

Bad Things Come In Threes

Ok, so no one in the family has bad health (at least not yet, we'll see what happens in a few weeks after the stress from the holidays and everything I'm about to unload takes its toll) and for that I am very grateful, but we have been hit by some bad luck in the past few days.

First was worst – my husband's hard drive went *kaput*. No warning; he just went to work Monday and found that virtually everything he had worked upon for the past 5 years or so is **gone**. Software he had written, info for clients that are now going to be extremely unhappy – **everything**. There are few options; everything he read on the internet about this problem raises little hope. He can send the hard drive away to a company with special equipment, but it's doubtful they can fix it, plus the price tag would be \$1500-2000. Basically there is no hope for the hard drive, and it's essentially as if he was laid off from his job less than a month before Christmas.

As if that wasn't enough, we noticed the other day that we no longer have a metal flap guarding our van's gas tank. We have no idea what happened to it, but now that it's missing, we are going through gas about twice as fast as we should be. Of course the car is no longer under warranty, so it will cost who-knows-how-much to fix it. The glove box broke months ago, and the tires are getting pretty bald (all 4 of course). We were going to get everything taken care of at the same time, but with no income now, that won't be happening.

And for #3 – our mortgage company decided to buy us extra disaster insurance for our house. Except it's not their treat – we have to pay for it. What happened is that we switched insurance companies about a month ago, trying to save money. Apparently there was some sort of mix-up, and everything was not transferred smoothly, leaving us lacking in the disaster

area of the insurance. So the mortgage company got us some of their own choosing, added \$300 to our monthly bill, and sent us a letter about it after it was too late to avoid paying this monthly fee. I hate insurance companies!!!

Don't mean to complain, like I said earlier, at least no one is ill and we do still have our health – that is the most important thing. And if it's really true that bad things happen in threes, then we should be done with the bad news for at least a little while, right?

Classy.

Family brawl erupts at children's pizza place

Deborah Donovan | Daily Herald Staff

Contact writer

CHICAGO:

Arlington Heights police are investigating a “family ordeal that got out of hand” Sunday night at the Chuck E. Cheese restaurant, 955 W. Dundee Road.

According to Sgt. Tom Boggs, a family was apparently celebrating the birthday of a young man in his early teens when other members of the family showed up, and an argument began.

“There was a pushing match and things were thrown,” said Boggs.

One person was taken to Northwest Community Hospital with a cut below an eye and another person went to a clinic for a cut on a hand.

“We tried to talk to everybody there last night,” Boggs said. “It’s hard to say at this point whether there will be charges.”

Boggs said he believes some of the participants had been drinking. He is not sure how many people were involved, but officers talked with five or six Sunday night.

While the altercation created a mess in the restaurant, no physical damage was done there, the sergeant said.

Boggs said the people involved were from the Northwest suburbs.

The restaurant has pizza, arcade games, shows and other things that appeal to young children. A woman who answered the phone Monday afternoon declined to comment on the record.

In His Hands

The next few weeks will not be easy ones. This morning, we learned that my “Aunt” Lu’s (my Uncle Bob’s current wife) mother passed away last night. A very long-lived lady... sweet as anything who lived a very prosperous life (91 years young with 12 kids, I think). She was a huge fan of the WCCT and she would come to shows quite often either with Lu or Father Fred. I remember that following *Grease*, she and Lu came to the basement to say Hi. She was also the Grandmother of one of my best friends.

Yesterday, we learned that Aunt Carol (Bob’s first wife) is nearing the end of her long fought battle with cancer. Definitely will be very hard this one. Care givers were at her house with my cousins and the rest of her family to

prepare them (as much as can be expected anyway.. can anyone really be prepared?) I'm not really sure how long she has been fighting, but it has been a great while in and out of remission until finally there is no more that can be done except to pray for Carol. So many great memories growing up, spending the night with my cousin until it was deemed inappropriate for Alicia and I to stay over at each others house (I think I was 8). At get togethers, we would always devise a plot whereby we would con the parents into allowing this. Very few people refer to me as "James" but I got so used to it that I expected Carol to address me as such. I remember a Christmas gift she gave me a few years back in a large envelope with "For Your Eyes Only" printed on the front. You will have to use your imagination to determine what was inside and it had nothing to do with the 12th 007 movie ☐

So... could be a rough few days ahead. Not the most opportune time of the year but I don't think there really is an appropriate time. But at least their suffering soon will be ended and will soon be in a much better place.

Tool Man

My almost 17-month-old son has started using "tools". When we put up the Christmas decorations, he started pulling chairs away from the table, pushing them over to the bookcase to try to climb and get at the nativity. Yesterday, he took down a wall hanging and began to use the hanger rod as a spoon for his mashed potatoes. When I told my dad about this mischief, he said that this behavior seems pretty smart. Yeah, I replied, smart like a chimpanzee! I really don't remember the girls doing so much climbing, tool-using, or just general

sabotage!

And another thing about little boys – the parental chasing. I always see moms chasing their little boys; running after them around the store, the zoo, wherever – and nine times out of ten, the kid being chased by the parent is a boy. I had a little boy almost a year and a half ago, and I've been wondering when my turn would come. Yesterday I got my answer. While I was getting my little boy dressed, he said an emphatic "NO!", then turned around and ran from me. He dove under the dining room table, where I had to drag him out, kicking and screaming. So yeah, the chasing of little boys by their parents begins shortly after they learn to walk.

Ah, the toddler days again – feels like it's been awhile, probably because the toddler in our family before our son was Disney, who is an almost perfectly behaved child. We often joke that Disney is [D.A.R.Y.L.](#) – remember that movie from the 80's about a boy who is actually a robot? And she is a quick learner! We've been doing "sight words" with our Kindergartener Sammie, which are flash cards with words on them, like "orange", "the", "purple", "my", "I", etc. Disney, who just turned 3, has been picking up the sight words as we practice with Sammie! She knows all the ones I listed above and is also starting to work on letter recognition – 3 years old is pretty early to start reading! I just feel badly for Sammie, who has her own gifts but is also very competitive by nature – it might be difficult for her to see her little sister learning certain things faster than herself.

But the point is, Disney's toddler stage was barely noticable, which is probably why her little brother seems like more than a handful – and I hate to tell myself this, but I think this is just the beginning!!

Modern Day Grinch/Scrooge/Mr. Potter

I think this real individual is NOW the king of the humbugs. Last weekend, a rather disgruntled gentleman shoved a Salvation Army bell ringer to the ground and stole the kettle that held the money passersby had dropped in. When he was apprehended, the person stated that he "hates Christmas and got tired of the ringing bell." So much for the mob of Black Friday last year who trampled a Wal-Mart employee to death.

MAUMEE, Ohio (AP) – A man who claimed to hate Christmas shoved a Salvation Army bell ringer to the ground and swiped one of the charity's red kettles stuffed with hundreds of dollars, police said.

The bell ringer, an unemployed woman, tried to pull the kettle away from the man Saturday evening, but he pushed her down and said, "I can't stand you and your bell-ringing. I hate Christmas," police said. The bell ringer chased him into a store parking lot before he tossed the kettle into the back of a stolen pickup truck and sped away, police said.

An empty kettle was found a day later. Police arrested Shawn Krieger of Toledo on Monday morning and charged him with robbery.

The Salvation Army estimated that the kettle held \$500 to \$700.

The bell ringer, whose name hasn't been released, had been collecting money outside a general store for most of the day when she was shoved from behind, said Capt. Steven Lopes, coordinator of the Salvation Army in northwest Ohio.

"She was so upset," Lopes said. "She was concerned that she wouldn't be allowed to bell-ring anymore. We want her to continue."

Krieger, 44, walked by the bell ringer at least twice before he made a grab for the money, said police Sgt. Jeff Siebenaler.

No witnesses have come forward even though the store was crowded, he said. "These things happen so fast sometimes people don't know what they saw was a crime occurring," Siebenaler said.

One shopper wrote down the truck's license plate number, and others consoled the bell ringer, who suffered a small cut when she tugged at the kettle, Lopes said.

Evidence inside the stolen truck, which was found in Toledo, led police to Krieger, Siebenaler said. Krieger could face more charges for the stolen vehicle, Siebenaler said.

Krieger was being held Monday on \$25,000 bond. The judge will assign a public defender to his case.

Not everyone likes the holiday season but what a hideous way to display it. Coal is too good to put in this man's stocking.

Tech Sunday

WAIT A MINUTE! Isn't this a week early?! We still have another full week and a few days before curtain. Weell... that may be but the Huber is always in a bind this time of year:

school programs, civic gatherings, etc. So, we must share the space with others. Mr. Potter would definitely find this situation downright despicable. But, I guess we will make nice. Yes, we did have the lights and mics going for the first time four our nearly 4 hour rehearsal... which was to be expected. However, it went rather well for the first time on stage, off book, all the way through with lights, sound, and set thrown in. I was pleasantly surprised how well I did with the lines. There was only one spot I really noticed where I forgot a line but the same is repeated only two lines later, so I will just pick it back up Thursday night.

Poor George... I'm not entirely sure that I would like to be in his shoes. All those lines. I have a great many, but.. OH, MY! In one of our scenes together, he asked me why I did not have my script. It was in the house being used for prompting.

I am also happy that I have been able to come up with my full costume... minus a hat... in my own personal wardrobe. I had to take my jacket to be cleaned, but that is to be done by Tuesday afternoon... good to go!

I must say that I think we have another heart-melting, scene-stealing little tyke on our hands. It's a good thing Mr. Potter and Zuzu do not share time on stage because I'm not sure I could keep the mean demeanor.

So... another 12 days before curtain. Just need to keep reading over my lines, getting my cues in order. I did get a new line tonight... added from the movie

Too much free time

Who complains about too much free time? Well, with no wife or kids, a dislike for many common social activities- okay let's just go with the truth here and say no friends I hang out with outside of church, and work that takes less than the normal eight hours plus lunch per standard, I just have too much free time. What do I do with it? Get movies from the library, spend time on the internet, and play games mostly- what a life, eh? In the last few days I have even purchased several games on [Steam](#)- did they have to make it so easy? I didn't even use steam until they had a \$9.99 sale on their [Orange Box](#) collection a few months ago. Now I have the complete Luxor marble game collection, Ghostbusters, GRID, and Osmos. Another service called [Direct2Drive](#) also successfully tempted me with a \$5 sale a short time back. I added no less than a half-dozen games from them including Neverwinter Nights 2 and Serious Sam Gold. A waste of time and money really. Well, I have been playing a lot of Serious Sam and the Luxor games, so just a waste of time in their case. To be fair, I didn't pay much for any of the titles, nowhere near full price, but still...

So what can I do instead? Theatre groups abound in this area, but I know very few of them anymore- I would have to look them up again. I have also looked a little into compassion ministries, serving those in need. I still have to look it up on the church website as I was directed to a few weeks ago. The obvious one in most people's minds is the friends issue. I have been to singles group, but it was very uncomfortable for me so I really don't go anymore. No friends that way. Perhaps through the other two potential outlets? I don't know. I know I have needed to schedule a quiet time with God, but I have known that for so long I wonder if I am really capable?

For now though I just sit here on the computer...

Back On The Hardwood

So much for retirement, eh? Tonight, my Uncle Bob returned to take command of yet another high school basketball team. He coached the high school girls for 12 years and retired. Last year, he co-coached the boys team and retired after the season ended. Finally last summer, he got the itch again while on the golf course and is now coaching the varsity girls team of his alma mater's biggest rival.

I really get a kick out of watching him perform. Very emotional, vocal, and BOY CAN HE PROJECT (of course, I have known that most of my life ☹)! Most of the family went to his return game tonight to support him... fun times, although... His team did well until the final act when the girls could not hit the broad side of a barn (the girls scored two points in the fourth frame) . The score was tied 28 a piece at the end of the third act and even through the first two or three minutes of the final period. I think the three pointer by the opposing team took a lot of the wind out of their sails. But as Uncle Bob said, they have a lot of work ahead of them.

Holiday Fun & Chaos

The chaos actually began Wednesday morning. Mom was working in the beauty shop... **UNTIL 11** at which time she wanted the kitchen. At ten, Dad decides it is the perfect time to strip the counter top off. Granted, it is pretty old, worn, and could stand to be replaced... but the day before we have company over for Thanksgiving?! Oh, MY... am I glad I had to go to work

from 12-9.

After my 9 hour shift, I returned to see him still at it. Mom was already in bed, but I can imagine the scene at home. I would not want to have been there ☐ . At around 11.30, he decides it is good enough and **THEN** decides to run the vacuum. At 11.45, Mom comes out, gives him a dirty look, and walks back into the bedroom... nothing even needed to be said.

Thursday morning, I got up at 8 in time to shower, bring the table and chairs down from upstairs, then watch the Macy's parade. Ironically, my favorite part of the 3 hour extravaganza is not the floats, nor the balloons. It is watching the performers from Broadway shows and singing groups seeing how badly they can lip sync. Who is Boy Likes Girl? I must be getting really old! Did anyone see Gloria Gaynor and her 30 year old "I Will Survive?"

After the parade came (not the dog show) the traditional immediate family dinner. Ma and Pa, siblings and their families. I did not indulge too much because I had two other meals to attend. I did get to see Chad and his pumpkin pie (or was it Cool Whip with a bit of pumpkin).

After digesting a bit, I ventured to another gathering. I knew I had a good amount of time between the afternoon and evening gathering so I went to the home of my wonderful friends and had smoked turkey and other delicious food. We have never had smoked turkey, but I find it enjoyable. Carol brought a game that I swear I did not cheat at. I read a few cards without looking at the answer and put them in the back of the box. It's only cheating if you look at the answer ☐ And I was treated to The Potty Movie... thanks girls. I found it quite odd that a 3 year old had a strangely deep feminine voice.

Finally, I returned home for our traditional Thanksgiving celebration with my mother's family. In total, we probably

had 20-25 people in the house. It's always good to be surrounded by family and loved ones but something about the holidays makes it even greater. Maybe it's the constant ribbing Chad tries to dish out about sports but knows he is fighting a losing battle. Outnumbered about 16:1. But the Cowboys again won their gimme. Maybe that's why they always play on Turkey Day. Sorry I can't say the same for the Lions.

Finally, about 10, everyone was gone, tables and chairs put back. and I was pooped. I wanted to go back for a game night, but I did have to be at work at 6.30 this morning and I almost did not make that! Hope everyone had a great holiday giving thanks for the many blessings we receive every day!

Thanksgiving Favorites

I forgot to poll our Thanksgiving guests, but I was wondering about everyone's favorite Thanksgiving dish. Judging by what the kids had for breakfast this morning, I would say my kids' favorite Thanksgiving dishes are as follows:

Taylor, age 9 – sweet potatoes (we put marshmallow creme in ours)

Sammie, age 5 – mashed potatoes and gravy

Disney, age 3 – oatmeal (ok, so oatmeal wasn't at the Thanksgiving dinner, but Disney didn't really eat Thanksgiving dinner, so I don't think she has a favorite dish. She LOVES oatmeal though!)

Christopher, age 16 mos. – turkey

And for lunch, Mom and Dad had their first delicious leftover sandwiches. They were so good we think we'll have the same

for dinner. We got a smoked turkey this year, and it was delicious! It was great to not have to mess with cooking a turkey with great company and all these little ones underfoot. There are so many ways to make a leftover sandwich; the best way is of course with creamed onions. We didn't have any creamed onions leftover this year, but my husband's yummy mashed potatoes make a really good leftover sandwich condiment. And not having leftover creamed onions is a good thing – I'm glad people enjoyed them! Creamed onions are my favorite Thanksgiving dish AND my husband's! So what's yours? Feel free to add anything in the comments section I may have forgotten!

[poll id="10"]