

Jen and I are celebrating 29 years of marriage this month. It's hard to believe that anyone could elect to put up with me for more than a few hours, much less for nearly three decades. She is a saint. Over the years our anniversary gifts to each other sometimes are the more standard fare of personal items, trips, dinners, and flowers, but occasionally they are a bit more practical or unconventional. More like shared gifts.

For our first anniversary we gave each other an Old English sheepdog puppy. Two years later we were in the kitchen cooking and discussing what we wanted to give each other when the electric cooktop went SNAP with a bright spark. Everybody screamed. That year we got a new cooktop.

When the wooden cover to the back patio nearly fell down from a storm, we shared the gift of a new pergola on our house for our 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

This year I'm very excited about our co-gift. As I write this we are having our wood floors refinished! I've wanted that to happen since we moved into the place twenty years ago. At last it is happening. However, those of you who have been through this process know what a mess it causes. Over the years, before and after we moved in, the floors have been heavily scratched and in some places stained. That means sanding. A lot of sanding.

Everything in the house has a layer of sawdust on it. The kitchen has to be cleaned before you try to make anything for dinner. All of the furniture has been moved to one or two rooms with just a walking path through it. It's a messy process. But in the end it will be worth it.

Giving each other a house renovation for an anniversary gift is a bit ironic. They say the real test of any marriage is putting together Ikea furniture or surviving a house remodel. We shall see if we make it to 30 years.

The college spends every summer conducting a series of maintenance projects to maintain and advance the institution. They can range from small to big, but all are needed to keep the buildings in good shape both functionally and cosmetically. Some studies show that most students make their decision about what college to attend within the first 90 seconds of being on campus! So having a college that looks great and makes a wonderful first impression is vital.

Here are some of those projects that I'm excited about!

At the Ottawa campus we are patching and sealing the parking lot. It is hard to believe that it has already been twelve years since we moved into that building! We won an award for its design and how we financed the campus. And we were recognized on the floor of the Kansas Legislature for building it without the use of any state aid or local property tax. It was paid for by student fees and some federal grants. Over the years there we have made some nice additions including a new computer lab and a lab for diagnostic medical sonography and another for a HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) program. Now, twelve years after it opened the building is in great shape but the asphalt parking lot is ageing and needed to be sealed and restriped.

In Chanute we are finishing up a greenhouse on the campus outside Stoltz Hall. That building was a very generous donated gift to our science department. It will provide a wonderful botany lab for our biology and environmental science classes!

Also at the Chanute campus we are replacing our ceiling tile and lighting grid in the Student Union, Stoltz, Sanders and the CAVE (the basement of the Chapman Learning Center). Much like my wood floors, the tiles were stained and scratched. Some of the former tiles were yellowed from when we allowed smoking in the building! That was some years ago. It is so much brighter with the new light fixtures and white tiles! That work continues but should be done before the students arrive on Aug. 21.

We are also replacing the bathroom dividers in some of the buildings. The previous dividers were painted metal and were...ah...rusty, in some areas. I'll let you figure out why. The new ones will be composite material, last forever, and are going to look great!

At the Mitchell Career and Technology Center (MCTC) work continues on fixing up the roof on the not-yet-renovated side of the old factory and on the indoor practice facility. That work may drift into the start of classes in the fall. The

biggest project there however is the concrete work for the parking lot. It's going to be a great parking lot that will last many years without the need to patch and seal every twelve years or so. All of that was paid for by a grant from the state!

At the Snyder Memorial Chapel we had a pipe break in the reading room during a cold snap this winter. There is some work that needs to be done to repair that problem, so we are taking the opportunity to renovate the bathroom and update the ceiling grid at the same time. It's also getting new carpet both in that room and in the sanctuary. Side note: I believe we are the only community college in Kansas with a chapel, which was a gift from the Snyder family in 1969. It's used for things like Fellowship of Christian Athlete club meetings and induction ceremonies for our local chapter of the two-year college honor society, Phi Theta Kappa. We have held many small weddings there over the years! I have heard from several community members who have told me they got married on campus.

We have also done some work on the softball clubhouse this summer with more work coming. That building was sandblasted, resealed, and repainted. Actually, they didn't use sand to remove the paint. Interestingly, they used walnut shells as sand would have damaged the cinderblock walls. We are getting a few water issues in the clubhouse so this resealing should help. Parts of that building were re-carpeted too.

As you can see it is an impressive list of summer projects! Thanks to post-pandemic supply and labor issues not everything has gone as smoothly as I would have hoped, but anyone who has done a major project knows, that's part of the process too – adapting to unexpected issues. Still, the delays and the dust are small prices to pay for maintaining and advancing the campus. And, of course, we are not done yet!

In the coming year we will be adding a new automotive laboratory to the MCTC and other improvements to the Chanute campus. Like my own home repair and improvement, the campus is always a work in progress. and I look forward to advancing NCCC!

My sincere thanks to all of the employees who have to put up with working in a construction zone. It's noisy at times and often messy. Thanks also to our many visitors who have to see parts of the campus not looking its normal best. Thank you for your understanding. Special thanks goes to our maintenance and custodial department for all their work!

Now, back to the sawdust. Happy 29<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Jennifer! I love you and I hope you like your present. If you have any questions about this article or anything else please email me at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).