

my Personal side

By Craig Hastings



Unbelievable. It's Thanksgiving 2019, I just packed up all of my Halloween decor what seems to be just last week, and tonight I'm digging totes out from under the stairs that contain way too much accumulated Christmas decor. The seasons are passing me by way too quickly. I'm desperately searching for a way to change up how I'm living my life in order for time to at least seem to me that it's slowing down; way down. My younger brother Randy and I just had this conversation last week. He told how birthdays have never really seemed much more than the day after yesterday but; he's been thinking a lot about turning sixty and this has caused him to pause. I assured him that I know ex-

actly how he feels. I'm having all the same emotions now that he fears may haunt him in the near future.

Our children are teenagers now and soon to strike out on their own. We (and Doug) had our children at an age when most of our classmates were becoming grandparents. So instead of being say 45-50 and entering a new stage in our lives, we're sixty and a bit panicked about how many good years we have left and how do we spend them. Unlike most of our classmates who had a ten to fifteen year buffer to think this all out; it's on us right now to figure it out. Well, not so much Randy because he's not here yet but I've been here for two years and don't like it much. I thought I was all

alone struggling with this whole turning sixty-thing but evidently not.

So tonight Christmas 2019 is approaching and it's time, tonight, for me to spend the next four hours unpacking and setting out my inventory of Christmas "stuff" that I've accumulated since moving into this home in 1992. I live my years from November to November. I gauge how quickly each year has passed from November to November because the first of October I do the Halloween decor with a little fall decor and after November 31, transition right from Halloween to completely fall/harvest and now, tonight, the fall goes away completely for Christmas. The rest of the months throughout the year I do nothing inside my home. I have my January through September decor that never changes. Nope, don't do Easter. I haven't ever been able to get my mind around rabbits that walk on two legs carrying chicken eggs around that either hatch or turn into chocolate.

Well about tonight. I have some advice for anyone considering buying a Christmas tree that has already been strung with lights. My mom gave me one new in the box that she had gotten from QVC four years ago. For the first three years I thought this was the best thing to hit the market since bread could be bought pre sliced. Last year I had a change of thought. This tree is in three sections. You plug one section into the other and when all assembled, one plug at the bottom of the tree and kazaam, instant fully lit tree. That is unless one strand doesn't come on. Then another, then another, until finally just a few lights were lit in the center section. So I ran out and bought my own lights and strung them right over the dead ones just to get by for last Christmas.

Why didn't I just take the other lights off you ask? Because they are tied in tight and I mean real tight. So when I took the tree down last year I took the time, two hours, to cut all of the lights out of the center

section. When I put the tree up tonight; dead lights in the bottom section. Not all but enough that something had to be done. I spent four and a half hours, until 3:00 a.m., cutting all the lights out of the bottom section and the top section. I have blisters on the palms of both hands from the wire cutters. Why didn't I just pitch the tree and get another...without pre wire lights? Because this tree is fully assembled and it is really a "real tree" look alike. It's a beautiful tree when fully decorated. The branches fold up and its stores away easily.

So instead of being all done tonight I'll spend all of tomorrow finishing up the inside of my house. My advice; no pre wired or pre lit Christmas tree purchase regardless of how much you spend on any pre tree. This same week I discovered another don't buy in my home. In 2007 I bought a 68" LG smart television. A fantastic television it's been until.... I signed up for the Verizon Disney plus app. If you have a smart TV you can connect the app via

your password to your smart TV. This particular LG television came with this high tech "Magic Remote" LG calls it. What this means is no controls on your TV, all is controlled with the remote. This means in order to scroll through the different menus you must use the remote. Well my remote will not allow me to open the menus I need to in order to enter my password to get the Disney app transferred to my TV. I Google searched my dilemma and discovered I wasn't alone with my "Magic Remote" piece of crap. It turns out it's not the remote. So I called LG to see if they could help me. Well sir, if you can find a service center in your area that works on LG televisions there is a circuit board that will need to be replaced and blah, blah, blah. My advice; do not buy a television that doesn't have buttons on the television itself that allow you to do everything the remote control will do. Besides these two episodes of bad luck; all else went well.

Hook, Line and Sinker With Tony Hooker

Potpourri One step forward, two steps back

The curse of being a diehard Illini fan lives. After falling into the pit of despair during the stretch of games from Eastern Michigan through the first half of the Michigan game, the Illinois football team seemingly righted the ship, reeling off four consecutive conference wins, including a thriller over number six

Wisconsin and a twenty-five point comeback against Michigan State, the largest such comeback in the program's history. Took care of business against Purdue and Rutgers too. Even the loss at Iowa was respectable. The Hawks don't lose too many at Kinnick, and we had a few chances to win it.

And then Northwestern happened. 0-8 in the conference, two wins all sea-

son, and they dominate us. Inconceivable. I don't know if the emotions of Bobby Roundtree's visit to the team got the better of them, or if they're too immature to recognize the importance of the moment or what, but the Kitties controlled both lines of scrimmage all day long and we didn't make many adjustments. It's like I've fallen for one of the two classic blunders. Never bet against a Sicilian when death is on the line, and never trust your Illinois football team not to find a way to break your heart.

One would think I would learn, but alas, life, and being a sports fan, is pain. Anyone who says differently is selling something. At least we have a bowl game to look forward to. By this time next week, we'll know our location and opponent. The team will get fifteen extra practices, which should benefit the young players as the older starters rest and heal their wounds.

VGH basketball heating up
Both the girls and boy's basketball teams are off to strong starts this season. The girls went 3-1 in their

season opening tournament, finishing third at the Bunny/Falcon invitational with their only loss being to SJO in a game they led for three quarters. They then went on the road to defeat Tuscola in their first road contest of the year. Aliya Holloman and Kyleigh Block provide a lethal 1-2 scoring punch, and Samantha Campbell and Jordyn Ray, along with Madison Burwell are making vital contributions to the cause. All in all, Coach Dan Sappenfield is undoubtedly excited about the season's potential.

The boys also went 3-1 in their season opening tournament, earning third place at the Cerro Gordo Bement Tipoff. Jake Eversole is the leading scorer early, but it has the look of a team that will rely on a bevy of scorers to get the job done.

Both teams look like they want to pressure the ball, run when they can and take and make open shots, which is an entertaining style to watch. It will be interesting to see how the teams evolve as the season progresses.

VG SCHOOL

Continued from 1

lockers. We knocked those out of the way before we began what we're calling phase one of the remodeling construction. After the staff and community surveys, security, watching who comes into and out of the building, was number one on the list. We worked on a secure front entrance where people would have to be keyed in to enter the office. Otherwise they would come into a waiting room as opposed to before when they could come into the building and go left toward the high school or right toward the grade school without having to come into an office. That was predominant. Trying to get that accomplished. We also wanted to improve four restrooms, in particular the ones around our gymnasium that our public comes in and uses during athletic competition or programs.

That was initially the project that was undertaken last summer during phase one. We kind of got thrown a curve ball by the polar vortex last winter and when the temperatures dipped, it damaged our elementary and junior high boiler heat that was built in 1964. Jack Clapp did a great job of babysitting the system until the spring when he could tie that project in to phase one. We had to get a couple new boilers put in, along with the new office area and front entrance. There was a lot of asbestos involved in that, so it involved some life safety money for its removal. Thank you to Jack for getting us through to spring when we didn't need heat anymore. That was the heat that went to the '64 addition that went down to the gym in the elementary and junior high, on the east side of the school. Boilers used to be big, giant kinds of things, but the new ones are about the size of a refrigera-

tor with piping going to it. It was converted from steam heat to hot water heat. We were able to tie that to the gym, and that lent itself to considering air conditioning into the gym. That was wrapped into phase one, which we were barely able to get completed before registration and the start of school this year. That leads us to the next part of the plan. We worked to establish a five-year plan with our performance contractor, and it will be "forever green", so after the year's up, we'll add another year on so that we'll always have a five-year plan. Some years, we might not do anything, but other years, like this year, there will be projects built into the plan. What we were looking at this year is that we're out of space in the elementary and junior high. Currently, we have our elementary library down on the first floor of the high school, which is not the best situation. We've just had

to make do with the space that we've had, including sharing space among two smaller classrooms. Along with the need for more classrooms, there's a need for a gymnasium. Not just a gymnasium for athletics, but with us being kind of unique, with all of us, the elementary, junior high and high school all combined into one, we naturally have four different lunch hours. Our students need a place to go after lunch, and if its inclement weather, unfortunately they might be stuck in some classrooms. A lot of districts have a separate lunch room or gymnasium for the elementary school. We just need a place to go. Right now, when we have programs, we depend on custodial time for setting up for those various programs. Right now, whether it's the variety show, choral program or student awards programs, we have to cancel P.E. classes unless they can go outside. Not having a

stage was one of the things the board looked at when planning the new site. The plan for phase two is to add four classrooms and a gymnasium with a stage, along with a regulation floor with bleachers along one side for use as a junior high gymnasium and for overflow for various programs. We could host tournaments too, with the additional locker room facilities available. We're hoping these kinds of improvements would be interesting to families who are wanting to come to Villa Grove schools to see what we're doing and what we're trying to do to make this a safer school.

When do you anticipate the completion of phase two?

The goal is to have the four classrooms completed by next August. Then, they'll concentrate on finishing the gym.

You're talking August of 2020?

Yes, the classrooms will

be done by next August when school begins.

What are some of the longer-term goals?

We're looking at ways to enlarge the front drive with additional parking to make it safer to drop of and pick up our students. That got put on hold, largely because of the bridgework that going to be done here in town. They're going to take out our south drive. We're going to need to see how that ends up, and we'll be working with some engineering firms on traffic management, flow of traffic and things like that. The city, along with Paul's and IDOT, are working on making a pedestrian cross walk, up by Paul's machine shop. With regards to the bridge project, as long as the sidewalk on the west side is there, we'll be ok, but once they flip that stop light, we'll have to have some

See VG SCHOOL page 10

Tuscola MOPS to host Family Night Out

By Kendra Hennis

On December 12 at 6:30 p.m. Tuscola MOPS will be presenting a night of comedy and magic with Family Night Out with the magic of Taylor Hughes. Doors open at 6 p.m. at the Tuscola United Methodist Church. The MOPS are very excited for Taylor to come to Tuscola. Some members of the organization were able to see him at MOMCon, the leading conference dedicating to equipping and encouraging moms. Taylor's show is family-friendly and is sure to amaze those of all ages. Taylor Hughes fell in love with the art of illusion when his parents bought him a magic kit for his seventh birthday. More than thirty years and 3,000 shows later, Taylor has become known for his signature style of Magic Storytelling. He is a favorite at Hollywood's famed Magic Castle, highly sought after corporate presenter, and has been featured on numerous television shows including the CW's Masters of Illusion. Taylor is married to his High



School sweetheart Katie and they live in Southern California with their two daughters Madelyn and Kennedy. Ticket prices are \$17 for adults and \$12 for children three to twelve. There are a limed

number of tickets available and they can be purchased by visiting tuscolafamilynightout.ticketleap.com. MOPS will use proceeds from this fundraiser to help families in the community.

BOARD

Continued from 1

there were only two days of finals, meaning that on some days students were taking up to four finals in a day. This year, there will be three days of finals, with first through third period on Tuesday, Dec 17, fourth through sixth period on Wednesday, Dec 18, and seventh and eighth periods on Thursday, Dec 19.

In her Principal's Report, East Prairie Middle School Principal Carol Munson announced to the Board that the Seventh and Eighth Grade Girls Basketball teams won Regionals, and that the Boys Basketball season has begun. She also gave a big "thank you" to everyone involved with the Veteran's Day assembly.

In his Principal's Report, North Ward Elementary School Principal Jason Wallace reported to the Board that the trauma workshop that was attended by some teachers was successful. He also gave a shout out to Jessi Young, for their donation of copies of "Help

for Billy", which was recommended by Kindergarten Teacher Mrs. Porter at a previous meeting. "Help for Billy" is pragmatic manual to help guide educators and parents who are struggling with children who are impacted by trauma. Finally, he announced that the North Ward Christmas Concert will be held on December 12. First and Second Grade will perform at 2:30 p.m. and Third and Fourth Grade will perform at 7 p.m.

In other news, the board is going to look at the previous School Board goals and update them as needed for the coming years. These goals were last updated on October 23, 2018. Board Member Jessi Young suggests that the board create a strategic plan for the goals, and to have Superintendent Alexander evaluate if they are being met, and then the board can revise them as necessary. This would allow the board to see the growth over the years and see what needs changed. The board also discussed the possible addition of subcommittees, which will be on the agenda at the December meeting.

The Board also:

- Approved minutes from the October 28 regular board meeting.
- Approved bills in the amount of \$1,377,207.57.
- Approved various donations in the amount of \$8,559.38.
- Approved the monthly Treasurer and Bookkeepers report.
- Approved FMLA Leave for Emma Silver.
- Approved going into closed session to discuss personnel, security, student discipline, and student matters.
- Approved the letter of intent to retire from Mary Williams.
- Approved Stacy Luth's resignation from JV Volleyball.
- Approved the appointment of Gary Alexander as the IMRF Authorized Agent.
- Adjourned until the December 19 board meeting at 7 p.m.