

# my Personal side

By Craig Hastings



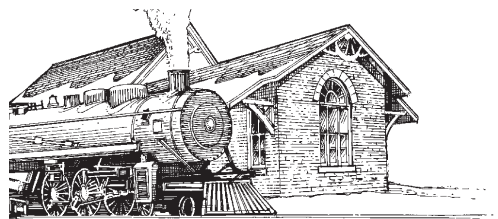
Probably everyone reading this has heard about the train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio that occurred on February 3. Just before 9:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, a Norfolk Southern Train derailed causing approximately twenty-four cars of the one hundred fifty to leave the tracks. Eleven of those cars that derailed were carrying hazardous material. That hazardous material was vinyl chloride. Of course depending on the person and their health, exposure to high levels of the material could lead to liver damage and some forms of cancer. Five of the eleven cars were carrying this material. One car carrying butyl acrylate dumped its entire load onto the ground. This material can cause respiratory problems along with nausea and dizziness. A fire ensued to several cars that derailed and because of their close proximity to the cars containing vinyl chloride, the decision was made to empty the vinyl chloride into a trench and burn it off to avoid a probable explosion to the cars which would cause metal shrapnel to blast into the air and possibly causing further harm to people and property. Of course by setting this chemical on fire it will convert to an even more harmful chemical(s). So, it was blast tons of metal shrapnel into the air for distances up to one mile along with the vinyl chloride or, dump it all out and set it on fire and cause a cloud of toxic gas and smoke to drift for miles into the air. Both choices were bad ones for the citizens, animals, and vegetation of Palestine.

Everyone living within a two mile radius were evacuated. Of course wild birds, fish, all other river life, and vegetation had no choice but to perish because safety precautions and maintenance inspection protocol weren't properly attended too. It has been reported a wheel bearing on one car failed and that one failure caused all of this carnage in Palestine, Ohio. I'll comment on what I think should be some simple precautions that should be taken if they are not already when transporting deadly chemicals by rail. Not that I claim I'm an expert or have any knowledge at all when it comes to transporting deadly chemicals by rail through thousands of cities across America. First I have to ask, is there not a way to make sure wheel bearings on train cars are in good working order at all times? Is there not a maintenance check ability on train cars? Are they just so big and heavy that Railroad companies just run the cars until the bearings fail, catch fire, and derail all of the cars in front and in back of them while moving down the tracks? I'm guessing the answer is that of course there is a way to check. Well there is if the owners of those train cars are willing to spend the money to have this maintenance check done on a schedule of miles traveled. So that's my first question as a simpleton with no expertise in railroads. My second question is this; other than for convenience of loading and unloading, why would every single car carrying deadly chemicals be connected to each other? It seems to me that because of the danger associated with a possible derailment, wouldn't it make more sense to space these cars within the train cars carrying non exploding, non cancer chemicals products so just in case a car does derail, every single deadly chemical car also doesn't derail? Well that would cause the railroads and recipients of these products to take longer to

separate and unload the products is the likely explanation. There may be a legitimate reason that I don't see here. Like I said, I'm just a simpleton of at best average intelligence asking the questions.

I really believe these giant Railroad companies think the risk to human life should an incident like this happen is worth the cost of being fast and more convenient for them and their customers. East Palestine, Ohio has a population of 4700 people, a rural community, surrounded by fields, woods, farm animals, founded in 1828, and a community where generations are born and die. Remind you of any place? Of course it does and this was my first thought when I heard about this town. I've been a lifelong resident of Tuscola and a police officer here for forty-two years. I remember Fire Chief Dennis Dietrich discussing with me over and over his fears of something just like this happening here in Tuscola. He pointed out to me many times the number of dangerous chemicals passing through Tuscola every day and every night. He described to me this very scenario should it happen here. He told me how we couldn't live long enough to ever see Tuscola return to what it was before such a disastrous spill in the middle of town. Later on after Chief Dietrich retired and passed the torch to Chief Hettinger, Chief Hettinger also discussed this same fear he had as Fire Chief. He told me there was no way to prepare for the devastation such a spill might cause and he was right. Would police officers and firefighters even stick around to attempt to deal with such a disaster or would they choose to load up their own families and get them to safety miles away? Could I blame them if they did? No I couldn't, especially those with young children. My advice to anyone close would be to get as far away as they possibly could.

Could it be any worse than it already is for the residents of East Palestine? Yes it could and it is. Our federal government slow walked any assistance to the community and the state of Ohio. Two weeks later and still almost nothing from the Biden Administration. An absolute failure of the federal government. But is this really a surprise to anyone? Of course not. So I just had to bring politics into this? Hell yes I did because it matters! A hundred billion dollars to Ukraine, another trillion dollars to people illegally invading our southern border. Ten million dollars in disaster relief to India recently. What about East Palestine, Ohio, United States of America?! Nothing so far. Not even a visit from any of the hierarchy of the Biden Administration. President Biden hadn't publicly even mentioned the incident for the first eleven days of the disaster. President Trump will be visiting East Palestine next week to see for himself what has happened. I'm sure he will plan now how to help should he be reelected in 2024. This is what real leaders do. Love him or hate him, he knows how to get things done and get them done in a timely manner. I can only imagine how much federal relief would already be in place in East Palestine and the assistance the residents would have been receiving within the first forty-eight hours had President Trump still been in office. America wake up before it's too late! We have to survive this administration for another 22 months. Can we?



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**10 Years Ago**  
**Feb. 27, 2013**

The Villa Grove man accused of making terrorist threats against North Ward schoolchildren following a Jan. 27, 2013, domestic dispute with his wife will be on an October jury setting, and there is a chance it may be in a courtroom other than Douglas County.

Defendant Timothy Little appeared before Douglas County Judge Michael Carroll in a preliminary hearing held Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2013. He was accompanied by his attorney, Fred Johnson of Mattoon firm Heller, Holmes & Associates. Johnson has indicated he will be seeking a change of venue for the case, citing extensive media coverage that he alleges will make it difficult for Little to get a fair trial in Douglas County.

Tuscola High School's girl's softball team finished the 2012 season with a bang, taking home the Class A fourth-place trophy. The Lady Warriors were the cardiac kids of 1A, collecting a pair of one-run victories in the sectional and super-sectional championship games.

Tuscola track-and-field coach Ryan Hornaday's fifth edition of harriers will be hard-pressed to match the banner season fo 2012. Last year's team made its mark locally and at the state meet in Charleston, where the 4x200 squad of Jeff Broch, Broc Smith, Chris West and Alex Kemp won a state title while setting new school and Class 1A state marks in the process.

**20 years ago**  
**Feb. 25, 2003**

The job of maintaining and plowing county roads now fall under the jurisdiction of the townships in which they were located. The Douglas County Highway Dept. recently entered into agreements with each of the nine township highway commissioners.

The Illinois Dept. of Transportation recognized Beniach Construction of Tuscola as its Contractor of the Year for exceptional work performed during the 2002 construction season.

The Smokehouse Restaurant, a family dining establishment owned and operated by Jim and Margaret Stilwell since 2000, closed at the end of business hours on Feb. 16, 2003.

Lady Warrior Lesley Hettinger advanced to the state level of the 2003 Three-Point Showdown. The junior earned the right by making 6 of 10 in a shoot-off conducted at the sectional level in Flora this week.

Marissa McCumber moved into third place on the all-time Lady Warriors three-point list with 84 treys in her Tuscola career. Also scratching the record book was Chambyr Gilmore, whose career total of 491 rebounds moved her into the top 10.

Austin Hogue and his buddies were able to pull off one of their greatest double-doubles of their young lives by delivering an outright LOVC basketball championship to go along with their football title.

**30 years ago**  
**Feb. 23, 1993**

Tuscola City Council members voted to reclassify city liquor licenses in an effort to curb minors' attempts to enter local bars. The reclassification affected establishments that derive more than 50 percent of their income through sale of alcoholic beverages.

"Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" starring Macaulay Culkin was as currently showing at the Gem Theatre in Villa Grove.

The Unity Rockets put an end to the Lady Warriors' basketball season in the championship game of the Tuscola Regional with a 53-33 victory. Tuscola ended its season with a 19-9 record overall.

The Warrior boys basketball team ended its 1992-93 campaign with a 13-11 record after being ousted from the Heritage Regional via an 82-59 defeat by the Heritage Hawks.

**40 years ago**  
**Mar. 1, 1983**

Chris Little earned a first-place trophy in the tractor pull at the National Farm Machinery Show in Louisville, Ken. He used a John Deere 5010 Pro Stock called the War Wagon to claim the title.

Tuscola School Board recently approved a measure that would raise the number of credits a TCHS graduating senior would have to earn, from 16 to 17, starting with the Class of 1988.

Douglas County Board members were meeting with architectural consultants to determine whether to remodel

or rebuild the county jail facility. Space constraints were behind the proposal.

The Tuscola Warriors won their second straight regional title with a 50-35 triumph over the Oakland Oaks in the Arcola Regional. John Brookins had 14 points, while Bill Fruit contributed 11 points.

**50 years ago**  
**Feb. 22, 1973**

A hearing was scheduled later this week to determine whether an objection filed by one of the Tuscola mayoral candidates against another had any merit. In other "election" news, Don Belz, a candidate for alderman, withdrew his petition to run for the office.

Chris Hill, owner of the Rise 'n Shine store on Route 36, announced a food service delivery for the Tuscola area. A minimum \$5 order would have to be made, and there would be a 50 cent delivery fee.

An open house was being planned to celebrate the 100th birthday of Tuscola resident George Helm.

TFD Chief Dennis Dietrich recently made a daring rescue, saving young Todd and Trent Proffitt's dog which had fallen through the ice at Patterson Springs Lake.

Teamwork and torrid shooting were most evident in the Warrior camp Friday night, as they thumped state-ranked Decatur St. Teresa 81-73. Leading the charge for Tuscola were Rick Smith with 24 points, Rudy Huber with 19, and 18 each from Doug Dietrich and Phil Waters.

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