

my Personal side

By Craig Hastings



Most of you probably don't care much but, last week there was a NATO summit taking place in Lithuania. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed after World War II. What started as ten countries including The United States, has today expanded to thirty. The original ten countries formed the alliance in hopes it would deter the world's number one enemy, The Soviet Union, from ever again invading any of the member countries. In theory, The Soviet Union was to understand that if they went to war with any of the ten member countries, the other nine would immediately come to the aid of the one. So, at a time of an invasion, instead of scrambling around Europe trying to sort out which countries were in and those that were staying out, all NATO members were automatically in. A good plan I suppose. An organization like NATO is extremely beneficial to the smaller, poorer, and less technically advanced countries. Why wouldn't they want The United States coming to their aid immediately should Russia or any other bully communist country invade their homeland? All of these years later do I think way back then that The United States cared or worried for an instant that Russia might invade The United States? No. Even if Russia (Soviet Union) had invaded The United States, just how were these other nine countries going to get any military resources here to help us in a conflict? They couldn't. Russia would have sunk any ships and downed any planes before they ever left Europe. Yeah but Canada was an original member! Hahahahaha! Yeah, okay! No, NATO was The United States way of keeping Russia at bay without having to staff and supply every single military outpost all across Europe at the time. I believe our military experts at the time concluded that anything these lesser countries could contribute to a military conflict was better than nothing because regardless, The United States would be taking the lead in any further conflicts in Europe.

Then in 1991, what started in 1989, The Soviet Union was broken apart. Russia became one in itself and approximately fifteen other independent Republics were free, well somewhat free, to establish their own governments and hold their own elections. In 2012 Vladimir Putin became the fourth elected President since the redistribution of the Soviet Union republics. Most of these break away countries, fifteen, joined NATO after 1999. Clearly the leaders of these countries were feeling the fear of an unstable Russia. Putin was campaigning on his plan to reestablish the Soviet Union and bring it back to all of its past glory. Of course these militarily weak countries wanted to be part of the NATO alliance. Most were pouring all the wealth they could into growing their economies and establishing their governments. They had little capital to invest in a military. But I think something unexpected happened.

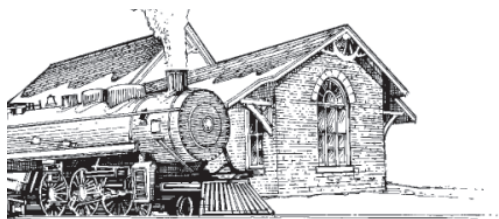
Some of these countries that wanted to join NATO were bordered to close or right on the borders of Russia. NATO members never wanted this to happen. I believe everyone with any sense of how communist Russia worked, suspected that one day Russia might want to reabsorb some of the land they lost who are now declaring themselves independent countries. Having NATO members that bordered with Russia was always and forever going to a powder keg just waiting for a spark to set it off. It would be much, much easier having buffer countries between NATO member countries and Russia. In 2014, during the Obama presidency, Putin decided he wanted the Crimea territory back as part of Russia. And he did just that without any real opposition from anyone. World leaders were backroom screaming at Obama to do something about Putin's aggression but Obama chose to stay out of it. One of the few decisions Obama made that I agreed with. However, this decision by Obama not

to intervene has greatly contributed to the reasoning Putin used to justify to his own country why they should invade Ukraine. That and the fact Ukraine has never been allowed to join NATO. The United States is afraid to intervene, he thought.

In February 2022, as expected, Putin invaded Ukraine. This was not a secret to anyone paying attention. Putin began his military buildup of supplies just inside his own borders shortly after Biden was elected President of The United States. The gradual buildup was out there for all the world to see. Putin planned it this way to see how the rest of the world would react. What Putin didn't expect was no reaction at all, from anyone. Sure, sure a handful of world leaders stood in front of cameras and expressed their concern but none offered a plan to change Putin's course. They didn't because not only didn't they have an ability, but they were also scared to death of Putin. If you watched the news, you too could see what Russia was up to through satellite images of everything Putin was bringing to bear against Ukraine. I sat and I wondered if Biden and our allies had a plan. I thought surely they did. This was too easy. Russia invaded and I quickly learned Biden had no plan. Now what?

A year and a half later the war continues. NATO countries are contributing dimes and nickels and The United States, well U.S. taxpayers, is contributing billions of dollars. No, no, Ukraine isn't a member of NATO but NATO countries are contributing to the cause. Once again, The United States is a major player in an endless, senseless, war. The only difference, so far anyway, American military personnel are not on the ground in Ukraine. Once again, the American people are getting fed up. Our own country is falling apart state by state but the much needed financial aid is going to some far off country most people couldn't find on a map and could care less. Ukraine requested this past week to become a member of NATO and was denied. Biden, all big and bold, well, small and weak, ran to the news cameras and proudly made the announcement to the world but at the same time stated it would happen some day, just not now.

Well duh! Of course not now, not in the middle of a war between Ukraine and Russia. So what's the difference? NATO countries are contributing billions of dollars to support Ukraine right? Well if Ukraine was a member of NATO, NATO countries would be obligated to treat this war as if it was their own. That means the war would escalate across the border and into mother Russia itself. American service men and women would be sent to fight on the front lines. Americans would die. Ten times the amount of money would be spent in Ukraine to fight Russia. The American people would not stand for this! Russia, Putin, has a larger nuclear stockpile than any other country in the world. I absolutely believe that Putin would launch nuclear warheads destined for many countries before he conceded the defeat of Russia. Why wouldn't he? Ukraine can never be a member of NATO unless NATO rules of engagement are rewritten. So what did Biden mean when he said some day Ukraine will be a member of NATO? The chicken s-t was saying; "Ukraine can become a member just as soon as I'm done being president! Don't put the next world war on my sorry azz!" Folks here it is in a nutshell; NATO has ended its usefulness. The United States is always going to put our business in everybody else's even when we shouldn't. When we need other countries to help out, they will, NATO or no NATO. I believe even a simpleton like myself could have stopped this war in Ukraine before it started with the resources at hand that I know of let alone the ones I don't. These are scary times in our world for sure.



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10 years ago
July 31, 2013

Governor Pat Quinn signed a bill into law this month that will require Illinois school districts to work with local police departments to come up with a plan that deals with active shooter situations. Once a plan is in place, police and school officials will be required to practice the drill in each of the schools in their districts. In Tuscola's case, that will be three locations.

The Douglas County Emergency Management Agency and Douglas County Health Department performed an exercise in Garrett to prepare for tornadoes. The drill included a realistic setup that showed disastrous effects on Garrett. Not all of the drills were carried out, however, because of an accident that took place at MasterBrand Cabinets.

AS predicted, Governor Pat Quinn signed into law Senate Bill 20 on Thursday, July 25. The Governor made the announcement in Will County traveling there to announce the construction of the South Suburban airport to be built. Attached in the bill was legislation required for the Douglas County Cronus project just west of Tuscola. The bill allows new or expanded fertilizer plants to be eligible for state job creation incentives, with a minimum of 125 jobs created.

20 years ago
July 22, 2003

Michelle Cookson of Lovington was crowned Miss Moultrie-Douglas County Fair queen, and Ashley Crockett of Tuscola was named Jr. Miss Mo-Do, while Moranda Matheson of Sullivan was crowned Little Miss Mo-Do.

Chuck Holmes was named the new president of Tuscola Economic Development Inc. at the group's annual meeting held recently.

Members of the Storm softball team took second at the state tournament. Team members included Jackie Carter, Liz Anderson, Rebecca Swaney, Marissa Darling, Kelsi Hoey, Mariah Brookins, Taylor Carter, Lauren Spannour, Katie Thomas, Molly Romine, Kim Fortney, Rachael Brewer, Megan Riley, Stephanie Swaney, and Courtney Day.

On the roster of the 11/12-year-old All-Star team were Matt Pflum, Tyler Clark, Christian Lehmann, Josh Scribner, Jesse Hall, Shaheen Shabrou, John Ervin, Kurtis Kinyoun, Shane Albert, Dylan Cox, Brendan Leisner, and Caleb Little.

30 years ago
July 20, 1993

State legislators recently passed a \$135 million in-



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crease for elementary and secondary education programs and services, meaning Tuscola School District would receive a 62 percent increase (\$300,813) in unrestricted state aid, according to Supt. Jim Voyles. But he noted it was not just "extra" money, but would help offset losses suffered by the district in the last year due to decreases in assessed value.

Carle Foundation Hospital applied for a special-use permit to build a new \$500,000 clinic in Tuscola. The proposed site was a 1.24-acre tract located just south of Liga's Restaurant.

Katrina Weaver was chosen as the 1993 Jr. Miss Tuscola at the contest held recently at the Community Building. Stephanie Pflum was crowned Little Miss Tuscola, and Chelsey Chenoweth earned the Little Miss Sweetheart title.

Bruce McNary's 54-hole total—a 4-over-par 214—captured his third consecutive Kaskaskia Club championship. Ron Strange and Mike Kerner finished two strokes behind at 216.

40 years ago
July 26, 1983

For the third straight year a Tuscola contestant was the winner of the title Miss Moultrie-Douglas County Fair queen when Christina Maggio, daughter of Richard and Judy Maggio, was crowned. She received her crown from Juli Carie, last year's winner. And Courtney Dobbs of Tuscola was crowned the very first Little Miss Moultrie-Douglas.

TCHS Principal Bill Butkovich announced his pending retirement, effective at the conclusion of the 1983-84 school year.

Dave and Joyce Arseneau were planning to open a retail office supply store in Tuscola on August 15, to be known as Douglas County Office Products.

Susan Harris and members of the Tuscola Junior Girls softball team were setting records this season. Harris had now pitched a record two shutouts, and also hurled a no-hitter against Bement.

50 years ago
July 19, 1973

Senior division state tournament director Wayne Matthews announced that Emil Vergan, former Major League baseball star, would be the guest speaker at a banquet to kick off the weeklong Tuscola-hosted baseball spectacular.

The Tuscola Postal Employees Association honored three recent retirees at a party held at Liga's. Guest of honor were Norman York, John Atwell, and Ed Schultz.

Specials at IGA included a 2-lb. box of Velveeta for \$1.09, cantaloupe for 39 cents each, a 49-oz. box of Cheer detergent for 65 cents, and a pound of Corn King bacon for \$1.09.

Tuscola Senior Division baseball team posted a rousing 10-0 win over Paris to advance to sectional play at LaSalle-Peru. Hurler Pet Rottman held Paris to three hits and struck out 14. The winner at LaSalle-Peru would return to Tuscola for the state tournament scheduled to begin July 23.

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