

Life Update

Whew. Okay, I have now gone through my junior high yearbooks and will soon have a post or two on that topic. Several memories, some forgotten mysteries, and general strangeness. More on that to come. I still have four high school band yearbooks (yes, the band had its own yearbook) and my one surviving yearbook from my freshman year, but I won't wait on those books- they will be a post or two all by themselves.

So what have I been up to? More of the same, really. A couple days a week are dedicated to just looking at and fixing photos online, usually adjusting the color when they are too blue or brightening dim or dark photos. I also report photo problems I cannot fix like photos taken at bad angles or ones so dark (or bright) that they can't be properly fixed. The other days I am still out in the field taking pictures at my own stores (soon to be given away so I can be free to fly out at any time) or helping another photographer who has been inundated as of late. Just Tuesday, she did over 50 cars with the assistance of the co-owner. She wants to give up some of the stores, but the owners like her too much apparently- for good reason as she is a very good photographer.

Besides that I have been rehearsing for Easter choir. I finally got the music I need to practice at home. For some reason they thought it would be a great idea to distribute the private link to the music over facebook instead of just emailing it to everyone, so when I realized an email was not forthcoming, I had to finally ask someone in the choir for the music. No, not everyone uses facebook and I have no intentions of ever signing up, especially after hearing about

[what's happening with Myspace and a company called Infochimps right now.](#)

As for now, it's a weekend of rest. Two days off from work, no choir until next week, and no 4th/5th grade ministry. I do enjoy what I do most of the time (even if fixing photos is a bit tedious), but it's nice to have a rest now and then.

Happy 1st Day of Spring!



Didn't we just have a (winter!) week of 50°F plus weather, culminating in two days over 60)? Oh well, that's Chicago for you! ☐

Drivin' a Porsche

I think I spelled that right. This job of mine allows me to drive all sorts of interesting vehicles. Before this, I had never driven a Mercedes, BMW, 'Vette, Mustang, or Lamborghini. Wait, I *still* haven't driven a Lamborghini. Oh, well. I haven't driven a Jaguar either, but our company serves two Jaguar dealers, so you never know... Today it was a Porsche. It must have been a low-end Porsche because the dealer was trying to sell it, a [2002 Boxter](#), for just 16 grand, though they might change the price because they removed it from the windshield while I was there. In any event, it

really doesn't matter what cars I drive since I don't really get to drive them as they are meant to be driven. If I were to drive them that way through their parking lot, or take them out onto the street, I would shortly be out of a job... ☐

But how about that training I mentioned? Well, the Florida team hired someone from around here, and so he started training here. Normal training takes several weeks, but he's to go to Florida next week, so we're trying to cram as much info and practice into him as we can in the few short weeks he has. He has actually been doing a pretty good job learning. Though it doesn't help him to have to miss days like today due to another job, like today. Too bad- he missed out on the Porsche... ☐

I started him off on the handheld a week ago, though another trainer gave him the rundown on it first. I was actually the first one who he followed around, and on his first day of training I did teach him the basics of the job, but then I worked from home for the next two days so he went with someone else- the one who trained me in fact. So back to the handheld- he did make mistakes, but surprisingly not a lot. When he last went with me Monday, I only had to correct a couple of things. He has really picked up on the photography too. At this point he essentially does one of the jobs (handheld or camera), I then look over his work and let him know what he missed. Then I do the other part. All he is going to miss is the practice, practice, practice I went through before getting my first store. But still, he should do well in Florida, though it is yet an emerging market so I hope he can find other work too to sustain him in the meantime. If not, well the warm season is starting and the town is on the coast, so...

Preview, and...

Okay, I've been back to post-lazy for the last several days, so time to post something even if it isn't in-depth. I have had a couple of posts in mind that I just haven't gotten around to. First, I have next to me some yearbooks, mostly middle school. What can I do with those, I wonder...? I have also recently started training someone. Okay, I am one of a few training him, but he's my first. Something soon about that. Lastly, though I tend not to get responses to retro-gaming posts, it is still one of my interests and it's time for another one. I will probably go the youtube route with this one. Speaking of youtube, here are some videos from another Christian band I have become very interested in, partly due to growing up on metal in the 80s like Iron Maiden, Motley Crue, Scorpions and the like. That's right, it's a Christian metal band called Kutless, but that's not all they do. In fact, they have done several versions of worship songs which tend to be lighter but still with a little metal flavor. The first video from Kutless is a recent release. In fact, this video comes in high-def versions. The second one is the title track from an older CD, one of the two CDs from them I own. The third is the song that made me notice this band when it was played on the radio- they are not so heavy that they don't get playtime on Christian radio and this song was one of their hits from a couple years ago. The last song is a common worship song done Kutless style. Enjoy!

[Amazon link for Kutless](#)

[Kutless on Wikipedia](#)

[Official Kutless site](#)

End of an Era

A while ago I mentioned becoming the national trainer for the photo job I do. Well, today I talked with the co-owner and the job is finally becoming a reality. As of this week I am the manager of training, or quality, or something like that. My new job will involve keeping a single store for photos, but in addition involve filling in for others' vacations, do quality control on their work, and of course train. In fact, I will be training someone really soon now to take over two of my stores. My compensation has also become consistent, no longer dependent on the number of cars I do. As for traveling, that will come sometime as well- they already have stores in another state, though mostly for those stores they will bring the people here for me to train.

So what do I mean by the end of an era? Well, this job has now become full time so that means no more subbing. Maybe once in awhile (with the co-owner's blessing I should add) if I want to as long as I get the work done, but for the most part I'm done. I will drop down to one district I think, probably hometown district and sub maybe once every other week just for the extra cash until the end of the school year. Or mornings once a week if I can. I don't know. In any event, that means a rebranding for this blog as certainly I won't be signing up again for next year unless something goes very

wrong with this job and so the name no longer works. I will have to think about a new name though I suspect the URL will remain the same.

I know I haven't said this yet, so I will say it now. In big bold letters:

**PRAISE GOD FOR HIS PROVISIONS
AND HIS BLESSINGS!!!**

Something New

I think I will try something new and make an occasional post featuring some of the music I listen to. This will mostly feature Christian artists as it is pretty much what I listen to these days, though who knows? I might post something retro to my life. Of course what I post depends on what youtube has to offer- current music seems to be abundant, but older stuff, and probably certain genres, can be hard to come by. All videos have been posted by other people and may be pulled by youtube at any time.

I think I will start with a Christian artist that has stood out to me in contemporary Christian music: [Chris Tomlin](#).

Maybe if I use the wall I can do it... Without the truck of course.

What a week

The Thursday before last, I shot all of one car at two dealers- highly unusual, so on Monday that was more than made up for by having 18 cars to do between the same two dealers. Normally this would make me quite happy, but not so much on a Monday following a snowfall. For starters, I knew I couldn't leave as early as normal because the dealers needed time to clean up their lots. The first one was still doing it when I arrived. Monday nights I have small group at my church, so it is the only night I need to finish on time so starting late and then finding I had so many cars to do, some of which would have to be brushed off, was less than thrilling. I finished the second dealer a little before 7PM, then headed back. It was dark and I was traveling 50MPH, so I can probably be excused for not seeing the massive pothole in the right lane. I kept moving, but I feared it would cause my tire to go flat on the way home. It didn't and I was able to drive the car for the rest of the week, but when I brought the car into the shop Saturday because I needed a brake job, surprise! A \$500 repair bill. Actually, it was higher but he gave me a break (on top of the four brakes ☐) because my mother and I were good customers. \$210 was for the brakes, \$30 was for the oil change- that meant the rest was for the new axle and bearings on the potholed wheel. Incidentally, I was an hour late for small group, partly because I stopped to eat on the way.

Tuesday I found myself in supersized district to sub- a rare

occurrence these days as I can find few jobs available there even the mornings of. And sub I dd- in bilingual kindergarten. Fortunately there was an assistant with me for both classes- a different one for each class. The morning had Spanish-speakers who knew very little English. The assistant ended up running most of the morning. It was a struggle. Oddly enough there was a boy who I'm told actually knows English and very little Spanish, yet he was required to do everything in Spanish like the rest of the class! The afternoon was supposedly Polish-speakers (hence the different assistant) but all of them knew English so I was actually able to take charge of this group. I felt I accomplished much more with this group.

Wednesday I had only a half-day in, what do I call it again- next-door district? It was for middle-school math. The website said 7th grade, but when I got there I found out it was 8th grade. Oh well, the system has been wrong before. It was actually quite easy- most of the classes had tests, though I also went over homework answers. This teacher actually teaches five different classes out of her six teaching periods- unusual for middle school. Usually there are no more than three different classes, repeating the same lesson for more than one. Her one repeated class was in the morning so I only had two different lessons, though I did start the 5th-period class which would have been my third different plan. She arrived less than ten minutes in and took over.

Totally forgetting Wednesday when I had that entire afternoon free that there was a dealer in Barrington with two cars, I could kick myself when I realized I had forgotten and would have to fit them in Thursday instead. This is a small dealer that only has a couple of cars every few weeks. At least I did remember. Eventually. So I started off the morning by

going there. Of course, there had been some more snow Wednesday night so I didn't get there *too* early. I did the cars and was on my way to the next dealer when- 25-min in I realized I still had a set of keys from the first place. Oops. I turned around, angry with myself once all over again. The better part of an hour wasted. So I finally arrived at the next place, their lot cleared of snow, and found I had another bunch of cars like Monday. Two of them were too loaded with salt to do (hey, I just used three forms of a homophone/nym!), so I breathed a sigh of relief and headed to the final dealer with a good three hours of light to go, though it would be less by the time I got there. I finished with some light to spare. You are probably wondering about Monday right now. Yes, I did run out of light Monday, but when there is pressure to get things done at the end of the day like that I get all the photos out of the way first before I do the options and print the stickers, which tends to be the bulk of my time spent.

Friday I had only one dealer in the afternoon so I took a morning job in next-door district (still not sure if that's the name I gave it). It was for 3rd/4th grade. When I arrived, I said who I was there for and was handed a folder for a classroom that turned out to be 1st and 2nd grade. I looked at the name and it sounded right when I said it to myself, but while I didn't quite remember the spelling of the name I knew it didn't look right. I asked another teacher if this teacher taught 3rd/4th grade last year as sometimes that info doesn't get updated on the sub system (remember Wednesday). She thought for a few seconds and then informed me there was **another** teacher upstairs with almost the same name! I went back to the office to verify I was in the right class and found out that I was indeed given the wrong folder. Both teachers were out this morning, probably both for the same meeting I knew at least the one was at. I went upstairs

to let the other sub know we had been duped. She had almost the same story as me, knowing something wasn't quite right with the room she was in. We traded folders and I finally got a chance to look at the right plans. The morning actually went quite well. For the afternoon, instead of the usual two or three cars I had nine because for some reason the other photographer either didn't go there the day before like he usually does, or they didn't have any ready when he did which would have been strange considering nine were ready this time. Well, more commission for me I guess- something I will need because of the car repair bill. Sigh.

Saturday I was supposed to go cross-country skiing with a few guys from church, but when I called around Friday I couldn't find anyone who rented skis close by, and the one store that was recommended to me closed at 6PM Friday night, too early for me to go there. Well, I hope the others had a good time. Instead, I stayed home to receive that repair-bill shock...

Well, that was my week. How was yours?

Wow

A week ago (sadly, my most recent blog post) I blogged about a school district monitoring their students by remotely turning on the webcams of their school-issued laptops. This story has really ballooned. On one site I have been following a thread about it and many links have been posted. Here are a few-click the titles for the full articles:

Lower Pervian School District vs. Mike and Ikes

...AP reports the FBI is investigating the school district's webcam program, and district spokesman Doug Young suggests without claiming that Harriton High School student Blake J. Robbins' webcam was activated only because the laptop had been reported stolen – in accordance with an established policy. The boy was charged with an undisclosed infraction based on an image the school picked up from his webcam. District superintendent Christopher W. McGinley, in an orotund statement, defends the program while canceling it. And just to make clear that we're still in high school, Master Robbins appears to have gotten in trouble when he was photographed eating Mike and Ikes...

Federal judge orders Pa. schools to stop laptop spying

...Yesterday, U.S. District Court Judge Jan DuBois issued a consent order that prevents Lower Merion School District of Ardmore, Pa., from "remotely activating any and all web cams embedded in lap top [sic] computers issued to students ... or from remotely taking screenshots of such computers."

Lower Merion spokesman Doug Young said today that the district would fully cooperate with the court order...

The Spy at Harrington High (and more)

...The truly amazing part of this story is what's coming out from comments from the students themselves. Some of the interesting points:

- *Possession of a monitored Macbook was required for classes*
- *Possession of an unmonitored personal computer was forbidden and would be confiscated*
- *Disabling the camera was impossible*
- *Jailbreaking a school laptop in order to secure it or monitor it against intrusion was an offense which merited expulsion*

When I spoke at MIT about the wealth of electronic evidence I came across regarding Chinese gymnasts, I used the phrase "compulsory transparency". I never thought I would be using the phrase to describe America, especially so soon, but that appears to be exactly the case...

Software maker blasts 'vigilantism' in Pa. school spying case

The company selling the software used by a Pennsylvania school district to allegedly spy on its students blasted what it called laptop theft-recovery "vigilantism" today.

Absolute Software said it dissuades users of theft-recovery software from acting on their own. "We discourage any customer from taking theft recovery into their own hands," said Stephen Midgley, the company's head of marketing, in an interview Monday. "That's best left in the hands of professionals."...

There is now a [Wikipedia page](#) about the ongoing investigation of this lawsuit, though the blogs and articles (full of even more links for your perusal by the way) are more interesting IMHO.

Next up, something about my own unexciting life. Hopefully. ☐

How Far is Too Far?

Besides being a song from a show I was in once, this is a question we ask ourselves over and over again as the government or some other entity does some eyebrow-raising stunt. It seems a lot of such stunts have occurred in the recent decades, and this one isn't going to make you feel better. The question here is, what should a school be allowed to do to keep tabs on their students or the school property they use, in this case laptop computers? A lawsuit has been brought against a school district for remotely activating webcams when the computer is off-site. This came to light when a school had the gall to discipline a student for something that happened at his home using webcam footage as evidence. Now I can fully understand monitoring computer use when the computers are at the school. After all, at school students should be engaged in schoolwork. But at home? It isn't mentioned just what the student did at home, but even if it had something to do with the computer, should the school really be allowed to turn on the webcam? What if the student left his or her computer open in the bedroom while undressing for the night or to shower? I really hope this school goes down for this, but not with some big financial settlement as it would be the taxpayers of course who wind up paying. What

a stupid decision, in my humble opinion of course. Here is the article:

[BoingBoing: School used student laptop webcams to spy on them at school and home](#)

School used student laptop webcams to spy on them at school and home