

Columns

Kids are different these days, but it's not all bad

*Don't cry
Don't raise your eye
It's only teenage wasteland*

— The Who

So much has been written about the isolation of today's teenagers. That they're more influenced by social media and often have difficulty being comfortable when they are meeting others in person can't be doubted. I've seen it too many times with my own eyes in my "real" job.

Studies in Life History Theory back up the fact that today's teens are "growing up" more slowly than previous generations. The helicopter moms and dads are real, folks. I interact with them pretty much every day. Their children are "much

too busy" to do simple tasks like making queries about course availability and registration.

It's true that today's teens are closer to their parents than any previous generation, which serves to inhibit their growth at times. Because mom and or dad have been taking care of the little details like making sure they're awake on time and registered for classes and meetings and such, it has been written that many find it difficult to make decisions and fear failure to a much greater degree than previous generations of teenagers.

Social media has also made today's teens feel much more isolated and alone, a feeling which psychologists now find

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



to be along the same lines as physical pain. All of these things could lead one to be doubtful about the future. Today's isolated and overly sensitive teens will be tomorrow's leaders, after all, and truthfully, I was starting to go down that path myself.

And then a series of relatively small things happened

recently that restored my faith in today's youth. Several Villa Grove high school students had recently qualified for state in the WYSE/ACE competition and brought home several top four finishes in physics and math. That these brainiacs care enough about their academics to do the work necessary to shine on the state stage

says wonders about them, and also about their sponsor, Mrs. Werts. (Sadly, after 15 years as coach, she's handing over the program.)

Finally, last night while hanging out in the "Man Cave" garage, I saw a young man I know, returning his granddad's trailer. I know that he borrows it to support his lawn mowing business, so I asked him how many he had gotten done and his response surprised me. He almost apologetically stated that he had only been able to finish two, because he had gone to support his little brother at the junior high sectional track meet.

He himself had a late night the previous evening when

he won multiple events at his high school conference meet, and the fact that he still took the time to support his younger sibling and also do his job spoke volumes to me, and to be honest was also my inspiration for this week's dose of word re-gurgitation.

If you look past the clichés, there are plenty of examples of young people doing good things. Today's teens are more tolerant of other people's differences than any previous generation. They're bright and industrious and will get the job done. It might not be the way we did it, but it will be done. They're our future, and I can't wait to watch them get to work.

Hanging on to memories

Do you keep an item in your house that you haven't used in years and will probably never use again in your lifetime? Maybe it's a handheld mixer, which is sometimes referred to as a rotary egg beater. Years ago, you likely upgraded to an electric mixer or you spent your children's inheritance and purchased an \$800 Kitchen-Aid stand mixer that comes with an eight-quart mixing bowl.

Despite the convenience, of modern appliances, you can't bare to part with the old rotary egg beater because it reminds you of the many times you, your mother, or your grandmother used it to combine eggs with flour and other ingredients to make special treats like cake, pancakes or bread. Besides, you never know when the electricity goes out or the electric mixer breaks down, and that rotary egg beater will come in handy.

I'm sure there are dozens of items that people keep for similar reasons. For example, with power screwdrivers and drills, is there really a need to have old-fashioned Phillips or flathead screwdrivers around? Yes, I have both a power screwdriver and an electric drill, yet I keep dozens of regular screwdrivers around my house and probably use them more frequently than I do the power tools and I'm not sure why I do.

Clothing is something else that I find difficult to part with. Occasionally my wife will convince me to let go of shirts, pants, ties or suits that I haven't worn in years, and take them to Goodwill. However, I am a reluctant donor because I always think to myself, "I might need this paisley tie or bell-bottom pants someday because one never knows when you might be invited to a 1960s-themed party."

The most foolish item I retain is my dress-blue U.S. Army uniform. It remains in my closet, covered in plastic with my white-colored 1st lieutenant rank sewn on a red shoulder board with a gold braid outline. The tailored pants have a gold stripe along the side of each pant leg. The crease of the pants could cut your finger as these pants have remained exactly as they were when they came from the dry cleaners over 40 years ago.

There is absolutely no reason why I would ever wear this uniform again, besides the fact that I'll never have a size 32 waist again. Yet I can't relinquish them. I held on to my fatigues for a while after I completed my time in the service, and I would use them when painting or doing yard work and I eventually got rid of them. But the dress blues... I'm not quite there.

I have other clothes that I

So there I was

By Pete Buckley



should part with but don't. I have a paint-covered sweat-shirt with sleeves too short that I keep because on the front is printed, Chicago Police Gang Crimes, a unit I worked with at one time.

I have another paint-splattered piece of clothing, a T-shirt with the emblems of the FBI, the Chicago Police, the Cook County Sheriff's Office, and the Illinois State Police printed on the front. It was a shirt that each member of a street gang task force in Chicago possessed. Each time I

wear this shirt it brings back fond memories of a unit that I belonged to for seven years.

Another T-shirt showing some wear has "FBI - 100-year anniversary (1908-2008)" printed on the front, so I know I've had this shirt for 15 years. According to the internet, a T-shirt should have a life span of between 35-50 washings and I'm pretty sure many of my T-shirts are well into being washed at least hundreds of times (if not thousands).

I have polo shirts and baseball caps that remind me of

places where I served in the FBI... the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, Canada; the U.S. Embassy in Doha, Qatar; New Agent Supervisor at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia; FBI-Springfield, and the Douglas County Sheriff's Office. All of these shirts and caps are sweat-stained, torn, or no longer hold their shape, yet I don't ever think about tossing them aside.

Why is that? I'm not sure exactly. It may have something to do with the fact that these items remind me of a specific time in my life when I did something worthwhile. Nowadays I take pride in wearing shirts with photographs of my grandchildren on the front. I absolutely know that I will never get rid of these gems because they remind me of family, and family is always worthwhile.

Online recommendations for Mother's Day meals

Mother's Day is Sunday, May 14, and I urge you to take the time to honor your mom. My mother is 97 and I realize I may not have too many more chances to wish her a Happy Mother's Day.

I clearly remember the first year I gave my mom flowers for Mother's Day. I was about 5 and I picked flowers out of a neighbor's yard. Yes, I got in trouble for that action and from then on I gave my mom a bouquet of dandelions. Hey, I learn quickly and I was pretty sure I would not get in trouble for picking dandelions.

Daddy and I usually gave mom candy from George's Candy Shop when we lived in Taylorville but when we moved to Decatur we started a new tradition and we took mom to the Dairy Queen. In later years when Daddy's business took him to Champaign, he found the Fanny Mae candy store and from then on he always purchased her gift there.

The first year I gave Mom a personal Mother's Day gift I was 18 and working at "Carson Pirie Scott" in Decatur and I bought her an extravagantly priced white cardigan sweater. She still has that sweater and wears it on special occasions. It looks as new now as it did back then. That sweater cost me \$48 and I only made \$50 plus commission a week. Wow, have times changed.

My son gave me my favorite Mother's Day gift at a BMX rally after a major surgery and this rally was my first outing in several months. I had volunteered to help judge the older racers and was just about

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



to get out of my car when he walked over to me with a huge flower arrangement that he and his dad had purchased on the way to the track.

It wasn't really the flowers that impressed me as much as the fact that my son had thought of me when he was so involved in a really important day for him and his racing friends. That was 42 years ago and I still have the card.

A couple years later, when my son had his first job at "What's Cookin" restaurant, I was allowed to sleep in late and served breakfast in bed. He had worked the early shift at the restaurant and was taught how to make an omelet served with strawberry bread. He made the breakfast and brought it home to me just as I was waking up. This was the first and only time I was ever served breakfast in bed.

Anna Jarvis is credited with founding Mother's Day in 1908 and it became an official holiday in the USA in 1914. "History.com states: "Anna Jarvis conceived of Mother's Day as a way of honoring the sacrifices mothers made for their children. After gaining financial backing from a Philadelphia department store owner named John Wanamak-

er, in May 1908, she organized the first official Mother's Day celebration at a Methodist church in Grafton, West Virginia. That same day also saw thousands of people attend a Mother's Day event at one of Wanamaker's retail stores in Philadelphia. While Jarvis had initially worked with the floral industry to help raise Mother's Day's profile, by 1920 she had become disgusted with how the holiday had been commercialized. She outwardly denounced the transformation and urged people to stop buying Mother's Day flowers, cards and candies."

Ms. Jarvis was not successful in eliminating the holiday as she was in creating it and in 2022 Americans were reported to have spent \$31.7 billion on Mother's Day sales and activities so stated by Yahoo Finance statistics. WOW, I had to look at that report a couple times before I was sure I had read it correctly; believe it or not!

"Muchneeded.com" states: "Flowers are the most traditional gift given to mothers on Mother's Day. In 2020, U.S. consumers planned to spend a total of 2.56 billion U.S. dollars on flowers for Mother's Day. But people spend the

most on jewelry."

"Foxnews.com" states: "About 23 million flowers are sold on Mother's Day each year, according to 1-800-Flowers.com, a leading floral retail company."

"Townandcountrymag.com" states: Approximately 122 million calls are made on the second Sunday of May every year.

Mother's Day is the third highest selling holiday for flowers and plants.

Normally, Mother's Day is the busiest day of the year for restaurants.

41% of Americans plan to buy their mom jewelry.

I find these reported

amounts of money spent on Mother's Day astounding and equally as interesting is that we supposedly only spent \$20 billion on Father's Day last year. Even dining out for dad takes a back seat to Mother's Day and most of the food websites have joined the media with listing special meals to cook at home for mom. Eatingwell.com recommends lemon blueberry pound cake, chocolate waffles with strawberries and cream or Sun-Dried Tomato and Olive Quiche with Sweet Potato Crust.

Southernliving.com recommends Fresh Salmon Cakes with Buttermilk Dressing, Skillet Chicken Pot Pie with Puff

Pastry or Crab-and-Bacon Linguine.

Epicurious.com suggests mapo tofu, seared duck breasts with blood oranges, clams with sherry and olives, or lamb chops with polenta and grilled scallion sauce.

I told my mom what she could have anything she wanted for Mother's Day and her answer was a Pizza Hut pizza. I am getting off pretty cheap except that I will have to drive to Tuscola for the pizza since Charleston no longer has a Pizza Hut. Hey, nothing is too good for my mom so a drive to Tuscola is just what we will do for her special day.

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

Follow Mars on its eastward journey

All this week you can watch the planet Mars trek across the constellation of Gemini, the Twin brothers, high in the west after sunset. Mars is much fainter than Venus as the "red planet" is on the other side of the solar system from us. But you can still find it with just your eyes, above and left of Venus.

The head of each twin in Gemini is marked by a bright star, Pollux on the left and Castor on the right. This evening, Mars is five degrees below Pollux after sunset. With Mars being the next planet beyond our Earth in the solar system, it moves rather quickly. So you'll see Mars in a different spot further eastward each evening.

By Monday of next week,

In the night sky

By David Leake



Mars seems to make a straight line with the two stars. Look with just your eyes each clear night and note the position of Mars relative to the two stars and you can watch a planet orbit the Sun!

The planet Jupiter passes behind the Moon next Wednesday morning but the event (known as an "occultation") occurs in daylight. If you can find the crescent Moon in

binoculars in the east after it rises at 4:24 a.m., follow it as the sky brightens, then you might see Jupiter disappear at 6:33 a.m. and reappear from the unlit side at 7:39 a.m.

David Leake is retired Planetarium Director of Staerkel Planetarium at Parkland College and co-founder of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, Inc.