



NEWSLETTER

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Our Next SOCO Meeting

Our next SOCO meeting will be on **JAN. 13, 2018** at **09:30a.m.** in St. Matthias' Reading Enrichment Room. St. Matthias is located at 1582 Ferris Rd. in Columbus.

YOUNG AGAIN

Finishing my brief session with a small group of second year Ohio State University College of Medicine students I suddenly realized that I had been wasting their time. I was babbling inappropriate anecdotes on unrelated subjects in completely random fashion, off topic and dull. The students were polite, bored, and tolerant. They were eager to get on to their patients for the afternoon. Mentoring these students is a portion of my volunteer activity at the Columbus, OH, Veteran's Administration Ambulatory Care Clinic. I think that I am appropriately senile but not demented; what had seized my mind?

My role with these students is to aid their clinical contact with patients at the VA Outpatient facility, probably the first such hands-on with patients they have experienced and certainly the only exposure to a not-for-profit, comprehensive medical delivery system that they will get during all their medical education. I have some latitude in dealing with subjects that I feel will benefit their skills as patient-focused physicians headed into their professional careers but I try to concentrate on case presentations. I hold fifty years of medical experience, now mostly the art, a little science remains, and a lingering love of teaching.

A few days later I was with family: wife and daughter, granddaughter and four great-grandchildren in a McDonald's play-place having free play and lunch. The oldest great-grandchild in the group was Michael, a four year old. Watching and eating it suddenly became clear: octogenarians are very much like four years olds. Four year olds are bull-headed, easily distractible, flighty, and exercise poor self-control. Four years olds are self-absorbed and shallow. When four year olds need to pee you'd better get them to the toilet. They are very proud when they accomplish "number 2". Four year olds are a work-in-progress, a transitional form, a changing organism; they are going to be different tomorrow. Four year olds need exterior restraints, firm guidelines, limitations on their conduct, assistance in maintaining appropriate focus, rules. Four year olds need steady guidance, preferably gentle, to enhance their small contributions, and equally gentle reminders to get back on point when they are wandering. The four year old has significant mobility impairment, he/she is a toddler.

All of the above exactly describes this eighty year old. The medical students must bear some responsibility for this learning dialogue; hold me on task, kindly steer me toward their interests, draw from me what I can offer. Another shocking idea has seized me: if I am so fortunate that I survive to be ninety will I be more like a three year old, a two year old, or - - - YIKES, a six month old.

Bill Myers, MD

Miracle on 34th St

Well, Westerville North's production of *Miracle on 34th Street* is done. Final performance was today at 2:00. Crowd size grew each performance. Today's crowd was near capacity.

This awesome journey began for me last summer, when my cell phone rang while I was cruising on the Ohio River near Marietta. It was Mrs. M., the drama coach at Westerville North (the high school from which my son graduated), inviting me to audition for the role of Kris Kringle. I was to be the only adult in the cast, because they wanted a real bearded Santa.

All the other 'adult roles' were filled by high school actors; we also had many elementary and pre-school children, with high schoolers cast as their parents. Some of the teens had stage experience, and were quite good; others were making their acting debuts, and required a lot of coaching from Mrs. M.

The youngest cast member was 3-year-old Clayton, who had but one line, in the zoo scene: "C'mon Mommy, c'mon Daddy, let's go see the reindeer!" Then he would run across the stage to the reindeer barn. In the first rehearsal where he was present he got out his line just fine, ran across the stage, but kept on going, down the stairs and up to where his Grandpa was sitting in the auditorium. Mrs. M. called, "Come on back, Clayton. We're not done! We have to practice this scene one more time." Clayton replied, "No, I stay with Papaw now." In later rehearsals he did better, though he sometimes said or did unpredictable things not in the script. But he didn't make one mistake in any of our four public performances.

After the show Friday night, little Clayton gave me his Christmas card. I opened it, and saw that he had written some 3-year-

old scribble on one panel of the card, but on the facing panel his mother had printed a legible translation of what he said: "Dear Kris Kringle, I love you because every day when I come to play practice, you are there. Love, Clayton." Now, THAT's a keeper! Those who have seen the movie know that Kris Kringle does not sing – except for the little 4-line song with the little Dutch girl – but, knowing I sing in other shows, Mrs. M decided to let me insert a song appropriate to the show. I chose Gene Autry's 1940's song, *When Santa Claus Gets Your Letter*, which I sang near the end of the show, after Susan's letter is given to Kris, but before the voice-over reading of Susan's letter is heard over the speakers. It's a very touching addition.

I also made one other contribution to the script: during one rehearsal, I cracked a joke during a lull. Mrs. M. heard it, and said, "Let's add that in!" Here's the joke:

"Do you know where Santa deposits his money?"

"No."

"In a Snow Bank – because making all those toys requires lots of cold, hard cash." Being in the lead role, I was in 17 of 32 scenes, and needed multiple costume changes, sometimes in very limited time. In dress rehearsal, it became readily apparent I could not accomplish all this without help. Mrs. M. assigned me two handlers, Jude and Uvena, one at Stage Left, the other at Stage Right, who would be ready no matter which side I had to enter or exit a scene. We had a minor hiccup in the second scene the first two nights, but none of which the audience was aware. The third and fourth performance came off without a hitch.

I told Mrs. M. on Saturday that I begin each day by doing two online crossword puzzles, to test my mental acuity.

“This morning I finished the USA Today puzzle in record time – 6 minutes and 8 seconds – and I knew it was going to be a great day!”

Working with these kids has been an absolute joy. Of the cast of 73, I had only met two before: Alina, a ninth grader whose dad is a fellow Hanby House volunteer guide, and Avamarie, the third grader whom we chose to play the role of Susan Walker. (I participated in the audition of six little girls who auditioned for that key role.) Both of these two girls have been a part of Vaudvilities productions, and have appeared with me on stage there before, though not this closely. Avamarie had a particularly impressive audition: she came with an 8 X 10 glossy photo and a resume listing her prior stage credits. At the audition she was given three pages of script. She reviewed them for 15 minutes, then placed the script face-down on the table and delivered her lines flawlessly. She has been a joy to work with. The drama club has a tradition: they gather back stage before each performance, lock arms, and sing *The Lord Bless You and Keep You*, in awesome harmony. Then various ones make remarks. For this show they added a new twist: they all moved to the dressing room, shut the doors and sang a loud and raucous rendition of *All I Want for Christmas is YOU*.

At tonight’s ‘dark room’ session they asked me to be the last speaker. I told them what an honor and pleasure it has been to work with them on this production, and how impressed I was with how it all came together. I thanked them for their help “in making me look better than I could possibly be on my own.” I shared that I have been in many theatrical settings, but none with this large a role, “one which I consider the role of a life-

time!” And I thanked Mrs. M. for giving me this wonderful opportunity to work with such fantastic kids.

Roy Nichols

Mark Your Calendars!

We have the Bexley library's auditorium booked for the February 3rd meeting of the Ohio Storytelling Network.

On February 3, 2018, The Storytellers of Central Ohio will be hosting the next meeting of the Ohio Storytelling Network. It will be held at the Bexley Public Library at 2411 E. Main Street Bexley, Ohio 43209 in their auditorium. We have the auditorium scheduled for the entire day and more information about the events of the day will be forthcoming. In the meantime, since we are trying to support the re-building of the OSN, please spread the word about the next meeting of the OSN on February 3rd at the Bexley Public Library!

Teri Lott

