

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. I 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.

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.

What most people don't know

It is amazing how we go through life not knowing. I know somethings about my friends, family and associates, but I don't know others. I know somethings about mathematics and sciences, but there is a lot I don't know. I know a bit of trivia, but again there is a whole lot I don't know. I know a little bit about my corner of the computer world, and there are whole other worlds out there. Even people who know a lot, don't know a whole lot more.

Then there are things that I really knew less about. I wish I knew less about death. I wish I knew less about heart disease and cancer. I wish I knew less about all the hospitals in the area. I wish I knew less about being a widower and an only parent.

There are things I wish I knew more about too. The list is growing everyday. I am sure I will learn more about things I don't want to know about, but I will also learn more about the things I do want to learn about. It seems like a cycle in life. I hope to learn as long as there is life in this body. That may or may not happen, but it is my hope.

I also wish I knew what the winning numbers would be on the next lottery draw, but that hasn't happened yet either.

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.

The test of Time

The final game at Yankee Stadium had an effect on this true Yankee Hater... For years I've rooted for any team but the Yankees. If the Tigers weren't playing, my favorite team of the day was whoever was playing the Yankees. That said, Yankee stadium was one of the last great baseball parks. So much history will be lost.

In the American league only Fenway remains as one of the "Old" parks. In the National league, only Wrigley field (home of the cubs) remains as one of the old parks. 1912 and 1914 respectively these two ball fields are the last to stand up to the Test of Time. From the Green Monster to the Ivy covered walls, baseball is just a bit different at these two parks.

These are not the cookie cutter parks from the 60's and 70's with their artificial turf and half circle outfield walls. The old parks do have some home field advantage. These are not the parks from the 80's and 90's that had closer to little league dimensions (ok, I'm stretching it a little), but check out the dimensions of Camden Yards and Jacobs Field (excuse me Progressive Field). The old parks, Yankee Stadium, the old Tiger Stadium, even Cominsky park and Cleveland's Municipal park had character.

They have tried to do that with some of the recent ball fields, but only time will tell if they made good decisions. Ballparks that were new in the early 70's are now gone too.. Why didn't fields in Houston, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh last more than few decades.

I'm not sure of the future of the two oldest ballparks in the major leagues, but I would love to see both last until at

least their 100th anniversary. I'm sure there are plans in the works, if not already in development for these cities, but wouldn't it be something if they could hold off until 2012 and 2014. We need more things that can pass the test of time...

Things I think I think?

Before cell phones and text messaging, before the internet and email, before the telephone, before the typewriter, people used to write letters by hand. They knew their language, both the writing part and the reading part.

Today in this fast paced world people don't take the time to write letters anymore. A quick email here, and text message their, an entry in a blog or on MySpace are what communication is today. I'm as guilty as the next person, except that I don't instant message, chat or text. I'm much too wordy for any of those media. It is just too sad that people don't know anything about the complete art of letter writing/reading.

NOTICE!!! I included reading in my assessment of a lost art. Before the advent of all these new ways to communicate, people took the time to read their letters. They were not meant to be a quick read. These were missives that someone took time to write and they deserved time in reading also.

Why am I mentioning this? Good question, I asked it of myself too. It seems that some maybe most people are looking at blog sites, and bulletin boards as direct communication to themselves. They take comments meant for general consumption and think others are talking about them. They have hard feelings when they think something or someone is against them. Now, I will admit that in some cases they may have a valid point, but in others, people weren't talking or writing about

them. But they want to take in personally.

Then again, people today don't think before they write. They can write things that could be considered cruel toward an individual or a group. People then get bent out of shape and small wars tarnish the blogs, bulletin boards and myspace accounts. So sad sometimes. Good conversations are ruined by misunderstandings. It happens almost everywhere on the web.

So in this, I asked myself: Why?. I came up with one simple idea. It could be something, it could be nothing at all. We are losing the ability to communicate effectively with the written word, just by not paying attention to what we write and how we read. Is this something we will miss in our lives, or will the older members of society who remember this sort of communication, just talk (write?) about the good ol' days.

Just one word of advice to those who read Blogs, myspace accounts, bulletin boards, emails, text msgs. and the like. If you read something that bothers you, take some time, leave it, come back to it later read it again. Before responding in haste or anger, make sure you understand what is written, and if those word really apply to you. I've used that since the my very first e-mail, and intend to keep using that practice well into my very last e-mail or whatever form of communication the future brings me.

multitude of flashing red lights

Driving to work this morning I saw a large number of flashing red lights in the distance. Due to the number I knew there was an bad accident somewhere along my drive to work. And

unfortunately, I was correct. Over 6 emergency vehicles were converging on a spot about 1 1/2 miles from the State Route 34 / State Route 66 intersection. From the looks of a small compact car was hit by an large SUV. Nothing on the crash on any local news yet, so I have no idea if anyone was hurt. Just one more reminder of how many miles I drive in a week. I've seen more than a few accidents on the way to work, and with no small amount of luck can say I've never been in a serious accident myself. I hope to stay on that trend.

Even back when I was learning how to drive, I had a profound respect for the power of an automobile. I learned to drive on a fairly large car ('66 Impala) and for a time owned an early 70's GM Station Wagon (I don't recall if it was the Chevy or Buick model, but it could fit a full 4 x 8 sheet of plywood in the back when the rear seat was down.) I guess I knew what those hunks of metal could do if they hit something. The wagon's ride was so smooth, and the engine so powerful, it would cruise along at 70 before you felt any speed from the thing (unless you hit a curve, the beast always wanted to go straight). I learned to be careful with my speed too. I didn't like seeing those flashing red lights in my rear view mirror.

It was amazing today at the distance I could see the lights this morning. For those who don't know, NW Ohio is flat, very flat. There was no fog this morning and I could see those flashing lights for miles down the road. This afternoon I guesstimated that I was around 4 to 5 miles away when I first saw them. I've driven in areas where you were lucky to see 2 miles of straight flat roadway. If I had come from the right direction, it could have been much farther. It is amazing how bright those red lights are in the dark.

Now just how did we decide that red lights should be the warning lights. The state of Ohio limits the use of the red lights to Fire and Police, The police may also use blue. I have yet to find any historical references to the use of these lights for emergency use. I will keep looking because my

curiosity has been piqued.

The box of eight has been completed...

Green numbers on the clock

I've been pondering the past few months on the choice I made a couple of years ago on my alarm clock. The numbers are BIG!!! For my aging eyes that is a good thing. There is a problem, the clock is very bright. Most nights, I really don't notice it, but when I am having trouble sleeping (tonight!!), the clock just seems to light up the room. While it isn't quite bright enough to read by, I don't have to turn on a light to make my way around anything I may find on the floor (dog?). I've been wondering if I shouldn't have looked for a different alarm clock. Tonight those BIG GREEN numbers are just passing by keeping me awake.

Really, I'm a bit of an insomniac anyway, so on some nights it doesn't take much to keep my eyes open. I also have other complaints about the clock, but it does wake me up on most mornings, so it isn't all bad. Even after staying awake half the night, the alarm/radio is loud enough to wake me.

But I did get my green in didn't I... One more color to go.

Now on to other "Green" things. The \$\$Cost\$\$ of gasoline this last weekend skyrocketed on limited supplies. I've heard of places where they have run out of gas, or even gas going for over \$5.00 per gallon. This is when Oil prices dropped to below \$100 per barrel. Now I realize the recent Gulf Coast Hurricanes disrupted the supply lines, but you would think after all these years of Hurricanes people would think to move as much gas as possible before the storms hit. Maybe not, but

I think I would have done that. Shutting everything down is all well and good, especially since it does keep people safe, but some forethought is also needed. Just trying to save some of my green.

The green leaves are starting their fall change already too. Some of the early turners in this area are the Ash, Hickories and Walnuts. Driving through the country side you can see the few yellow/brown leaves in the small wood lots. Don't blink though, these trees lose their leaves quickly. I remember going to college and the campus had mostly tall Hickories around the buildings. By Mid to late September all the leaves were gone from the trees. Made fall come very quickly. And if I remember correctly, they got their leaves later in the spring than other trees too. Long winters in NW Ohio....

One more color on my small list of eight crayon colors... And then maybe something else.. I never know where my thoughts will lead...

Oranges and Juice

Well today I'm not sure if I'm suffering just allergy symptoms or I have caught a summer cold. It has been a year since my last allergy symptoms, but you would think that after years of having them, I could remember exactly what they were.

But today I have a slight fever and sore throat. Yes, the sore throat could be the result of the allergies, but I don't ever remember the fever. This could be the result of lack of sleep last night, even when I was 'sleeping', my rest was not very restfull. Full blown Sinus headache this morning... Oh well, such is Sept in Ohio for me.

I have been drinking a lot of Orange Juice and had an orange today. Both seemed to feel really good going down. I'm not sure if the vitamin C is helping, but the taste of orange hit the spot today.

While eating my orange at lunch, I remembered that there is no English word that rhymes with orange. Then I got to thinking if there were any other such words. I recall that purple has very few rhymes, and they are words from the British Isles. So Purple has no American English rhyming word. Then there are the words Silver and Month. I found those in an internet search. If you can find or think of more words or find a word that rhymes with any of the above, my curious nature would be sated.

Three colors in this post, but the post color is still orange... 3 more to go for the box of eight.