

Thanksgiving...

Many things to be thankful for. Good Friends, family, wonderful daughters, decent health, and a decent steady job. The job of course means food on the table ect.

But there are times I don't feel like giving thanks. I just want to hide out for a few months until this winter holiday season is over. Feeling kind of like Scrooge and "People that go about with Merry Christmas on their lips should be boiled in their Christmas pudding and buried with stake of holly through their hearts." I'm not sure if that is an exact quote from the book, but it was very close to what I heard in at least one movie.

"A Christmas Carol" is not about the day of Thanksgiving, but it takes place on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing day (set in London, so they have that). There are a few holiday shows that deal with Thanksgiving. There is a Peanuts (Charlie Brown/Snoopy) Thanksgiving show, of course. I think they covered every major holiday.

But the one I am thinking of, most people would agree that it is a Christmas Story, but it starts on Thanksgiving day. That favorite holiday classic "Miracle on 34th Street". I'm partial to the 1947 version, but the 1994 version isn't too bad. There were a few made for TV versions that were not quite up to either theater version. Drunk Santa on Parade float replaced by the real article for the annual Thanksgiving parade. The start of the Christmas Shopping season.

Hmm, now I know with both the Christmas Carol and Miracle on 34th street, the commercialization of Christmas has been going on a long time. Scrooge complained about people spending more than they could afford just to make merry on one day. Of course the whole Santa being against the commercialization in 34th street was again showing it for what it was.

This Friday is known as Black Friday. A day when retail stores finally see a profit (I'm skeptical on that, but I just spend the money).

Well for me, I don't do that much. A few nice gifts and that's about it. I try not to break the bank (do that too much during the rest of the year).

So I guess for me and from me, I wish you the best this Holiday season. From Thanksgiving day to New Years Day, there are Holidays a plenty for those of all faiths, or no faiths. The very best to you and yours. To those reading this blog who have lost a special someone, may you find some peace and hope amid the additional stress this season puts on you.

A little early Christmas

I don't usually care for Christmas music before Thanksgiving. A little quirk of mine, true, but a quirk all the same. Tonight it was a little different. Family and friends (and a whole bunch of other people) got together for a dinner and show. It was a fund raiser for the High School Show choir, so the meal was exactly what I expected. The show itself, while way too short, was wonderful for me.

Can a father be more proud? Watching my youngest perform in the show choir was an experience I will not forget. The rest of the show choir was good too. My view was a bit biased. I had eyes for one lovely young lady. I would love to describe the show but words about that escape me.

What I do remember is a show from 5 years ago. Two other daughters performed in another dinner/music show. While not the show choir, it was another wonderful show. It was also the

last show my wife saw any of her daughters in. Early the next week she was in the hospital. Two weeks later, we were told things were very bleak.

This is where my thoughts tend to go this time year. It can be very difficult to go to these events when my thoughts turn in this direction. I really wasn't thinking of it when it started, it just kind of flowed with the evening. Sometimes I wonder how long this will happen to me. At least I don't break down and cry now. That doesn't happen much anymore, just kind of a sad feeling. I guess that is better. It could be worse.

I have four beautiful, talented daughters and it is wonderful to see them in whatever they do. Tonight was no exception, even with my melancholy.

Sweet music

It was a beautiful evening in Bryan Ohio. There were some wonderful singers and musicians performing for a musical recital. My youngest did her best to bring music to many people. It is her senior year and last recital. So many talented young people, and so few times to see them.

I guess I should take more time to find some of these recitals. I'm sure that there are many people I know whose children perform, or will perform in the future. As with all recitals they weren't perfect, but they all tried their very best. It was wonderful.

If I can talk my youngest into allowing it, I will post a youtube link to her performance.

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 a great Restaurant, when 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

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

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.

My \$8.00 putter...

Since my pal [jamiahsh](#) mentioned my \$8.00 putter, I guess now is a good time to tell how I happen to own said putter. I am not a golfer by any means. I've played maybe 2 games of golf in my lifetime. In both games, I did lousy. My drives were short, but straight, my short game was all over the place, and putting on a real green, forget about it. The one thing I do reasonably well with a golf ball is miniature golf, especially the par 2 [Putt Putt](#) courses. I've played on a few, and while I'm nowhere near to being a Putt Putt pro, I usually can break or make par on these courses after a round or two to get used to it. As with any sport, somedays you just don't have it, so I don't always make par.

Anyway, on to the story of my \$8.00 putter. A few of years ago (was it really so long??, yes, it was during our magic show) a

group of us were invited to have a day at the nearest Putt Putt / Go-Cart place. I got to the town a little early and we stopped at a local sporting goods store. I'm not sure now if I stopped with the thought of picking up a putter, or just saw it when I got there, and had the idea, but anyway C is a slightly competitive person, and his friends know this about him. Me, I'm never beyond trying to set someone up for a joke, so knowing about his nature, I wanted something to play games with his mind.

So I picked up the cheapest putter available at the sporting goods store. For 8 American dollars, I picked up a putter that was much better than the clubs at the local Putt Putt. And it gave me a wonderful joke to play on the rest of the gang. I arrive at the Putt Putt with putter in hand. Now everybody thought that I was a serious putter. I saw fear in their eyes. (not really but it sounds good doesn't it?) I did have a really good game that day, having quite a few holes-in-one and ended up in first. I was lucky my putter worked. I may have looked a fool if I didn't have a good game. After that I don't think too many believed that I just picked the putter up that day. They can comment if they remember. But I think my youngest convinced them.

So now, I always have that putter with me during the summer months. My youngest and I frequent the putting places often, and I've grown used to my stick. Sometimes, like today, it brings out the fear in my opponents... Ha ha ha (how do you write an evil laugh???)