

Saturday Night in Toledo Ohio...

The song would continue "is like being nowhere at all." Today I spent the evening in Toledo, actually the Suburb of Maumee and I had a wonderful time. Spent the evening with a large group of my daughter's friends. Went out to eat at a great Restaurant, then to her house and played some group games. All around fun for the evening.

This was a bit of a change from my reflective evening yesterday. We had such a large group at the restaurant that we were asked what the occasion was. Welll the occasion was that it was Saturday. Fellowship, food, drink were all enjoyed.

Just getting into my relaxing phase. I do tend to psych myself up for long drives in the evening, and it takes me a bit to unwind to fall asleep.

Night folks

Halloween and this time of the year

This is one of the strange seasons of the year. I've always enjoyed Halloween with all the ghouls, goblins and ghosts associated with it. But this time of year also brings to mind some very sad memories.

In 2000, just prior to Halloween, my mother passed away. In 2001, just after Halloween, my father passed away. In 2003 around Halloween, my wife was struggling with all sorts of

problems that a cause could not be determined. She died before the start of the New Year. Sad thoughts sometimes fill my mind at this time of year, and will haunt my thought through the end of the year.

Will these thoughts be with me 100% of the time? Not anymore. Time does, after a fashion, heal all wounds. What they never tell you is that you may not like the way you heal. Break a bone and you may have re-occurring pain whenever the weather changes. Lose a loved one and you may feel that grief sneak back in when you least expect it.

When the fall leaves start changing and falling on the ground, I tend to think a lot about my father. This was the time of year we spent cutting down trees and moving wood. We did this together because it made the job a bit easier. It is still hard work, but we were able to laugh and joke during it. Laughter makes light work.

Sunday afternoons, I sometimes find myself thinking of my mother. Sunday dinners with the family were always a welcome addition to the day.

There are many times, places and events that bring back memories of my wife. Watching our daughters is one of those events. While others see my features in my daughters, I tend to see their mother's features. That is sometimes uncanny.

The smell of baking apples, or hot cider remind me of my wife. Hot tea at night remind me of her also. I could spend days writing about all the things that remind me of her.

All of these memories, plus memories of other loved ones who are no longer with us, are generally good memories. They are, however, memories tinged with a bit of sadness. Things that won't happen again. Places in the past that just live in the corners of my mind. Sadness that new things won't happen. There are no new stories to tell about them.

This weekend, my youngest will be involved in her school's show choir. They are giving a show for some group. I'm not even sure yet if I can see it. This is something her grandparents, and mother would be waiting to see. The stories of the show would be family conversation for a good long time. There are many voices that have been silenced. I miss their viewpoints.

There may be more "memory" posts to come, who knows where or when this mood will hit...

An interesting weekend.

Saturday started out with a quick trip to [Wild Winds Buffalo Preserve in Fremont, IN](#). My youngest and I didn't take the truck trip into the preserve, but we were able to visit the 1850's Rendezvous and talk with a few of the 'trappers'. The main goal of the trip was to pick up some bison burgers for a gaming night at my oldest's house. Good food, good fun and a wonderful afternoon and late-late evening. More Dungeons and Dragons was played.

Today, I made a recipe that I submitted to our Theater's cookbook to serve at the final production of "Kitchen Witches". Fun little show and the audience/guests seemed to like my samples. The recipe is on page 6 of our cook book. (Just wondering if we could sell that on line? – E-Book???).

I'm going to try a recipe or more from the book, they all look pretty good to me. My oldest daughter got to be the on stage "guest judge" for the show today. She seemed to really enjoy the small bit of stage work. Another day of good fun.

And finally I see that some dear friends are all back from

their Florida vacations. Someday, when I can get more than a day or two off, I will need to do something like that.

That's all folks...

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 weak, 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.

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

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...

Another haunting...

Yes three of us ventured into a haunted maze again. Again we ventured in 3 times. Why do we do this? I'm not really sure. I will admit I did have a bit of fun.

As [jamiahsh](#) also wrote a blog about this, you can check his site for the links. I'll just make a few observations from the evening.

It was great walking through actual mazes. Especially since you could get turned around and head back the way you came. With angry clowns and some creepy creatures who will chase you through the mazes, this make for an entertaining evening. At least for me. In these attractions, I will say that I don't often get "scared". I do get startled, and I do occasionally get grossed out. Some of the stuff just looks nasty. Once I get into the haunting, I really want to join the team that is doing the haunting. I'm always looking for where they can hide and where the best places to scare are. I think I would have added a couple to this attraction. There was a fairly long stretch of corn row walking that didn't seem to have too many ghouls. Maybe this was a 'breather' area, or they just didn't have enough actors to cover it. Not sure, but I thought it would be a good spot for some spooky noises, or just someone rustling the corn.

The one area that really gets to me on a very physical level is a walk through tube. My friends were very loud through this. Me, I almost shut myself in. To me, it is that unnerving. I imagine if I opened my mouth too often in that area, a visceral scream would emerge. I'm not sure exactly what about that gets to me, but it hits a very primal cord. On every trip through I arranged to be in the back of our little group. I lagged behind a bit, and actually walked through this section a bit slower than the rest. Even though this area was clawing at my core, I went as slow as possible. Each trip was a release of some tension. The relief felt when exiting was a soothing balm. I imagine the only thing that would get me more is if I had to crawl through the thing... That does remind me of one place where I did crawl through something very similar, only without the pressure from all sides. This place had multiple textures in a pitch black crawl through... That also got to me.

Now onto the room that disoriented everyone but me. I'm not sure why I could manage my way through. The visual clues, messed up by the strobes were interesting to me. Finding the proper path and keeping balance were like solving a puzzle. Once the solution was arrived at, I had no problems navigating the room. And it did not cause any disorientation. Finding the hiding spot or spots of the resident ghoul was also part of the problem. Avoiding him, and my companions was the bigger challenge. □ I did find another challenge to crafting one of these haunted attractions, the multitude of hidden doors needed by the actors to move in and out of the rooms at will. As an community theater volunteer, I can tell you the hanging of that many doors can be quite a feat.

I've been thinking about this a lot recently, and I've been wondering why I don't get frightened at these haunted houses. I know there was a time when I did get a little more frightened, as an adult, but that has been a few years. I think real life frightened me more than I can ever be

frightened by an actor in a haunted house. I've worked late night shifts at a gas station, and worried about the guy robbing stations in the area. That was scary. I worried when my wife had a miscarriage, and didn't come out for a very long time. Or when one of my daughters was in a car accident, or when my youngest was born 7-8 weeks early. These things are scary. Seeing death first hand is scary. A part of life, but a troubling part. Being the only parent to my daughters is scary. No one to bounce thoughts and ideas off of. No backup. That is scary. Haunted house, that is a walk in the park. Well except for that one area.

Things I like...

Not quite a list, because my interests are varied, but some of the things I like to do, all G-rated of course. (I have a daughter or two who may read this. Yes, they are all over 16, but they are still my little girls.)

I like insignificant bits of trivial knowledge. The more trivial the better. Knowledge that Diners Club was the first independent credit card (1949) and that is when the middle man started handling our money is interesting. Knowing that it came about because one of the first partners forgot their wallet at dinner is the cake. Knowing that partner was a man named Frank X. McNamara is the icing. Finding out what his middle name was would be, as they say, priceless.

I like reading. Of all sorts, but I tend to read Science Fiction, Fantasy (Swords/Sorcery), Mysteries, and Trivia on the web. Will read almost any well written book. Great rainy day time filler.

Computers... Yep, I can't get enough of them. I work 8 hours a day on them and then I come home and spend free time on them... You would think I would get tired of the little buggers.

Cooking occasionally. There are times when I really want to whip up a special meal, I just don't like doing it everyday. But, you have to eat...

Time spent with friends. I'm glad to say I have a few people in my life, that don't seem to mind having me around. My wife used to call this "Adult Time". Sometimes, I think we adults act a bit like children, but that is part of the fun.

Softball and Baseball. Baseball is the only sport I ever really followed (I played at one time too). No matter how old I get, if I can still swing a bat and toddle down to first base, I plan on playing softball as often as I can. If I would do it more often, I imagine I wouldn't be as sore the next day...

Theater. In my college years, I never would have thought I would want to get on stage in front of people. Wasn't me at all in my early years. I've had a lot of fun doing my ham-bit on stage.

Science and math. Things that make my logical little brain tick. You've got to keep the gears greased to keep everything running smooth, and that's what the Science and math does for me...

A bit of wood working. I really like destruction the best, but I like using power tools. The smell of cut wood is something too.

And last but certainly not least, I like my family. Every dang one of them. They helped form the person I am today (along with many others I've met along the way) and since I tend to like the person I became, I guess I could thank them once or twice... Nah, it would go to their heads wouldn't it.

Purple, I like purple...

Since I can't seem to sleep (to be fair I did sleep away most of the day, and now I am bothered by my raw throat again) I thought I would blog a bit. Continuing in my countdown of the original 8 crayon colors I had in my first box of school crayons.

I had crayons before school of course, in fact I had my favorite crayon. I would take it with me where ever I went.

Me and my purple crayon. I would use this crayon to write my name. For some reason, I liked to write my name. I'm not sure if this is the first word I learned to spell/read or whatever, but I wrote my name a lot. I wrote my name on bookshelves, pool tables, coffee tables, dining room tables, furniture, in cupboards, and of course on paper. I always wrote with my purple crayon. The funny thing is except for the pool table and paper, I never wrote where others could see. I wrote under tables and shelves, in cabinets and cupboards, on the back of the furniture. I would write my name in all of my 'places'.

I used the dining room table as a fort, I wrote my name. I would 'camp' under the coffee table, I wrote my name. I would hide in cabinets and cupboards and I would write my name.

Kind of like "Kilroy was here" only I wrote my name.

Until we moved, my parents never knew how many places I wrote my name, and since we left the house, I'm sure they didn't find it in the permanent places in our old house. Mom removed all traces of my name from any place she found it. I'm glad she didn't make me do it. I still wonder if my name isn't out there somewhere in purple crayon still hiding after all these years.

And even when the [Crayola company](#) calls the color Violet, the crayon color has always been purple to me...