

my Personal side

By Craig Hastings



Some of the calls for service we get at the police department don't really have a thing to do with law enforcement. However, we are considered public servants so when people are unsure just who they should call, they default to their local police departments. Sometimes we are the appropriate public service entity to call and sometimes we're not. We could say "No, that's not really something we can do because we have no authority" and maybe refer callers to somebody else. However, I've been here for forty-two years, I've been the chief for thirty-six of those years and when I started then Chief Tom Harris never pawned these calls off to someone else so I've continued on doing the same. Have any of the officers pointed out to me that these calls are not police matters? Certainly they have. My response has always been the same. "If you can convince the Mayor, my boss, you shouldn't have to be involved in these requests for service unless you want to, that's when we'll be done." It hasn't happened often over my years but occasionally it has. Most of these calls don't amount to anything more than delivering a message to a someone, encouraging a student to get up and go to school after they've told a parent they didn't want to go that day, asking someone to move a car forward on a right of way because it blocks the view of their neighbor, a tree branches hanging over the next property over, etc. None of these are really responsibilities of the local police department because no law or ordinance is being broken but, I guess it's easier for us to intervene and try to reach a reasonable solution for everyone involved. But sometimes, it doesn't go so well for us. Sometimes people want to argue and are quick to point out we have no authority to ask them to do anything and get off their property. And because they're right; we leave without further discussion.

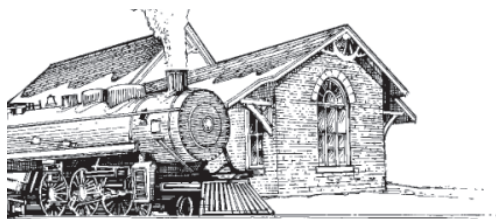
Of all of these types of calls we get, the most frequent request we get is someone asking us to do a welfare check on someone else. Now there are a variety of reasons for such a request. The schools will ask us to drive to a residence and check on a student whose parent didn't call them in sick, on vacation, doctor's appointment, etc. It might just be to deliver a message for the resident to call who called us because they keep getting a busy signal. I've, more than three times, been requested to stop by a residence to remind that person they need to pick a child up after school. The list goes on. None of these are really in the scope of what police do and I imagine in the larger the department the less chance that these simple services are done. It could be such a thing that over the years some of my own officers were requested to do one of the above and maybe didn't put much effort forth to do some of these requests. It could be they were busy doing other things and never got to it. Sometimes we will get a bit aggravated because it will be the same caller requesting we do the same thing at the same house over and over. There has come a time when we've said "No more."

There is one specific welfare check we are requested to do which we do take very seriously and make every effort possible to accomplish. Most of these calls are made to us during the day shift and if not, usually no later than 9:00 p.m. This being the case, I've had to do many of these welfare checks. We get called and requested to check on the welfare of people living alone that haven't been seen or heard from for a day or two. Too many times the caller is from out of town or the person making the call has no

means of entering the property because doors and windows are locked. This puts us in a difficult position because we need to make the decision to break in somehow or wait for someone a distance away to get here. Well, time just might be extremely important so is waiting an option? Of course when we do break in we do the very best we can to do minimal damage to the property owner because what if all is well and we just broke a door down or a window out? Fortunately over the years I've managed to figure out a couple of ways to get in that won't cause much damage. And I've found people in distress but still alive needing immediate medical attention. Back in the day there was one option, kick the door which in turn split the door frame. This not only caused a lot of damage but the door couldn't be resecured easily until someone was able to fix it properly.

Last week our department received two such requests. Neither outcome was good. Both men were living alone and both were found deceased. The first gentleman it appears had committed suicide. We were required to break a window in that residence. The second gentleman had died of what appeared to be natural causes. Fortunately a relative knew where there was a spare key which I was able to retrieve and enter the home. Over my years I've had to make these discoveries for the families more times than I can remember. And now because I've been here so long most of these people I'm finding are people I've known for many years. Maybe we weren't friends but good people I've gotten to know and also their families. But then there's that person that I've not only known, but I've known my entire life and even grew up with from the age of me being three years old. This happened to me this past week. I had been getting text messages from a concerned friend that hadn't seen him for a couple of days. He lived alone and none of the siblings lived in town anymore so there wasn't someone readily available to check on him. On the second day the friend texting me became very concerned and asked me to please stop by his home and check on him. First I called a brother who told me where I might find a key and if not to go ahead and make entry anyway I could and he was on his way. After several attempts of banging on doors and windows I entered the home, I already knew what I was going to discover but this one was extremely hard for me. Not only did I grow up with this gentleman, I had also spent many, many hours in this house as a child because he and his younger brothers were all some of my best friends. He was a wonderful man, extremely intelligent, and as nice a guy as you could ever hope to become friends.

I was by myself when I entered the house. After finding him and making the required phone calls, I sat down at the kitchen table and teared up. The memories from being in this house in the 60's and 70's with this family came like a flood back to me. You might think after all the years of doing this and after all the people I've had to discover just like this I would be hardened to it. And mostly I have but, not when it's someone I grew up with from age three and was still talking to some days and seeing most everyday because we live in the same neighborhood. The same neighborhood which we met in 1960. No, this was a tough one for me. To the friend who reached out and asked me to check on him, thank you so much, as you know the family appreciates you too. Steve, you will be truly missed. Until we meet again my friend.



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DO YOU RECOGNIZE this week's Back in the Day photo? If so, drop us a note at The Journal. Your efforts will be rewarded.

10 years ago February 26, 2013

Tuscola Fire Department purchased a new fleet vehicle. Ladder 96 replaced three outdated vehicles.

The Illinois Rural Water Association selected the City of Tuscola as its "Runner-up Wastewater Plant of the Year." The award is given to a plant dedicated to managing its wastewater plant to the highest standards.

Seventh-grade Lady Hornets claimed regional and section titles and were heading to the ISEA state tournament. The team, coached by Shelbi White, had a 19-4 record.

Two youths were heading to a state tournament in youth wrestling. Andrew Erickson and Cale Sementi both qualified for Illinois Kids Wrestling Federation State Tournament in Rockford after Sementi placed first and Erickson second in the sectional tournament in Pontiac.

20 years ago March 4, 2003

Kyle Ransom was hired as principal for Tuscola High School, to succeed retiring TCHS principal Mike Damler.

The national Little League organization was now requiring background checks for anyone coming into regular contact with children within Little League systems across the country, including Tuscola.

Deon and Katrina Ches-

ter of Tuscola were proud to announce the birth of a son, Donovan, on Feb. 22, 2003 at Provena Covenant Hospital. Donovan weighed 8 lbs. 11 oz. and was 21 1/2 inches long.

An Illinois State University professor was doing a research project on WDW Radio, the oldest continuously broadcast station in Illinois, and whose birthplace was Tuscola.

For the second consecutive year, Coach Bryan Smith and the Tuscola boys basketball team fell just short of a regional championship as the Warriors ended a great season with a heartbreaking 46-41 loss to Unity in the title game of the St. Joe Regional.

30 years ago March 2, 1993

The five lucky winners who walked away with \$3,600 each at the ABC car raffle fundraiser were Jim and Judy Brannon, Larry and Shirley Eastin, Penny and Brian Lynch, Tom and Diane Stewart, and the Arcola Pharmacy. More than 200 people attended this year's event.

The Douglas County Sheriff's Department had a new chief deputy by the name of Kerry Bittenbender, who came from Newark, Delaware.

The University of Illinois Assembly Hall was launching its 30th anniversary celebration with an open house reception on March 2. A collection of Assembly Hall memorabilia

would be on display for the public to enjoy.

Becky Sudduth, a junior on the Lady Warriors 19-9 basketball squad, advanced to the state competition of the Three-Point Showdown by sinking eight of 15 attempts Friday night at Tolono.

40 years ago March 8, 1983

Approximately 20 Tuscola residents, most of them downtown business people, heard the Tuscola Planning Commission vote unanimously to recommend to city council that the block of Sale Street between Main and Center streets be made two-way.

It looked as if Old-Fashioned Days would be a go for at least another year, as Clarence Snyder was just named general chairman, and most of the committee positions had been filled.

After serving for more than 24 years as a service representative for General Telephone Company in Tuscola, Marie Beard was retiring from her job, and a luncheon in her honor was held recently.

A hard-fought 43-34 victory over Chrisman in the Tuscola Sectional meant the Tuscola Warriors boys basketball team earned a berth in the Millikin Supersectional for the second time in four years. John Murray had 15 points and Steve Bates 12 to lead Tuscola in the exciting victory.

50 years ago March 1, 1973

Plans for a large motel development at the I-57 Tuscola intersection were announced Tuesday morning. The development called for a 100-unit complex which would include indoor swim pool, sauna, restaurant, and meeting facilities. The motel complex would be located on a five-acre site between East Prairie Street and the I-57/Route 36 interchange.

Lack of ambulance service in Tuscola was reaching a critical stage, with "temporary" provider Shrader Ambulance noting it could not continue its interim situation much longer given the inadequate amount of staffing.

Rosemary Nussel of Nussel Real Estate in Villa Grove was opening a branch office in Tuscola at 704 South Main Street.

Sixteen-year-old TCHS junior Greg Skuta was accepted for membership in the United States Collegiate Wind Band, and would be touring with the organization next summer for concerts in England, Belgium, France, Netherlands, Switzerland, and Russia.

The Tuscola Warriors ended the regular cage season on the sweet note of victory Friday evening by defeating Arcola 70-59. For Coach Bill Burress, it was win number 100 at TCHS.

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