

# Technology Tips

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## A Teacher's Christmas Tale

This is a variation of that Christmas story by Dickens. Please forgive me for a little poetic license as it were. **BTW**-the names have **not** been changed to protect the innocent (for the most part anyway).

*The Author*

### Spirit the 1st

Snow crunched under the feet of the man as he made his way across the parking lot. It was a cold morning, but the chilled wind had no affect on him as he said hello to the custodian and chuckled at a joke the man made about the local football team and their masculinity after a loss the previous Sunday. Entering the school at his usual time, 6:30 a.m., he knew was early but it gave him time to move into the day.

"Mr. M.!!!" said the smartly dressed secretary from the front office. "We've got people signing up for conferences with you."

"Good morning to you too Maria," he said with a chuckle. "But... me? I'm a technology coach, I don't have regular students like the rest of the folks around here. Who'd want to speak to me?"

"When the Superintendent started that program for Open Houses once a month during extended days, we started getting lots of calls," Maria said as they walked down the soon-to-be-busy hall toward the office. "And... believe it or not, some of the students actually like you."

"Yeah, but on the day before Christmas break?" he sighed.

"You're just lucky I guess. Besides, there's only a few

of them," she smiled.

"Ah well, the pressure of being so popular I suppose," he said with a smirk.

"I'll send them down to your office. I think they're only coming one an hour, so you shouldn't be too overwhelmed" Maria said as she smirked back and laughed good naturedly.

"Thanks."

### Spirit the 2nd- The Past

It was a little over an hour later when a young man in an Army uniform knocked on his office door.

"Come in" M said as he stared at the computer screen trying to figure out color schemes from a web design by one of the students he was working with.

"Good Morning sir," the young man said as he entered the room and noticed that M was looking at him as if trying to place his face. "You won't know me sir, but I know you. I'm here because of a man in my unit. We served together in Iraq and he was always talking about the Mythology book you gave him when he passed your class."

The look on M's face dropped a little which didn't go unnoticed by the soldier. "Oh, don't worry sir," he said with a smile "...Sergeant Morrison is fine. He's actually stationed at Fort Shafter in Hawaii. I just wanted to meet the teacher that made such an impression on

him. He said you wouldn't mind if I stopped by. I'd like to know ..."

### Spirit the 3rd- The Present

Later, after the young man had left, M was walking down the hallway on the first floor when he was approached by a member of the Key Club. The young woman had a number of flyers in her hand that were embossed with the school's IB logo and the official Key club logo as well.

"Hi Mr. M.! Have a flyer. The Key Club is going a

little bit further this year than last." she said cheerfully. "Usually we try to give 25 kids their "Christmas Wish", but with the way things are this year, it's kind of hard on so many more families than it was before. I mean working with the MSPCC is great because we can really get to help out using our carnation money and all but...we want to do more. There are more kids out there that won't have a nice Christmas if we don't do something, so we're gonna give it a try and see if we can get some toys and any of the other stuff on the lists that we can".

"Wow E, that was a heckuva mouthful." M said as he opened the door of the office they were now standing in front of. "What do you want me to do?"

"Well...donating something would be nice. I mean you do seem to know where to get toys", she said as she looked into his room pointedly. "Doesn't your step-daughter work at Hasbro?"

(Continued on page 2)

## Merry Christmas In many languages

- African/ Eritrean/ Tigrinja Rehus-Beal-Ledeats
- Arabic: Idah Saidan Wa Sanah Jadidah
- Armenian: Shenoravor Nor Dari yev Pari Gaghand
- Basque: Zorionak eta Urte Berri On!
- Bengali: Shuvo Naba Barsha
- Choctaw: Yukpa, Nitak Hollo Chito
- Columbia: Feliz Navidad y Próspero Año Nuevo
- Cornish: Nadelik looan na looan blethen noweth
- Cree: Mitho Makosi Kesikansi
- Croatian: Sretan Bozic
- Czech: Prejeme Vam Vesele Vanoce a stastny Novy Rok
- Danish: Glædelig Jul
- English: Merry Christmas
- Eskimo: (inupik) Jutdlime pivduarit ukiortame pivduaritulo!
- Esperanto: Gajan Kristnaskon
- Farsi: Cristmas-e-shoma mobarak bashad
- Finnish: Hyvaa joulua
- Flemish: Zalig Kerstfeest en Gelukkig nieuw jaar
- French: Joyeux Noel
- Gaelic: Nollaig chridheil agus Bliadhna mhath ùr!
- German: Froehliche Weihnachten
- Greek: Kala Christouyenna!
- Hebrew: Mo'adim Lesimkha. Chena tova
- Hindi: Shub Naya Baras
- Hawaiian: Mele Kalikimaka ame Hauoli Makahiki Hou!
- Hungarian: Kellemes Karacsonyi unnepek
- Icelandic: Gledileg Jol
- Indonesian: Selamat Hari Natal
- Iraqi: Idah Saidan Wa Sanah Jadidah
- Irish: Nollaig Shona Dhuit or Nodlaig mhaith chugnat
- Iroquois: Ojenyunyat Sungwiyadeson honungradon nagwutut. Ojenyunyat osrasay.
- Italian: Buone Feste Natalizie



"Yeah, I'll ask her to see what they can do. I can't promise anything, but what's the worst they can say? No? I can deal with that."

"Great! Did you hear how we did on our blood drive? 50% over last year! I think we can do even better when we have the Spring Blood Drive. Once the football team finds out there's cookies and juice after they donate...just kidding mister. Oh well... gotta go. There are lots of people I have to see."

## Spirit the 4th-

### The Future

E literally bounded off down the hall to the next teacher she was going to chat up about Adopt-A-Child leaving behind an almost pixie-dust-like haze in her wake. M smiled and went back to his office and the web design projects that he was looking at earlier.

It could have been a minute or an hour that passed, M could never judge time when he got involved in working on some of the projects sent to him by students and staff.

It always seemed to him that time was a very fickle thing anyway. When there's joy, love,

***"I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year."***

***E. Scrooge***

fun and merriment in the air it always seemed as if the sands moved a bit quicker. Of course the opposite was also true as far as he could see. Pain seemed to hurt longer and heal slower. But then living one's life was also like the blink of some cosmic eye as well. "You wake up one day and you're 16, go to sleep, wake up the next day and you're 50". He would never figure it out.

The one thing he could be sure of was that "now" somehow always set up "then". The work you do today prepares the stage for tomorrow.

Finishing up his labors on the web design, he shut down his computer, put it in its case, then shut down his Christmas decorations and lights thinking he'd come back early in the morning after the holidays and clean up. He moved up and into the hallways which were starting to clear out from the screaming hordes of students who knew they weren't coming back for what would seem like an eternity (or the blink of an eye, depending on whether or not their perspective was skewed by the inevitable trip to some relative who still put them at "the kids table"



when they were obviously "grown (insert the other word for backside here) men or women" at least according to them anyway).

It was here that he saw a woman staring blankly at the hall around her while an eager looking kid of about fifteen said, "Excuse me sir, we're looking for ... what's the name on the paper Mom...Mr. M.?"



"You've found him. He's me. What can I help you with?"

"Mr. M, you may not remember me but..." said the woman.

"How are you doing Molly?" M said with only a slight hesitation. "Let me guess, your son?"

"Yes..." she said with a hint of a smile coming to her at his memory of her name. "He wants to come here for high school. When I told him about the pros and cons he thought that he'd like to check it out first. Since I knew you still worked here, I figured we could come and talk to you. I knew you wouldn't candy coat things."

When M turned to the prospective student, he was looking at one of the showcases of student photos and artwork from the past semester. "Are you interested in art?"

"Huh?" the kid said as he turned around quickly. "I...uh...I don't know. I suppose, but I think I'd like theater a bit more. I don't think I'll ever be much of a painter or that kind of artist. Do you have that kind of program here?"

"As a matter of fact, we do. It's actually a big part of what we do here. Academics are obviously what we'd like to focus on, but we also like

to promote the extracurricular activities we have as well."

"Could you tell me about them? I mean, I know what the academics are like. I can do that easy enough I suppose..."

M looked at the mother and she smiled proudly and nodded.

## Epilogue

Snow crunched under M's feet as he walked across the parking lot to get into his car. Pressing the "unlock" button on the remote, the doors to his car clicked and he unlatched the hatchback to pack up the presents he kept hidden in his office in the back. As he got into the driver's seat a thought struck him as sure as the snow was falling and that Christmas was coming.

Just like the lesson of faith and redemption for Scrooge in his past, present and future, the same lesson could be used with people who do not celebrate faith and perseverance and it's result in the past, present, and what it can be in the future.

Focusing too much on the past leaves you blind to the challenges and changes of the present, as well as the prospect of the future.

"Living for the now" denies what has come before and it's significance while also disregarding the scope of "what dreams may come".

Planning for the future by forgetting the past and not taking into account the present is nothing more than being set up for failure.

Maybe it was the connection between Dickens and his own life M finally needed to make to really get the message that what we were, what we are, and what we can be is just as important to teachers as it was to Scrooge.

In any event, whether it's this or that, as Tiny Tim said, "God bless us, every one".



Albert Finney playing Scrooge. Although there have been many adaptations of the Dickens classic, the 1970 musical version complete with fake accents and songs is far and away my favorite.

## *And so gentle readers... The Christmas issue special!!!*

### *“Yes, Virginia...”, and other intangibles of the season!!!!*

*“DEAR EDITOR: I am 8 years old.*

*“Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.*

*“Papa says, ‘If you see it in THE SUN it’s so.’*

*“Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?”*

*“VIRGINIA O’HANLON.*

*“115 WEST NINETY-FIFTH STREET.”*

*VIRGINIA, your little friends are wrong.*

*They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except [what] they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men’s or children’s, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.*

*Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.*

*Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that’s no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.*

*You may tear apart the baby’s rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the super-natural beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.*

*No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.*

*“Church, Francis P. “Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.” New York Sun 21 September, 1891, Print.”*

Sure, I know I’ve given you copies of this article before. I’m well aware of it in fact. Consider that this is my newsletter and my column and you’ll begin to understand why. I’m a teacher. Not



just a teacher of technology either. I taught for quite a number of years in situations that make me believe what we have here at the High School of Commerce to be a pot of gold.

Let me give you a few of examples to answer why I do:

Think about your neighbor here at the good ol’ HSoFC. This staff is one of the finest collections of people I’ve ever had the pleasure to work with. That’s not to say that other schools in the district don’t have this kind of staff, they do I’m sure. While the other schools have brilliant folks as well, I’ve never seen a school as large as this one that has people that are as genuinely good to each other as the folks are here. Ah...you want an example? Look at Maria, how did this school respond when she was in need? She’s one of our own. And...we didn’t do this for her because we HAD to, we did because we wanted and needed to. That’s what you do for people. It’s what community is really all about.

Ah, I see you’re saying that you still have some doubts. You want to know about the students? How about the sorts of things that the Key Club gets up to? They’ve done things that, from the present tense to a more historical perspective, dwarf the expectations we place on them. They exceed and excel on so many different levels in terms of their service to Commerce, and the Springfield community in general, that it makes you reconsider our notions of what is normal for these students

Let’s see, what does this leave us? Ah!!! The building itself!!! This building is amazing. It’s the oldest high school building in the city (and longest continually serving high school as well). You see, the High School of Commerce was created in 1910 and the building was completed in 1915. We’re going to be 100 years old in 2010!!! Our auditorium is one of the most beautiful in the city period. It was designed along the same principles as Symphony Hall and it doesn’t get a whole lot better than that let me tell you.

When we say to our students “You can be anything you want to be”, I understand that there are some very realistic barriers that students growing up in Springfield, or any urban area, will have to contend with to make something like that happen. I’ve seen them and faced them as well from lots of different perspectives.

Having said that, I still believe we can do more **despite** all that we lack because of all that we **are**.

I still believe that we have an **obligation** to the students and their families not because of a paycheck as some have accused us of, but because of a **duty** to the future we’d all like to see come to pass.

That’s what I believe. What do you believe?  
Happy Christmas, Merry New Year,  
Joyous Holidays to you and yours,



# Life Lessons in Imagery

Those of you who've been following this section of the "Tech Tips" over the last several years are fully aware that I've been showing that images we see everyday in newspapers are snapshots of life and that the comics we see are certainly excellent examples of this. Every day there are teachable moments to be found and yet, somehow we neglect to include the gentle humor of Charles Schultz's "Peanuts" or the sometimes not-so-gentle reminders of our "common humanity" from artists like Tom Batuik and Gary Trudeau. I'll be mixing it up this year by giving you as much as we can without violating the "fair use" tenets of copyright laws as they apply in educational situations. Enjoy and share!!!

*Ed Musiak*



Japanese: Shinnen omedeto. Kurisumasu Omedeto

Korean: Sung Tan Chuk Ha

Latin: Natale hilare et Annum Faustum!

Latvian: Prieci'gus Ziemsvētkus un Laimi'gu Jauno Gadu!

Lithuanian: Linksmu Kaledu

Macedonian: Sreken Bozhik

Maltese: IL-Milied It-tajjeb

Manx: Nollick ghennal as blein vie noa

Maori: Meri Kirihimete

Navajo: Merry Keshmish

Norwegian: God Jul or Gledelig Jul

Peru: Feliz Navidad y un Venturoso Año Nuevo

Philippines: Maligayan Pasko!

Polish: Wesolych Swiat Bozego Narodzenia or Boze Narodzenie

Portuguese: Feliz Natal

Russian: Pozdrevlyayu s prazdnikom Rozhdestva is Novim Godom

Samoan: La Maunia Le Kilisimasi Ma Le Tausaga Fou

Sardinian: Bonu nadale e prosperu annu nou

Serbian: Hristos se rodi

Slovakian: Sretan Bozic or Vesele vianoce

Sami: Buorrit Juovllat

Samoan: La Maunia Le Kilisimasi Ma Le Tausaga Fou

Scots Gaelic: Nollaig chridheil huibh

Serb-Croatian: Sretan Bozic. Vesela Nova Godina

Serbian: Hristos se rodi.

Spanish: Feliz Navidad

Swedish: God Jul and (Och) Ett Gott Nytt År

Tagalog: Maligayang Pasko. Masaganang Bagong Taon

Thai: Sawadee Pee Mai

Turkish: Noeliniz Ve Yeni Yiliniz Kutlu Olsun

Ukrainian: Srozhdestvom Kristovym

Urdu: Naya Saal Mubarak Ho

Vietnamese: Chung Mung Giang Sinh

Welsh: Nadolig Llawen

Yugoslavian: Cestitamo Bozic

