

Perspective

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Forgetfulness

My wife is a saint for a variety of reasons. One such reason is that after 44 years of marriage she knows that before I leave the house she must interrogate me like a 16-year-old going out on a date; "Do you have your keys?, your wallet?, money?, your hat?, your phone?, (and lately) your mask?" Sad to say that these reminders are usually needed because without them I would indeed have forgotten one or more items.

I tell you this because last weekend I took a rare trip without my wife for the weekend. I traveled to Arizona on a Friday and back to Illinois on Sunday. I made it to Arizona without losing anything, but the trouble began when I took a flight back to Illinois.

The day started out with a sinister foreboding. My sister and brother-in-law had taken me to breakfast in Phoenix and I did not realize that I had left my favorite baseball cap (it has the word, "ExFed" on the front) at the restaurant until they dropped me off at the airport. I was supposed to fly from Phoenix to Tucson to Dallas/Ft. Worth (DFW) to Bloomington. I can't recall why I chose this unusual route other than to say the departing and arrival times fit into my schedule.

My flight to Tucson was uneventful; it took only 47 minutes and I wondered if it would have been faster to drive to Tucson. It was in Tucson when the proverbial poop hit the fan. The flight to Dallas was to depart Tucson at 12:10. Due to bad weather in Dallas, the airline representative at the gate informed us that our flight was delayed 10-20 minutes. When 20 minutes expired, passengers who are lumped into Groups 1 through 6 were allowed to get on the plane in numerical order.

However, after Groups 1

So there I was

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through 4 were onboard, the airline rep, who had a thick Australian accent (think of the kid's cartoon series, Bluey) came on the public address system to announce that the DFW airport had issued a "stop flight" order because of bad weather. She explained that this order prevented planes who were on the ground elsewhere but bound for Dallas, to remain on the ground because it was too dangerous to land in Dallas.

The Aussie apologized but said that based on radar, it appeared that Dallas was inundated with storms for hours and she suggested passengers consider getting a hotel and flying out of Tucson the next day. Few people took this advice, although looking back, I wish that I had.

Several hours later we were allowed to board again. All groups were boarded this time and several minutes after we pulled away from the gate the pilot got on the intercom to announce that more bad weather had rolled into Dallas and we had to return to the gate to deplane.

Again, the Australian representative urged us to consider going to a hotel and try again tomorrow, and once more, I ignored this sage advice and waited several more hours in yet another line.

This mile-long line was so we passengers could see if the air-

lines could find us another flight to take us to our next destination. When I finally got to speak with a ticket agent I learned that there was no other way to get to Bloomington other than to hope and pray that the plane stuck in Tucson would be authorized to fly to Dallas and arrive in time before my connecting flight left for Bloomington.

With my head lowered, I trudged back to my old gate and waited some more. More hours went by before we boarded, pulled away from the gate and actually took off. When we landed at DFW, the flight attendant encouraged passengers who had Dallas as their final destination, to remain in their seats while the rest of us raced down the aisle with our backpacks and roller suitcases in an attempt to make our connecting flights.

I was in such a hurry that I left a darn good paperback novel and a bottle of water in the back of the seat in front of me. I noticed this as I neared the front of the aircraft and decided not to turn around and retrieve the book because I would be like a salmon swimming upstream against the current of other passengers fighting their way forward.

As you may have guessed, I missed my connecting flight. There was a two-mile-long line for customer service to help pas-

sengers make other flight arrangements. Two hours later, when I got to see a ticket agent, I was issued the very next flight from Dallas to Bloomington.

Unfortunately, that flight wasn't scheduled to take off for another 13 hours. I steeled myself to stay in the terminal by trying out the chairs by the gate, hoping to find a few with no arm rest so I could stretch out. But the few chairs without arm rests were already taken, so I reluctantly sought out a hotel.

I had assumed my iPhone would automatically change time zones when I left Tucson and got into Dallas. So, I thought it was 11:30 pm when it was really 1:30 a.m. When I finally found a hotel with a vacancy I was told the shuttle from the airport to the hotel shuts down at midnight.

When I told the hotel clerk it was only 11:30, I was schooled about the correct time. I took an Uber to the hotel and walked toward the front desk with the confirmation number the reservation person had issued me. However, the desk clerk informed that whoever had given me the confirmation number was in error and that "there are no rooms at the inn."

The clerk suggested another hotel that he knew had openings. I made another reservation, then called Uber for a ride to the new hotel.

While I waited, I plugged in my remote phone charger into an outlet in the lobby. After waiting for what seemed like an eternity, the Uber driver arrived and in my zeal to leave, I left my charger plugged into the wall. Of course, I did not realize this fact until I was firmly ensconced in my new hotel room.

The next day I was able to catch my flight to Illinois without incident... and without my ballcap, novel and phone charger.

Our opinion — Drive for success, strive for excess?

The Tuscola School Board is still talking about buying a \$180,000 scoreboard (plus \$40,000 for installation and a \$5,000 per year maintenance contract) despite Supt. Gary Alexander proposing a "lower end" scoreboard for the more modest sum of \$28,399 plus installation.

The high-end model would be the biggest, brightest, bestest high school scoreboard in the state. Maybe the nation. Students could operate it, so it would be, you know, educational.

People would talk about it all over. Good PR. Families would flock to our city so their kids could play under the shining lights of this magnificent behemoth.

It could be used for band and track and the dance team and graduation and prom and homecoming and oh, the possibilities are endless. Maybe the drama club could use it to promote shows on their 60-year-old dilapidated stage.

I have a better idea and it would even cost a little less.

Instead of a stationary scoreboard, how about a traveling billboard? Let's take that same money and buy a Lamborghini for a driver's ed car.

Now hear me out.

Almost every kid in high school goes through driver's ed, so it would be for every student. We would probably be the only high school in the country with a Lamborghini for student drivers. I'll bet the Chicago papers would write about us.

It could be painted up with Warrior logos so it would get noticed everywhere it goes. Miss Tuscola could ride in it in the homecoming parade.

When it's not being driven, it could be parked in front of the high school with motivational slogans like "Accelerate your education," "Drive for success" and "Eat my dust, Arcola."

Don't our students deserve the very best in everything? Why set your goals on having the Cadillac of scoreboards when you can have the Lamborghini of automobiles?

The educational benefits are astounding. The same ego-driven data that proves the benefits of a state-of-the-art scoreboard supports a state-of-the-art sports car.

I can't imagine any family that wouldn't want to live in a town that had a Lamborghini for its driver's ed car. Or a scoreboard that can play movies.

C'mon, Tuscola. Let's unite behind this lofty goal. We can do it! Sell the sizzle, not the steak.

If we don't glitz it up, we'll be forced to concentrate on what really matters to parents, like becoming known for the highest test scores in the state, having top-tier curriculum, the best qualified educators, innovative programs and, God forbid, lower taxes. We might even have to pay our teachers more money.

The School Board could use more of their sales tax money, which can be used only for facilities, to abate their construction bonds to free up property tax revenue, boosted by the ending of the city's big tax increment finance (TIF) district, for non-targeted educational excellence expenses such as salaries and text books and new programs. Families searching for a new town might like that.

You can't buy test scores, but you can invest in education. It can take years to move the needle, though. It's easier to buy a Lamborghini or a really cool scoreboard.

Marketing matters. Test scores surely don't. If we look like we're the best, then we are the best. It's all about appearances.

Heck, let's do both. A \$220,000 scoreboard and a Lamborghini. Surely we could find the funds to have gold-plated basketball rims and diamond-encrusted goal posts, too. Let's go for the gusto! — David Porter

Balancing our future

There's been a lot of talk lately about the money spent on sports versus the arts. Sadly, it's now been tied into what makes our community great and what would draw more young families to make Tuscola "home."

I'm a big sports person and sports parent. I started playing backyard soccer when I was 9 years old. Living in inner-city Chicago and coming from a low-income, single-mother home, it wasn't in the cards to play for a club. Fortunately, in 7th grade, my sister and I learned of a small local team. We joined up with a few friends but with the understanding that my mom couldn't provide transportation. We rode our bikes on extremely busy streets for 1 mile to get to practice and games. Looking back, it's not something I'd feel comfortable letting my 9-year-olds do, but it was a different time and I'm sure we begged my mom to allow it.

I went to high school two

hours from my house, since I had opted to accept admission to a private school on the north side of the city. In Chicago, it's the ultimate rite of passage to start taking public transportation your freshman year. The downside was that when spring soccer started, it was dark by the end of practice and I was riding the bus or train until after dinner time. It never crossed my mind to quit; I loved the sport and my team.

I've talked about my love for the arts. Besides theater, my elementary school had a band teacher and a finely stocked band room. I learned to play the flute in 5th grade, the trumpet in 6th grade, and then tried the xylophone in 8th grade. My school also had a wonderful art teacher that reminds me a lot of North Ward's program.

As an adult, the arts hold a special place in my life and truly bring joy to my free time. To my husband's annoyance, our kids

Margie's Mess

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have full access to my arsenal of art supplies from fabrics, paints, hot glues, card stocks, gems, clays, and everything in between. The spare bedroom is known as the "craft room" in our house.

So, when I listen to the discussions about what should take priority in our schools and what will bring more families to settle in our town I'm conflicted. While I will admit I'm not an avid high school football fan, I do cheer from behind my phone screen when I see announcements of the game scores. I know the passion of those athletes and I know the pride they are feeling.

I also know the heartache of being passionate about a program and feeling like you're playing second fiddle. Having to fundraise to get necessities. Seeing upgrades for some programs while your venue or equipment comes from a different century.

I don't know what the right course is. What I do know is that as a self-identified "outsider" settling in Tuscola was based on a lot of factors combined. No single sport or program put the nail in the coffin.

We have an amazing elementary school and youth programs galore even without a park district. Our neighborhoods are generally safe for young kids to play and our parks offer something for everyone.

However, above all that, it's the way our community rallies behind those who are doing great things. Whether it be a lightning track star, a gifted basketball player, the ambitious small business owner expanding, the next Rotary Student of the Month, or the long-time resident volunteer. There's always someone to celebrate and we do that very well here. We know or know of each other enough to understand what others have overcome in reaching achievements.

It had to be about a balance in support. Letting go of what we want and looking at what others may need. Because not every new family is going to be a baseball all-star or the next techie mastermind. If our mission is to support the whole child, then we should expand it to the whole group of uniquely built children and people.

Letters

To the editor:

I read with interest the salaries of City of Tuscola employees. Part time employees (City Treasurer, Bldg. Inspector, Fire Chief) earning more than our City Librarian. Am I missing something?

Joyce Lewis

EDITOR'S NOTE: We

reached out to City Administrator Drew Hoel who informed us that the treasurer and building inspector positions are full time. While the fire chief position is part-time, Chief Brian Moody also serves the city as director of economic development, and his salary reflects that. Hoel said Moody works full time for the city "and then some."