

Jennifer, my wife, is a middle school counselor. Along with the perks of helping many students every year, she also gets summers off. So, with this time in the summer Jen likes to take on a home repair and improvement project over the break. This year she took on repainting the dining room. The room is in progress but already looks great, as all her projects turn out great. But the projects often involve misadventure.

Like the summer she was hedge trimming behind the house and cut the Freon line to the air conditioner on the hottest week of the year. Or the summer she vacuumed out the fireplace with the shop vacuum and forgot to put in a vacuum bag, resulting in blowing ash throughout the living room. Or the time she was painting our daughter's room, moved the ladder and forgot about the full can of paint resting at the top of the ladder. (We spent the next three hours scrubbing neon green paint out of the carpet.)

For the dining room makeover she wanted a new table. We had the same table since we got married 21 years ago and the chairs were falling apart. So for our anniversary gift this year for each other we decided to get a new table. Then I made an error. I took her to a giant furniture store with WAY too many choices. Jen is not the most decisive person. We got there when the store opened at 10am and went home at 6pm, with no table. Jen would not make a great missile commander. "Launch?!? Don't launch?!? I can't decide!" (Also, before she painted the dining room Jen patched holes and seams in the walls. She sanded the rough joint compound without closing off the room, so now we have a layer of white dust on everything we own, including the can goods in the cabinets. But that is another story.)

At Neosho County Community College we are preparing a set of projects of the 2015-2016 year, hopefully with less misadventure and a bit more decisiveness. Many of these projects were in the works for a few years thanks to our Facilities Master Plan, but until things were resolved with some tax issues in the county the Trustees wisely did not want to greenlight any of these until we knew where we stood financially. Now that seems behind us and we can move forward improving the Chanute campus.

First we will be looking to air condition the gym. That project will start in the spring and should be complete for summer of 2016. We often have summer sports camps for kids in the gym, and volleyball comes back for practices in early August. The temperature can be quite oppressive. The cost is relatively low as our current chiller system should be able to handle the load. Luckily, only a change in ventilation is needed using a "sock" system instead of the standard metal vents to avoid condensation dripping on the new gym floor.

Next, we will be looking to improve the Student Union lobby. If you've been to the Union in the location of the former Kansas Works office there is a beautiful stone fireplace that is currently boarded over. The vision is to reopen that area and rekindle that fireplace with a gas insert. The Ottawa campus has a beautiful fireplace and is quite popular with students there. I hope this becomes a popular lounge area in Chanute and return a great architectural feature to its original purpose.

Outside we will be adding our first water feature to the campus. This will be located next to the Chapman Learning Center, which acts as our Welcome Center for prospective students. This fountain will be built entirely with donated funds and should give a great first impression to students.

Lastly, the Trustees want to move forward with creating a locker room, press box, concession stand, and restrooms at Hudson Field, our baseball facility. These additions will be much like those currently found at the softball field. Head Coach Steve Murry will be working with VP Ben Smith and the Operations staff to design the facility this academic year. We hope to break ground on this project as soon as baseball season is over in May 2015 (hopefully that is very late, like after the College World Series). The funds for this project will come from the out district fee, which is charged to students who live outside Neosho County. These fee accounts will also pay for the gym air conditioning and the minor Student Union renovation.

I am VERY excited about these upcoming projects! I know you are going to love the finished project.

After LONG deliberation, making lists, creating a scoring system, narrowing down the list, and sleeping on it, Jen picked a table. I had no idea a dining room table and chairs were such a big commitment to her. By comparison, Jen said she would marry me with less than two seconds of deliberation, so I guess I should be flattered. That was twenty one years ago next Thursday. Happy Anniversary my only love. I'm glad you picked me. I know our life together is your true project for improvement, with more misadventure on the way. I wouldn't miss a minute of it. Except maybe the Freon line cut. It was hot that week.

If you have any questions or comments about this or anything else happening at the College, feel free to email me at binbody@neosho.edu.