

# The Hastings Senior Times™

The Hastings Family Times™ & The Hastings Community Calendar™

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## Grandparents Are Special: A Bicycle for Paul

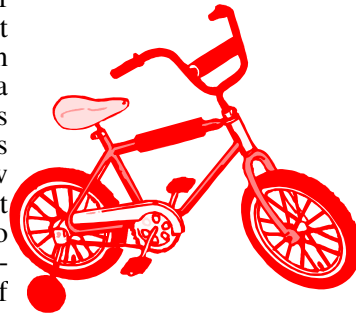
by Andrew D. Callahan, Editor

The year 1994 was a hectic one for our family, and for me in particular. I often felt that I wasn't giving my children the attention they needed. My second son, Paul, wanted a bicycle. As the year began he was six years old and often talked of wanting a bicycle. As Paul's June birthday approached I don't know if he talked about a bicycle less, or if I just heard him less. I had recently changed jobs to a more time consuming one. My father's cancer progressed quickly and I found myself spending more and more time with my parents who lived ten miles away.

As Paul's birthday approached I got a wonderful opportunity to teach a heavy schedule at a local community college. There was only the promise of one summer's work, so in addition to keeping my full-time job, I started teaching six days a week. My father's health took a turn for the worse. Paul's birthday came and went with no bicycle. My father died in July.

In August, just as my summer of teaching was ending, a close family friend died, and my wife was the executor of the estate. The best description of the estate is that it was cluttered and required months of physical labor to clean before it could be disposed of. Both of our cars failed in 1994 and had to be repaired frequently and ultimately replaced.

As Christmas neared Paul was again talking about wanting a bicycle. He was sure that Grandma would get him one for Christmas. This expectation was reasonable as my parents had always bought the bicycles and tricycles for my children. I cautioned Paul that he might not get a bicycle, "Grandma has been very busy since Grandpa died.



Things are kind of difficult for her right now." All of my cautions were to no avail as the buoyant seven-year-old became more and more convinced that he would get a bicycle for Christmas.

Finally, about a week before Christmas I asked my mother if she had gotten a bicycle for Paul. She had not. I then went out to the local K-mart and bought a bicycle for Paul. Because we traditionally opened all of our gifts at my parents' home, I took the bicycle to mother's house and put it in the large shed in her front yard.

Just a couple of days later, Paul was spending Friday night with Grandma. This was a special treat for him, of course, and it was also a plus for my recently widowed mother. Early Saturday morning grandmother and grandson went out to work in the yard. This was Florida, after all, and yard work needs to be done all year round. They needed some tools so Paul headed for the large shed in the front yard. Realizing that he would see the bicycle and spoil his Christmas surprise, my mother redirected Paul to "Grandpa's shed," the small shed in the back yard.

The shed door hadn't been opened in most of a year and Paul wasn't able to open it himself. Grandma came to help. In the shed they found my father's final gift: a little used bicycle that he had carefully and lovingly repainted and spruced up for Paul the preceding Spring before his health failed.

1994 was a very good Christmas for us. Our family wishes you a joyous and happy holiday season this year.

## Final Issue of The Hastings Times, Maybe

This is a special combined issue of The Hastings Senior Times and The Hastings Family Times. Unfortunately, it is also the last, at least for now. Equipment failures are the immediate cause of our sudden, and unexpected demise. We will explore possibilities of getting things back up and running, but it doesn't look promising for the immediate future. If we are able to start back up, it will

be after the first of the year.

We are extremely grateful to all our readers, advertisers, and friends for all their support. We have a long list of things we still want to write about, and much that we feel still needs to be said about this wonderful little city, its history, and its people. Keep a positive outlook. Look for the good things.

We hope to be back. Thanks for reading.

### Joe Heltne Correction

In last week's story about the Chorus of the Plains, we misspelled Joe Heltne's name. We also incorrectly identified him with the J.M. McDonald Planetarium instead of the J.M. McDonald Department Stores.



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# Time Out for Life

By Tamera Schlueter

I've heard the same questions a hundred times since quitting an administrative job at Hastings College a few years ago. Are you *enjoying* your retirement? What are you *doing* with your free time? Aren't you *bored*? I know what they're thinking. I work. My spouse works. Over sixty percent of American women with school-aged children work. What makes you so special?

In some respects they have a valid point. You don't walk away from jobs like mine without a darn good reason. I had three: a husband and two sons.

Other families seem to manage dual careers while raising children just fine. They juggle board meetings and soccer games, deadlines and dinner menus like they were born for it. But I was an organizational nightmare. I lost library books and report cards, forgot baseball practices and school conferences. I tossed sandwiches in the sack the same way I lobbed newspaper in the trash. I was unceremoniously booted out of three car pools for dereliction of duty.

My house was a disaster. Clothes fresh from the dryer were dumped on the couch in hopes they might actually be folded before being worn. Showers required a tetanus shot, the vacuum cleaner filed a missing owner's report, and dinner choices were limited to three flavors of frozen pizza. Checkbooks went unbalanced and the dishes were washed once a week whether they needed it or not.

We were rats on an exercise wheel. We made good money, but we spent more too. We worried what our sons would recall about their childhood, when "hurry up" was heard as often as "I love you." When home cooked meals meant somebody died, and more time was spent in the car than was shared reading books. They'd remember parents too tired to throw footballs and too busy to hang out with them. Our family history was being written, and it had all the charm of a horror story.

We called a family meeting one night over a steaming slice of pepperoni pizza. If I quit, it would mean less Nike and more store brands, fewer Big Macs and more broccoli. But the final vote was unanimous. I gave my notice and crossed my fingers. On my last day of work, my husband gave me roses with a card that read "Welcome Home Stranger." I turned in my office keys and never looked back.

I leapt into my new role with gusto. I tackled the scary closet that ate the school's video last year. I dusted off the pots and pans and started cooking real meals. The dog stopped growling at me and the neighbors quit calling the police to report a suspicious person.

I learned a lot about life. Titles are better on books than they are on business cards. People are happier in tube socks than pantyhose. Popcorn in pajamas tastes better than cocktail wieners in business suits. Kids talk more in a five-minute ride home from school than they do in the five hours before bedtime. Life is better when the beds are made.

Some still think I'm nuts for trading my suits for jeans. But I'm too busy joking with my boys to give a darn about what anybody says. And when asked if I'm enjoying retirement, I smile and walk away.

Time is ruthless. We run ourselves ragged to get promoted and retire comfortably. But after our children have moved away, we'll realize how fast it all went by. We'll remember the faces we told to wait. Wait 'til tonight. Wait 'til the weekend. Wait 'til I'm finished. And we'll wonder: was it all really worth it?

*Editor's note: Tamera Schlueter now works as the very happy, very part-time director of the Cottonwood Festival. Her husband and teenage sons admit she still needs a crash course in organization, but the laundry's always folded and the food is a whole lot better.*

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# The Hastings Family Times™ Original & Local Word Search

## #13

by Paul Callahan, Age 16 - "Thanksgiving"

carrots	Indians	Papa Rays	Russ's
corn	Jack and Jill	Pax Christi	Statue of Liberty
dressing	Kensington	Pilgrim	Sunmart
El Patio	Lincoln	Pizza Hut	Thanksgiving
feast	Mayflower	Plymouth	Thursday
football	meat	potatoes	turkey
Godfathers	November	prayer	yams
hot rolls	Papa Johns	pumpkin pie	

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## Editor's Parting Thoughts

by Andrew D. Callahan, Editor

We planned a special combined issue for Thanksgiving, but not quite like this. I had envisioned 12 pages or so, with extra puzzles & features. I'm glad we could at least put in Tamera Schlueter's story. The front page story about Paul's bicycle was originally planned for our Christmas issue. I had two other "special" Christmas stories also.

Among the other stories I had hoped to write in future weeks were the new Children's Museum, the long-time dream of the new owner of Papa Ray's Pizza, a story about family businesses featuring brothers Bob and Murray Wilson of the Brand Wilson Funeral Home and many others.

There are too many people to thank but the two that can't be left out are my wife Cecile and my son Paul. Cecile has graciously worked with me and encouraged from the start. Every man should be so fortunate to have a wife like mine. Paul has been absolutely invaluable as my Production Manager, doing most of the printing, folding, and other essential "behind the scenes" work. Two thumbs up for Paul.

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