

Perspective

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— Email: publisher@tuscolareview.com

David Porter,
Jennie Porter,

Mike Carroll,
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Returning home — but just for the time being

Today I'm watching my neighbor load a truck, bound for sunny Florida. I'm exhausted just watching them walk up the ramp with box after box. I am so tired that I can't get up from my chair to go mow the grass. I think: well, the grass will still be there tomorrow while my neighbors might not. So I didn't move.

I'm saddened but do understand people moving to Florida... or to Texas or Tennessee or Nevada, because those four states have a better climate than Illinois and don't have a state income tax. So there's that.

Data from the IRS on the migration of taxpayers and gain or loss of income from those moves, shows Illinois is a big loser having lost \$8.5 billion in income moving to other states (second only to California). The big winners are Florida (+\$23.7 billion), Texas (+6.3 billion) and other mostly southern and western states.

So I understand the attractiveness to Tuscolians of moving south and west.

Of course, there are many other reasons people move: e.g., jobs, family, health. Whatever the reason, the clear trend is neg-

ative for Illinois.

Myself? Well, I remember thinking about where to live when my Army tour ended in '73. I remember pulling out map after map, even studying travel brochures from promising places to live.

It turns out that there were so many attractive options, it created decision-anxiety. Alvin Toffler talked about this in his 1970 book "Future Shock." His basic theory was that people will be overwhelmed—"shocked"—by the speed of rapid change brought on by technology and explosion of choices. Our emotions and intelligence won't keep pace, Toffler argued, and theorized that weird behavior will increase while anxiety skyrockets.

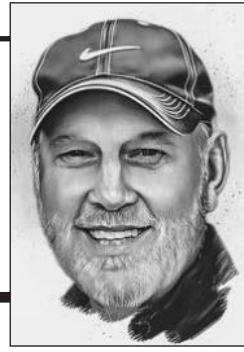
"Future Shock" had just come out about the time we were studying where to live. But all those choices, and the freedom to go anywhere we wanted, wasn't as liberating as I thought it would be. Rather, it was constricting in its stress. Toffler was right, I thought: my anxiety was skyrocketing (and weirdness seems slightly afoot in America).

So we decided to move

I'm just sayin'

By Mike Carroll

mike.carroll@tuscolareview.com



back to Tuscola. But "just for the time being," until we could better figure out where to live.

Upon returning from the Army, I remember going into this former store downtown. Upon seeing us, the owner asked "What are you two doing back home? Just visiting?"

We told her we had decided to move back to Tuscola—"but just for the time being." She shook her head like in dismay, and said "What a shame" and turned and walked away from us. I felt like we'd just flunked our "return home" test. Where was the Welcome Wagon?

She and her husband soon moved to Arizona. Never to return.

When I was young, back in the '50s and '60s, it was not uncommon for fellow Tuscolians to pull up stakes and move to the golden

lands of milk and honey—usually Florida or Arizona.

There were usually going-away parties, with gifts, hugs and tears. My mom used to always say "They'll be back. They'll find out." And it turns out, back in that era, many of them did return home after a year or so—sometimes just a few months—after their brush with touching the flames of paradise.

And when they did move back to town, it was usually quietly, without a band or parade. We all acted like nothing had happened and that was fine with them. The only question, asked in a whisper over clothes lines and backyard fences, was whether or not they were going to return all those going-away gifts. After all...

But then, by the '80s, and especially now, I noticed Tuscola migrants

mostly quit returning home. And the clear trend was to not return. For a Tuscola devotee this is sad.

I'm staying, even though a main reason for returning back in the '70s—to be near my parents and sister—is no longer a factor. But their graves are here, and need flowers and occasional visits, so there's that.

Returning home from the Army to Tuscola was probably fated. My mother would have guilted me to her death, and even beyond, if I didn't get my hind end home and pronto. Plus my dad was neat to be around. And both of them needed help with Melinda and her serious illness.

My parents were not going anywhere else, ever. They were not kid-chasers. My mom was a Bourbon farm girl with nine siblings. Her parents and grandparents are buried here. Ditto for my father, an Atwood farm boy with five siblings. His parents and grandparents repose in the quiet rural Lake Fork cemetery north of Atwood, near the Harshbarger's 19th century log cabin, clan to the Carrolls.

Their, and my, deep roots, and sense of belonging, are here, in Douglas County, Illinois, soil. So I stayed "home." And if for no other fact than I got to be close with my parents for decades, it was worth it all.

As for Illinois' infamous weather, I like the four seasons, especially spring storms, leaf season in the fall, even a rip-roaring winter blizzard. Besides, with global warming Illinois will soon be like tropical Florida, so just hang on a bit. As for taxes, well the state income tax is about average but the real estate tax is one of the highest in the nation. So that's a big negative.

Which leaves quality of life issues. With low crime, friendly town folk, moderate to conservative ways and family values, and a community spirit that centers on our schools and children and radiates throughout every facet of Tuscola life, I can't image a better place anywhere else.

So I think I'll stay a little while longer. Because this is still the time, and I'm still being.

mike carroll

A funny thing about my secret ambition

Everyone who knows me knows that I'm not a real happy-go-lucky kind of guy. Oh, I'm easy going enough; I'm just pretty serious most of the time. So, naturally, my secret desire is to do stand-up comedy.

It would probably help to be funny first. That's a hurdle.

My family is sort of my anti-support because even when I think I'm being funny, they insist that I am not. I think they believe my failure on stage would somehow be a reflection on them. They are already picking out new names for themselves and looking at far-flung places on the map where they might be able to move so they can resume a new life free of shame.

But here's the deal. Secret ambition is almost always dif-

ficult and is often opposite of what comes easy to a person. If it weren't tough, it wouldn't be a secret ambition. It'd just be an ambition.

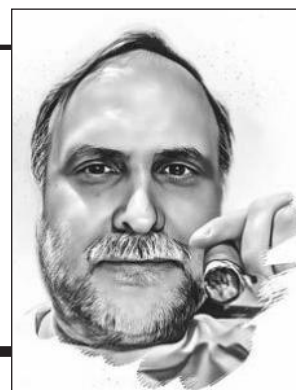
This afternoon, in the cigar shop, the subject of stand-up came up. It turns out that some of my friends also have a desire to be comedians, which I guess should come as no surprise since they aren't funny, either.

We all know people who are just funny all the time. They're always grinning, chuckling and telling funny stories. They're the life of the party even when there is no party. You'd think those people would make great comedians. But, maybe not.

People like that are generally spontaneous, and stand-up comedy routines usually aren't. They're scripted and

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter
porter@ramblinman.us



rehearsed. It's all about timing and knowing what works. You have to be able to read an audience and make adjustments on the fly, but there is still at least a framework to work from.

Funny people would be better at improvisational comedy, perhaps. But a polished routine is much like acting. Acting

takes control. The comedy sincerity is faked. It can be hard for a spontaneous person to fake that.

Then there's a matter of content. You can be great at telling a joke, but are you great at writing a joke? And can you get the joke that works hilariously in your head to work vocally on a stage? Now throw in

facial expressions, body language and props. It all has to work together.

I think it would be a great challenge. For a lot of people, including me, just standing on a stage and talking to people is a frightening idea. Now you have to entertain them? Make them laugh? I feel like if I can do that, I can do anything.

Right now, I believe I can do it, and that's enough for me. Actually attempting it would prove whether I could do it, and that's a 50/50 proposition at best. But as long as I don't do it, I believe 100 percent that I can do it. In this sense, "trying" is overrated.

If you're already at 100 percent, why risk losing that if succeeding can't add anything to what you already have?

Schoolteachers and optimists everywhere are cursing me. We're conditioned all our lives to think that trying is the important thing. No. Succeeding and not losing are the important things. In order to make trying worthwhile, there has to be a substantial reward.

However, I think I may have my motivation. While I already have 100 percent confidence in myself, others have zero belief that I could be a stand-up comedian. So, my reward is changing their minds and proving them wrong. And when that becomes important to me, I'll give it a try.

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PUZZLES

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Slovenian mountain
- 5. Growl
- 9. Where things stand
- 11. Made a sharp sound
- 13. Female spirit in Irish folklore
- 15. Deteriorate with age
- 16. A way to save for retirement
- 17. The Big Apple
- 19. Intestinal pouches
- 21. City in New Hampshire
- 22. Giving a bad impression
- 23. Samsung laptops
- 25. Without (French)
- 26. Scientist's tool (abbr.)
- 27. System of one more computers
- 29. Captures
- 31. Authentic
- 33. Female mammal's nipple
- 34. Pandemonium
- 36. Satisfy
- 38. Arrived extinct
- 39. Shipborne radar (abbr.)
- 41. Network of nerves
- 43. Monetary unit
- 44. Showed old TV show
- 46. They help you hear
- 48. One who eliminates
- 52. Congress' investigative arm

CLUES DOWN

- 53. Parties
- 54. Most supernatural
- 56. Takes illegally
- 57. Breathes while asleep
- 58. Sea eagles
- 59. German surname
- 1. Looks at for a long time
- 2. Solution for diseases
- 3. Belonging to a thing
- 4. Former Packers fullback
- 5. Contemptible person
- 6. One billionth of a second (abbr.)
- 7. Helps
- 8. Final section of the large intestine
- 9. Invests in little enterprises
- 10. Look for
- 11. Unbeliefs
- 12. Susan and Tom are two
- 14. Female sheep
- 15. A poet writes it
- 18. Affirmatives
- 20. "Full House" actress Barber
- 24. Traveled rapidly
- 26. Long upholstered seat
- 28. Set wages
- 30. Peter Gabriel song
- 32. Sides of a jacket
- 34. More beautiful
- 35. Actress Kate

CLUES ACROSS

- 37. Furniture with open shelves
- 38. Indicate
- 40. The cost of a room
- 42. Gets rid of something
- 43. Impudence
- 45. No No No

CLUES ACROSS

- 47. Drunkards
- 49. Middle eastern country
- 50. High energy lasers (abbr.)
- 51. Primary component of ribosomes
- 55. An informal debt instrument

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