

Opinion

6A - Monday, July 31, 2023

A GRACE FILLED JOURNEY • by Mary Herschelmann

Family Van Brings Back Memories



I'm not always much of a saver of things. Most days, I'm more of an "out with the old and in with the new" kind of gal.

As the girls have outgrown their clothes, I have lovingly packed them in boxes for Hearts United, hoping that other families will get as much use out of them as we did. And it's extra nice because Hearts United uses the funds from the donations to help our local communities. I'm working on doing the same thing with outgrown toys, but it seems to be a much bigger process.

It's not that I'm not sentimental, more just practical. I saved a small box of the girls' clothes, including both the outfits they came home from the hospital in, as well as my wedding dress. Both are stored in Charley's closet.

This past week, our family took a road trip vacation to the Mall of America in Minnesota, adding almost 1,200 miles to our nearly ten-year-old minivan. We didn't quite cross the 125,000 mile mark this adventure, but it won't be long.

And while I hope our van lasts us for several more years, I also sort of look forward to picking out something new (or new to us) in the near future.

But when I start to think about our minivan, and the adventures we have taken together, I know it will be hard to give up as well.

Grace was only three-years-old when we got our brand new Dodge Caravan. And believe it or not, it was Kyle that wanted the van more than me. We signed a contract to pay it off in seven years, and at the time, just hoped that it lasted until we paid it off. It had less than a dozen miles on it when we drove it off the lot.

Kyle said it would be easier to get Grace in and out of a van than our car (and he was right). And he felt like it would be a good fit for our family. I eventually caved, and we

have enjoyed our van ever since.

I honestly think that van could find its way to Springfield by itself as many Friday trips as we made for physical therapy appointments. It was nice to have extra room for Grace in the back. And eventually, when we got a medical stroller for her, it was great to have a place to put it in the back of the van.

We didn't make quite as many trips to St. Louis, MO, for appointments in the van, but I imagine it could find its own way there as well.

And we brought Charley home from the hospital in that van. I can remember craning my neck back the whole trip home from Springfield to make sure she was still breathing.

In addition to our big road trip this summer, the van was a home-away-from-home for us another road trip when we visited my brother and his wife in Washington, DC, one summer. Charley was about one-and-a-half, and it was about that time, we learned about her issues with motion sickness. I have to say we have cleaned puke up out of the van more times than I can count.

We also made two trips to New Jersey together as part of the first-ever clinical trial for INAD, logging over 3,400 miles over the two trips, and stopping for adventures in Philadelphia, PA.

On our way to Minnesota, I got to thinking about all of our adventures, and they haven't always been happy ones, but I choose to remember the laughs, the smiles and most of all being together.

So, while I'm not super attached to things, I think it will be hard to let go of our minivan someday, just knowing all the places it helped us go with Grace.

I know someday, we will trade it in for something else, maybe even something sportier (I've had my eye on a Mustang), but I'll also always be partial to a red minivan that took our family on wonderful adventures together.

IMAGINE HILLSBORO CHECKS IN • by Lucas Altenberger

Busy Summer For Imagine Hillsboro



Welcome back to Imagine Hillsboro Checks In! This column features a bi-monthly update regarding all things Imagine Hillsboro. Summer is well underway, which brings us to one of our busiest seasons of the year. This summer is particularly eventful, with Hillsboro's bicentennial celebrations and the "Spark! Places of Innovation" Smithsonian exhibit. Furthermore, the Events and Festivals committee has been busy with the return of a few community-favorite events. Regarding internal updates, Imagine Hillsboro committees and leaders had the opportunity to meet in-person at The Coop on July 14. This Meeting-of-the-Whole gave stakeholders a chance to collaborate and meet new leaders and members within Imagine Hillsboro.

In June, Bicentennial celebrations kicked off with a weekend full of family fun. A 200th birthday is no small feat, and Hillsboro celebrated accordingly. The birthday party event included cake, bounce houses, sack lunches, a plaque dedication ceremony, and more. The weekend ended with a revamped Mother-and-Son "Battlefest Palooza" event, full of obstacle courses, pizza, water guns, and the perfect amount of (slightly) competitive fun.

Friday, July 28 saw the reveal of the "Spark!" Smithsonian exhibit, right here in Hillsboro. Launch party guests had the opportunity to get a first look at the exhibit before it opened to the public the following day. Included with tickets were meals and drinks from Opera House Brewing Co. and Que One Seven. The exhibit, located in the basement of Hillsboro Public Library, is now open to the public through Sept. 2, during regular library hours. Additional visiting hours to be announced. Patrons may be interested to know there are two collaborations

with Alpha Candles currently running: a Birthday Cake candle, and a Spark! candle. To purchase, message the Imagine Hillsboro Facebook page, or speak with an Imagine Hillsboro volunteer at the exhibit or one of our events.

Two staple Imagine Hillsboro events made their return this year: the Cardboard Boat Regatta and the Free Back 2 School Store. For the first time since 2019, spectators witnessed homemade boats racing the lake waters. This successful event, held July 15, was complete with food available for purchase and ended with an awards ceremony. On July 22, hundreds of families were helped with common back-to-school needs, such as supplies and backpacks, haircuts, clothes and shoes, and personal hygiene items. Lunch, drinks, and snacks were also provided. A huge thank-you to everyone who helped give this event a successful comeback. If you are interested in helping with next year's event, please contact Cassie Malloy at cassiem.1988@gmail.com.

Imagine Hillsboro is still in the midst of the Farmer's Market season. New this year, several pop-up "night markets" have also been announced. Be on the lookout for these on social media, as you may find some vendors you cannot find on a Saturday market. As always, the Farmer's Market season will conclude with a Harvest Market, to be held on Saturday, Oct. 7. Looking ahead, you may also want to mark your calendars for Storybook Christmas on Saturday, Nov. 25.

Imagine Hillsboro at-large is planning another 5K race. Although in its early stages of planning, you can look for updates on the Imagine Hillsboro website in the coming weeks. The race is scheduled to take place October 14. Stay tuned for further details regarding the second annual "Shake the Lakes" 5K!

DID YOU KNOW? • Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Litchfield Museum and Route 66 Welcome Center

Did You Know About... Electus Bachus

The City of Litchfield is named for Electus Bachus Litchfield who came to the community in 1855/56 to procure the right of way and establish the railroad system through the area. Litchfield, who was born in Delphi, NY, on Feb. 15, 1813, to Elisha and Percy Tiffany Litchfield, was director of the Terre Haute and Alton Railroad.

Litchfield never actually lived in Litchfield, however, some of his family members did eventually move to the city; seven are buried in Elmwood Cemetery. Edwin C. Litchfield was a lawyer specializing in railroad legislation. Electus B. and Elisha C. Litchfield owned a wholesale grocery business,

but soon joined their brother and "went railroading."

In 1836, Electus married Hannah Marie Randall Breed of Norwich, NY. They had five children, Charles T, William B, Arthur B, Mary Eliza (wife of Walton E. Colton), and Heloise M. (wife of George A. Allin).

Electus Bachus Litchfield died May 12, 1889, at his home in Brooklyn, NY, of pneumonia. He is buried in the Greenwood Cemetery.

Further information about Electus Bachus can be found by visiting the Litchfield Museum and Route 66 Welcome Center located at Historic Route 66 North in Litchfield. The museum and welcome center is open



Electus Bachus

to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and from 1 to 4 p.m. on Sundays.

Joe's Corner

by Joe Rollins



A FEW GOOD THOUGHTS • by Isaiah Atkins

Tom Cruise Can't Stop Running



"Running in movies since 1981," reads Tom Cruise's Twitter bio. The simple five word statement is a remarkably accurate description of his incredible movie career.

Mission: Impossible Dead Reckoning Part One released in theaters on July 12 to an exceptional reception, with a 96 percent critic score on Rotten Tomatoes (the audience score has yet to be posted, but I imagine it will be similarly high.)

With that comes an excellent opportunity to examine the career of the biggest movie star of the past and present generations and potentially future, ever since he arrived on screen 42 years ago.

While his first roles came as a bit role in 1981's "Endless Love" and then a small supporting role 1981's "Taps," Cruise leapt onto the screen as "greaser" Steve Randle in 1983's adaptation of S.E. Hinton's young adult novel, "The Outsiders."

"The Outsiders" was a pivotal moment in movie history, as it ushered in a new era of Hollywood.

Rob Lowe, who made his film debut alongside Cruise in the film, recently said that, "anyone and everyone was auditioning for that movie. Every young actor knew that if they got the part, they were in."

They were right, and Cruise, Lowe and the rest of the cast members, including Patrick Swayze, Ralph Macchio, Emilio Estevez and Matt Dillon, would all go on to have major film success, ushering in a new generation. With that came a new definition of a movie star, a heavier focus on the persona of the actor, and less on the character they were playing. Think Sly Stallone, who made a career out of being muscular.

No one better represented this shift, however, than Tom Cruise, film's megastar of megastars. Cruise's career would launch into the stratosphere, as he ripped off nearly 20 years worth of hits, including 1983's "Risky Business," "Top Gun," the highest grossing movie of '86, "Rain Man" in '88, "A Few Good Men" in '92, "The Firm" in '93, 96's "Jerry Maguire" and of course, 96's "Mission: Impossible."

He was the most bankable movie star in the world, possessing a midas-touch, turning every picture he appeared in to box office gold.

Somewhere along the line however, things got strange. Cruise's personal life, got weird, for lack of a better word. A few failed marriages, a jumping-on-a-couch interview and

a conversion to Scientology, all simultaneous with an incredible Tom Hanks run, left Cruise as the second most sought after 'Tom' in Hollywood.

Cruise's unflappable charm was losing its way. His public reputation was not necessarily ruined, but 'Tom Cruise, Actor,' was becoming harder and harder to separate from 'Tom Cruise, Human.' And his movies suffered from it, whether directly or indirectly, as many of them lacked the memorable touch that had made his early career so outstanding.

How does Cruise respond? He pivots hard, beginning to lean more into science fiction and action, and leaving drama behind. He hasn't been involved in a non action picture since 2007's "Lion For Lambs."

The choice to become an action star could possibly be the reason that Cruise has retained his title as the premiere actor in the world. By distancing himself from films that deal excessively with the human condition, i.e. the romance, emotions and relationships, he has effectively weakened the critique on his own personal self.

When watching a Tom Cruise movie from the past decade, be it 2022's "Top Gun: Maverick," one of the multiple stellar "Mission: Impossible" sequels or even 2013's lackluster "Oblivion," the audience is not asked often to look deeply at the person Tom Cruise.

On screen, he is rarely challenging the audience to think critically about their humanity, instead he is driving a motorcycle off a cliff (an impressively real stunt) or hanging on to the side of an airplane (another impressively real stunt).

These incredible stunts and set pieces showcase Cruise in almost unbelievable breathtaking scenarios. The protagonist he plays is always asked to save the world as the last man standing between life and destruction. He always does, too.

Cruise, after an incredible run to begin his career, was shown to the world as who he really is, a flawed human just like the rest of us.

In response, he took himself out of the world, hiding the person and replacing him with a character, the perfect action movie star, one so perfectly normal, with no flaws or slipups that ever imply anything out of the ordinary. A character that audiences will go to see again and again, the 'savior of movie theaters' as Steven Spielberg claimed in 2023. A character so human, that he almost seems inhuman.

A character who, at 61, is still running, because if he stops running, it all might fall apart, and this time for good.

GUEST COLUMN • by Valerie Belusko

Take Advantage Of A Small Pond

This column is for everyone, but if you are a young adult or a parent of a young adult, pay close attention!

Small towns are great places to live (even though it doesn't always seem that way when you are a kid). True, small towns do not offer the constant excitement of the big city, but it does offer opportunity—especially if you know how to look for it. It can be annoying listening to adults complain about needing an electrician or contractor but not being able to find one without a long waiting list.

You can hear these conversations as a teenager or young adult and make one of two choices. You can decide that "small-town life" does not have what you need, or you can recognize that small-town life can offer a chance for you to build a career and future! Keep your eyes open for what is missing or in short supply. Talk to your teachers and family members and take an inventory of your community's needs. Then think about aligning your interests to coincide with the community needs for optimum success.

Small communities have many opportunities, but you must learn how to find and plan for them. Building community trust is a very important first step. How do you do this? Volunteer on community and school projects to get yourself noticed. Get a part-time job and learn to do it well. Practice soft skills and learn how to communicate among all generations (both written and spoken). Do not break promises. Finish your job and

never leave something half done. (If your job is to weed a garden, then your job is also to get rid of the weeds and clean/put away any tools that were used when working.) Dress for success. (If you volunteered to help plant trees understand that flip-flops are not the appropriate footwear for that job.) Lastly, keep your nonverbal communication in check. Be cognizant of giving a "side-eye" or having an angry look on your face.

While this may seem like a lot to tackle as a teen, this puts you on a path to success! Build a brand of being responsible, and then go to school to learn skills that your community desperately needs to fill. Create a path to financial success and the freedom to create your own schedule and be your own boss.

Could you do this in a larger town? Of course, but remember that it is easier to be a big fish in a small pond than a big fish in a big pond.

As a Community and Economic Development Educator I can offer programing to your school, directed at eighth through 12th graders, to help prepare young adults for their future.

For more information about these services and programs contact me (Valerie Belusko), at valerieb@illinois.edu or call 217-532-3941. I serve Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery counties.

Valerie Belusko is a University of Illinois Extension community and economic development educator.

First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.