at the Yerkes observatory. The main lens is 40 inches across. The largest reflecting telescope in operation is the 11 meter scopes in South Africa. The largest telescope in the United States are the twin 10 meter scopes on Mauna Kea in Hawaii. The largest in the mainland US is the 9.2 meter Hobby-Eberly Telescope in Texas. And finally in Ohio the largest telescope is the the 1 meter (39 inch) at the University of Toledo.

I have a family connection with the telescope in Toledo (and others around the world), my father was a quality control manager at Owens-Illinois and this was one of the mirrors he over saw the production of.

More later

Thoughts on family

As a father, I've had many thoughts on my family and my responsibility to them. To me that thought is mind numbing. For the first 20 years of my being a parent, I had help. My girls had, in my opinion, the best mother on the planet. She gave everything to those girls. The last four years it has been just me. The youngest was 13, and the oldest 23 when their mother died. The oldest had been out of the house since she graduated High School. There was really no more parenting that needed to be done there. She was on her own. The next was a senior in High school and I had a sophomore and a 7th grader. These three still needed their mother, and I could not be her.

I struggle through with their help. Their mother did a good job at raising them, I just had to keep things flowing. Lucky me. The first year I had trouble keeping me flowing. The four of us at home kind of flowed with the stream for a while. Not our best moments by any standards, but we got through.

There were 2 high school graduations, 2 weddings, multiple boy friends in the past 4 years. I probably wasn't the best at handling all that. But again we made it through. I should emphasize that WE made it through.

Video tapes of my daughters in plays were put into a safe

place. Birth Certificates were put in a safe place. Those safe places were lost. I found tv remotes in the freezer. Bought more cabbage when I couldn't find the head I just bought. Found the first head months (weeks maybe) later. By then it was a wonderful science experiment. There were a number of those experiments. But as a family WE made it through.

We all got together last January. My daughters, the extended families, grandkids and all went to the Zoo, went shopping, and just hung out. We made it through.

In the future, no matter how far apart we are, I know I can rely on my girls. We will make it through.

late night

When everyone is asleep, I feel the need to be awake. I really need to get more sleep, I do have to get to work early tomorrow. This has been my method of living for years and years. I tend to stay awake when I should be sleeping.

For the past four years, I've been blaming it on the fact that I am a widower. While I admit, that sleeping alone after 20 years of sleeping with someone takes getting used to, (not sure I'm used to it yet), I've had this problem most of my adult life. In fact, I would read well into the early morning with my dear wife sleeping next to me. I sure am glad she could sleep with my reading light on. Now I just live with this normal insomnia. I imagine I could get some sleep aids from my doctor, but I really don't like taking medication. I've read where not sleeping can cause all sorts of health problems, so maybe I should look into it.

For me the night is the time my mind is in full motion, I need

to read, write and just think of things. The silence of the house seems to push my thoughts faster and faster. I may have to use this time to do something other than read fiction, and type out blogs. It would be nice to get more benefit than just getting a few more trivial pieces of information.