

Flat Stanley and Little Tom: The Strike on Facebook

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What follows is a brief series of strike-related Facebook posts that I began in the early morning hours of Oct. 19th and which continued through the conclusion of the strike with a final post on Oct. 23. They feature my version of Flat Stanley—Little Tom, who is a key-chain version of the 4th Doctor Who. Students love Little Tom!

Oct. 19

So it begins ...



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Oct. 19

Little Tom is on scab patrol near Still Hall! Watch out everyone! He's small but that just means he has a short fuse!



Oct. 19

It would appear that faculty D2L sites are being turned on by the Administration and that students are simultaneously being told by the Administration that they should go to class tomorrow. The implication of this is that students are being deceived into believing that the strike is over. It is not. The only reason the Administration could have for engaging in this deception is so that they can go around tomorrow, have students sign in at their classes, and try to present to the public an image that "Students are coming to class, but faculty refuse to come and teach them!"

I suggest you do whatever you want to about this deception. But faculty are on strike tomorrow. All of us are on strike, and there is only a handful of faculty-scabs, who are particularly predominant in our business school, who have crossed the picket line. But I do want all of you to remember and recognize that you are all adults, who pay for your

education, and no one can tell you what to do—not me, not other faculty, and not the Administration.

(With 400 likes and over 500 shares by students, this post deeply impacted the attitude of many students towards the strike as it made clear to them that the Administration was going to use them in an exploitative fashion)

Oct. 20

No, it's OK, Little Tom! These boys aren't the Walking Dead! No! They don't want your brains or other delicious innards! What do they want?

I imagine they want to go home. Don't worry about them, though. They will get there! So will you. Everyone gets to go home at some point.



Oct. 20

What, Little Tom?! Someone screamed out of a car "Go back to work! You little p*ssies!!"

You want to know what a 'p*ssy' is? Oh, Tom, maybe when you are a little older. For now let's just say it is a sentence enhancer and/or a power word.



Oct. 21

Yep, Little Tom, it is going to rain today. But the strike goes on. You know what Matthew 5:45 says, Little Tom? It says the rain falls on the just and the unjust.

What does that mean? It means two things: God cares about everyone, but if you want justice in this world, sometimes you have to bring your own rain.



Oct. 21

Guess what, Little Tom! The strike is over and we have a contract.

How about that?



Oct. 23

I am back in my office and I am going to get some work done. I want to thank with every atom in my body the students who made this moment possible. You won this strike for us; there is no question about it. I will try to tell each of you this in person, but I am nearly in tears as I type, so it may not go very well! So to avoid you all having to see me ugly-cry, I will just say the following:

This was one of the hardest three days in my life and my life has had its share of difficult days. The only thing I have ever feared is uncertainty and so much about this strike was uncertain. So, I will admit that I was afraid. I was never afraid we were wrong to strike—that we were morally obligated to do so was quite clear—but I was afraid

of how it would go down. I was afraid it would last too long—that it would harm those I care about most: my family, my students, my fellow faculty, and all my university colleagues. Ultimately, I was afraid that being right wasn't going to be enough, and I felt so very alone. I imagine that my fellow faculty all felt about the same.

Yet what happened was that faculty came together immediately and with a unity I have never seen before or thought possible. And suddenly I didn't feel alone anymore. Next, the students came in droves to support us and I felt something I had not felt in a long time at my university. I felt deeply loved. When my daughter picked me up from the picket line on Friday, when the strike was over, I tried to tell her how I felt, dazed though I was. I said with an already breaking voice that this shows that when you love people and take care of them, they will love you and take care of you right back. I said this is what the world should always be like. I have always loved my students and they know that. To have them bring their love to bear on me in my moment of doubt and fear was beyond overwhelming. It was one of the most uplifting events I will ever experience.

So to all my colleagues—thank you for standing together. And to all my students—thank you for taking care of me. I will never forget it.



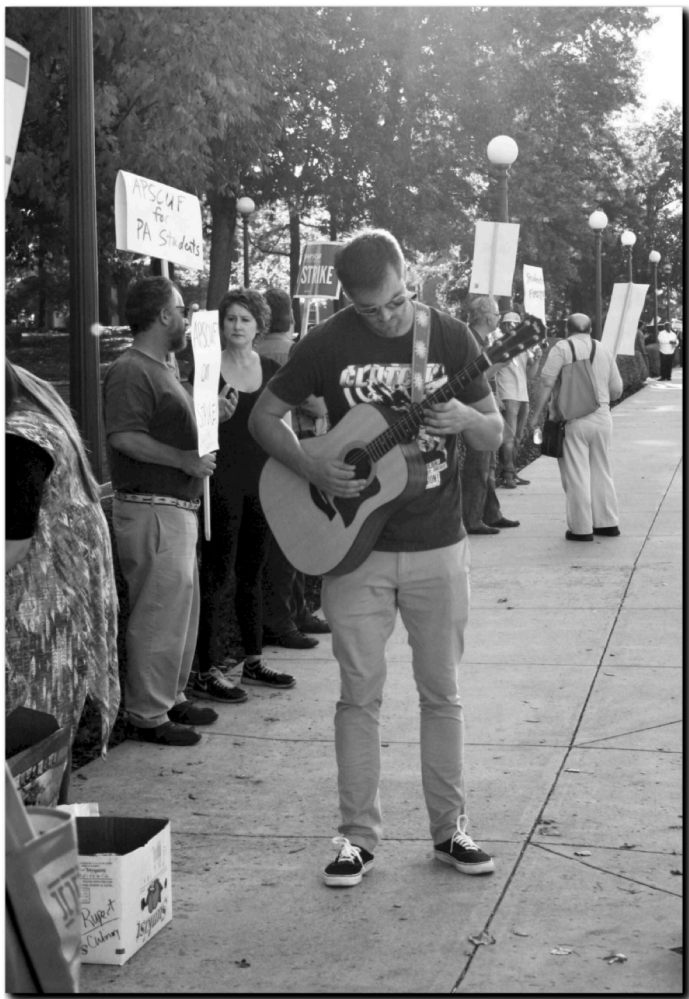
APSCUF and State System Begin News Embargo

Attention news media:

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education and the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF) have agreed to a news embargo to begin immediately through the duration of the current round of contract talks, which are slated to continue through Sunday. To help minimize distractions, neither side will discuss any details involving the negotiations nor make any statements related to the negotiations during the period of this embargo.

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Strike

Henry Yukevich

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Hey there

mister chancellor

I googled you. I know about you.

Where do you get such handsome ties?

I have a friend who knows a few things about demonology.

Do you have any friends like that?

Adramelech

Grand Chancellor

you should look it up.

it has to do with greed.

up in your tower, Wizard,

Crusher of Unions.

I guess you can't hear my friend

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Reading HOWL through a megaphone
With locusts in his hair
While my professors cheer him on.
Everybody finds themselves in that poem.
you should look it up.
especially the part about Moloch.
you should read it.
I dare you.



APSCUF News Blackout Over: State System Issues Last Best Offer

Oct. 18, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Kathryn Morton, kmorton@apscuf.org or 717-236-7486

Around 8:45 p.m., Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education handed APSCUF a last best offer and said it is done negotiating.

"The governor urged us to keep on negotiating," APSCUF President Dr. Kenneth M. Mash said." He was very clear about that. He personally spoke to both sides and urged us to settle this. I find it shocking that Chancellor Frank Brogan would spit in the governor's eye like that. Through all of this, the governor has been a strong advocate for the students."

Mash spoke on Facebook Live 10:30 p.m. [Click here to watch part 1.](#) [Click here to watch part 2.](#)

"We'd like to reassure our students that we did everything we possibly could to avoid a strike," APSCUF Vice Presi-

dent Jamie Martin.” We will be here should the State System decide not to abandon its students.”

A final decision about a strike will come at 4:59 a.m. APSCUF is sticking by the deadline.

This release is being updated as the situation evolves.

The faculty contract expired June 30, 2015, and negotiations have been ongoing since late 2014.

APSCUF represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.

Diary of a Striking Faculty Member

Gian S. Pagnucci

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

5:00 A.M.

Blue light flares in the darkness. A cell phone comes to life.

"The strike is on," I hear a voice say.

"So they really called for it."

I roll over in the bed onto my side. "My God," I think. "What have they done?" I have bills, a family to feed, a mortgage, college tuition to save for my two sons. I feel a sickness in the pit of my stomach. I pull a pillow to my chest and close my eyes.

I am a faculty member, an English professor, and I am going on strike.

6:34 A.M.

"What's the strike for, Dad?" asks Cormac.

"Well," I say, "it's kind of complicated."

"I'm in high school, Dad, I can understand."

"The union, we call it APSCUF (the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties), is fighting to keep things fair for all the teachers. The

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state system is trying to pay some of the teachers less and make them teach more classes."

"So it isn't just about money?"

"Well everything is about money. But it's really about fairness. We want everyone to be treated fairly."

"Will we lose all our money?" asks Loughlin, my 12-year-old son. "Will we have to move out of our house?"

"I don't think so," I say. "We'll be ok. Now finish your breakfast. The bus will be here soon."

7:30 A.M.

I drive along back streets to the far side of the campus where I teach. No taking a short cut through campus today. No crossing picket lines. Not ever.

On the far edge of the campus is the Robert Shaw Parking Lot, a huge commuter parking area. Dust rises as I drive along the gravel and pull into a spot. The president of our university has been kind enough to allow faculty to park in this lot even though we are on strike. The word is, he is thinking about the long term. He knows that when the strike is over we will all have to work together again. It's a small thing, perhaps, but still I wonder how much courage it took to make that decision.

Then again, it feels odd to be here. Technically, the parking lot is on campus property, but it is not within the boundaries of the strike. It feels a little like cheating, though, to be on campus but not really on campus. I turn off my car and pick up a bottle of water. "Hey," I say to myself, "I'm not the one making the rules. At least this way parking won't be a nightmare."

A few faculty are gathered near the entrance to the Shaw lot. I walk over to them.

"Hi," I say. "How do things look so far?"

"We're off to a good start," says a woman in a red coat.

I recognize her face, but can't remember her name. How many faculty are there at IUP, I wonder. I think it is something over 700, but I don't know for sure.

"Plenty of people arrived for the first shift and more are coming all the time," she continues. "Things look good. Where's your post?"

"I'm over by Johnson Hall," I say.

"Bob will give you a lift." She motions toward a white pickup truck, and I climb in.

"You're in biology, right?" I ask.

"Yes," he says.

"I'm Gian, from English." We shake hands.

"Certainly never thought I'd be on strike."

"Me either," I say. "Feels a little crazy."

"Feels terrifying," he says.

"No turning back now, though," I say. "We just need to stick together."

"Solidarity," he says and pulls out of the parking lot.

I turn toward the window and say a silent prayer. Then I cross myself and watch as we pass the first group of picketers. Faculty hold signs that read "Contract NOW," "Teachers for quality education," "On Strike! Students First!" and "Treat us fairly."

Behind the group, the morning sun is just reaching the big brick arch that welcomes visitors to Indiana University of Pennsylvania. When the arches were built, people complained about their cost, but I've always liked them. I like people seeing a symbol of IUP as they drive toward the campus. I'm proud of my university.

And now I'm on strike.

Bob honks his horn as he passes the group of faculty. I give a thumbs up sign. Then I think, for the love of a God, I'm on strike. I cross myself again.

IUP is part of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. There are 14 universities in the system providing a first class education to over 100,000

students. Now nearly 5000 faculty at all 14 of the system schools are on strike after working for almost 2 years without a new contract.

Bob keeps driving and then a couple blocks later pulls up next to a pizza place. I thank Bob for the lift, open the car door, and step out into a sea of people. For a few moments I just stand there, trying to take it all in. There seem to be people everywhere. Dozens of faculty members I recognize, and even more I don't. Some are walking back and forth along the sidewalk. Some stand in groups talking. Others cluster around tables of donuts and coffee. Many carry picket signs they wave in the air from time to time.

The strike is really happening.

I finally shake myself a little and get moving.

My strike post is a stretch of street along Wayne Avenue at a three-way intersection. On one side of the street sits Johnson Hall where many faculty are gathered. Most of these faculty are standing and holding signs, but a few sit on lawn chairs they have brought. I realize I didn't think about bringing any lawn chairs. I can get them for tomorrow.

The streetlight turns red, and I cross the street while the traffic is stopped. As I step into the crowd, someone hands me a blue sign that says, "APSCUF Faculty on Strike." There's no turning back now, I think, and raise my sign high as a passing car honks.

"Hi Ken," I say to one of my colleagues from the English Department. "How do things look?"

"Our department is here in force," he says.

I scan along the street and do a rough count. I get to around 17 English faculty, but people keep moving around and throwing off my count. Still, I'm happy. The English department is the biggest one on campus. I serve as chair of the department, so I was anxious for us to make a good showing. But I needn't have worried. It looks like everyone is on board.

"It's kind of exciting, isn't it?" Tanya, another English faculty member, says to me.

"I suppose so," I say. "I've been teaching at IUP for over 22 years, and I never thought we would go on strike. Now here we are."

"You would think the system leaders would want to end this soon," says Todd.

"I hope so," I tell him.

11:00 A.M.

I'm walking along the sidewalk with my friend Scott, another chairperson. The street is filled with a constant line of cars, people driving by to see the faculty on strike; history in the making. Drivers go by slowly and people stick their cell phones out of car windows to take pictures. We hold up our strike signs obligingly, smiling for the cameras.

Several faculty members carry "Honk for a quality education!" signs. They wave them at the cars, and many drivers do honk. A cheer goes up every time a car horn sounds.

It's a bright, sunny day. We are walking along a hedge that marks one border of the campus. On the campus side of the hedge, students have spread out blankets. They sit talking and watching us. There's no homework during a strike.

Lots of students come up to talk to us. Students want to talk to their advisors, their favorite teachers, faculty they remember from freshman year. We take selfies with lots of students, holding our signs aloft.

"We're with you," say the students. "This is crazy. Why won't they just let you teach?"

Noon

"Do you think we can duck out of here and get some lunch?" one of my friends asks.

"That might be a good idea."

"Hold on," says someone else. "I think lunch might be coming to us."

A group of students walks up to us carrying boxes of pizzas. "You guys look hungry. We wanted to help."

"Thank you so much," we say, as we take hot slices out of the box.

A few moments later another group of students walks by pulling a wagon full of water bottles and snacks. "Can we get you anything?" ask the students.

Then more students come by carrying boxes of donuts, bags of cookies, subs, sodas, and more pizza.

"Are you hungry?" asks a student.

"The way things are going, we are going to add 20 pounds during this strike," says a faculty member from political science. "We really can't believe all this generosity."

"We just want to help," says the student. "You matter to us."

"All you teachers work so hard for us," says the student's friend. "We just want to do something to pay you back."

"You could try calling the chancellor's office," I say.

"We already did," she says, her face broadening into a smile. "We heard it was a 20 minute wait to get through, but I just put on my headphones and played music until someone answered."

"What did you say," I ask.

"That I want to learn, and I need my teachers to do that," she says. "I told them they need to support you."

"That's even better than the donuts," I say.

"I don't know," says Scott. "These are pretty good donuts."

1:00 P.M.

The IUP Marching Band comes out to play a concert for us. Drums and brass echo off the buildings and music surrounds us.

And then, as quickly as it started, the music stops and there is silence. Something has happened. But because we must stay off campus property while striking, we can't get close enough to hear what is going on.

There is a long delay. People are asking what is happening. Some students come up to the hedge and tell us the band is being kicked out.

"What?????" everyone asks. We are incredulous. It's a total outrage. Won't anyone support the students?

Then a stream of students carrying their instruments crosses Wayne Avenue. On the other side of the street is a triangle of public grass. The band takes up a new position and plays the IUP alma matter. It's one of the most beautiful sounds I've ever heard.

4:00 P.M.

It's a long way back to the parking lot, but I'm feeling pumped, so I walk the whole distance. I pass groups of faculty at different strike posts. Each one blocks an entrance to campus. The rumor is there are 27 different entrances. We've been told that the teamsters won't cross picket lines, so blocking the campus entrances is the best way to prevent deliveries.

Partly, though, I've begun to see this is also about a show of force. Though the groups are a bit smaller now, new faculty arrive to replace the day shift. There is supposed to be an early evening shift that was running from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. to catch any nighttime classes.

The walk is farther than I realized, and my feet are getting sore. I have plantar fasciitis, and a full day of standing and walking has left me aching. But the ache feels worth it.

When I reach my car, I gratefully fall into the seat. I drive to the exit and stop by the union folks.

"What's the word?" I ask.

"Big day. Huge turnout across the state," says a man in a Pittsburgh Steelers baseball cap.

"Now we just need to hold onto this momentum," says a woman.

"It's all or nothing," I say. "See you tomorrow."

Thursday, October 20, 2016

9:00 A.M.

I pull on my IUP ball cap as I walk up to the circle of chairs in front of Johnson Hall.

"Looks like it's going to be another nice day," I say.

"Perfect strike weather."

Mary Lou offers me a box of donuts.

"No thanks," I say. "I ate too many yesterday."

"Who knew there was going to be so much food?"

I pick up a coffee flask and pour out a cup. Then I dump in some cream and sugar, and take a sip. Not too bad.

"Hey Judith," I say, as I see a colleague from my department. "You're on sabbatical. What are you doing here?"

"I wasn't going to miss all the fun," she says. "Although it's not clear whether they know the people who are on sabbatical are on strike or not."

"The word is everyone is supposed to use their ID card to swipe in so they know who is still reporting to work."

"Is anyone still reporting to work?" I ask.

"Supposedly one guy from computer science, a couple people in business, and a few others. No one knows for sure."

"As long as it's nobody from our department," I say. "English is fully committed to the strike."

"But why would anyone cross the picket line?"

"Greed? Stupidity?"

"I heard one faculty member had a baby that was born five weeks early. Supposedly he crossed the picket line because without health coverage he would be bankrupt in a week."

"Ugh, that really sucks. Lose, lose. I hate this."

"They're the ones who pushed us to strike. Claiming we don't work more than 17 hours in a week, when really everyone is exhausted teaching classes, writing articles, and serving on a half dozen committees."

"If the job is so easy," I add, "how come everyone is so stressed all the time?"

11:00 A.M.

Five of us have been reassigned to the corner opposite Taco Bell. There's less action, but we stand making jokes and drinking coffee. I've picked up one of the "Honk for a quality education!" signs, and I wave it enthusiastically at the passing cars. I get to around 45 honks before forgetting my count.

"Our numbers are holding out well," someone says.

"Yeah, but tomorrow it's supposed to rain. That will be the real test," says Scott.

"We've got to keep going, rain or shine," I say. "If we give up, we're done for."

"Let's hope everyone knows that."

We stand for a while more. Then Scott tugs on my arm and whispers, "See that guy? He's one of the people who crossed."

"No way!" I say. I turn to watch a thin man in glasses walking along the sidewalk. He is walking on campus property. He has on a beige coat and slouches as he walks.

"He's a business prof," Scott tells me.

"What an idiot," I say. "And if the strike falls apart, he'll be screwed like the rest of us." I glare at the man, but he doesn't look toward us.

The traffic light is green, and a steady flow of cars leaves the man stuck at the intersection by us.

I stare at him. He is so small and thin. I feel a wave of hatred surge up in me. My job is on the line. My friends' jobs are on the line. My family's well-being is

at stake. He is a tiny man. I think how easy it would be to punch him. How easily I could hurt this man who cares nothing for his colleagues, who is earning a few days' pay while the rest of us are risking our careers. I feel my pulse start to race. How can he betray us like this?

He reaches out and pushes the walk button. He looks up at the light, still red, the Don't Walk sign still illuminated. He shifts from foot to foot, watching the light.

Just one punch, I think. He ought to feel some pain for his betrayal. Honor should matter in this world.

The light stays red. The cars continue to drive past. He pushes at the walk button again. He takes one glance toward us, then quickly looks the other way.

I move one step toward him and the light changes and the man begins to walk across the street.

I watch his slouching back and feel ashamed. What have they done to me? I'm just a teacher. What is happening? Why can't they just settle this contract? Why does the other side refuse to talk to us? Why go months without negotiating? Why demand 249 changes to the contract's official language? We just want everyone to be paid fairly. They can't cut the temporary wages by 20%. It's just not fair.

Once, when I was 10, I punched my brother in the stomach for an argument I no longer can remember. Probably he said something that made me mad. Who knows? That was a long time ago. I am not 10 anymore. I've never punched another person since that day. I never will. But I feel ashamed.

It didn't have to be like this. They didn't have to make us strike. All they had to do was talk. Reasonable people can settle their differences. You just have to sit down and talk.

I watch the man in the beige coat walk along in the sunshine, the same sunshine I am standing in. He is a

small man and thin. I grip the wood of my picket sign tightly and raise it high and a car honks as it passes.

1:30 P.M.

The marching band returns and this time they have the required permits. Fair enough, people say. We do have rules about public performances. The drum line propels us forward, encouraging us with their rhythmic beat. Some of us march along, waving our signs in time to the music. The sun shines down and we smile, united with our students once again.

Not long afterwards, the IUP Men's Chorus arrives. They, too, fill our ears with music. At one point, a smaller group of singers surrounds three female faculty members and serenades them. Everyone talks about the remarkable talent of our students.

We start a chant of "Just Let Us Teach!" It is not music, but the chant rumbles in our chests with force.

3:00 P.M.

As the afternoon starts to drag a little, Scott and I drop lures on the two Pokémon stops within range of our picketing spot. We spend a happy 30 minutes catching virtual reality monsters with one hand while waving our picket signs with the other.

Then the Pita Pitt staff come walking by giving out free subs. I say to one of the workers, "Please thank your manager for us."

The man says, "I am the manager, and we're happy to support you." He hands me a coupon for a free drink.

A group of students passes by with sodas and chips.

"Didn't you bring us stuff yesterday, too?" I ask one of them.

"Yep," she says, "and we'll be back tomorrow."

"We love our professors," says her friend.

"You're talking too much," Scott tells me. "I'm catching all the Pokemon."

"Maybe so," I say, "but I just leveled up. I'll catch you yet."

"Not likely," he says.

4:30 P.M.

Someone has brought a microphone and portable speaker to the picket line. And the English Department has risen to the occasion. Wes reads aloud from Allen Ginsberg's beatnik masterpiece, *Howl*, and we cheer and applaud. He takes a small bow when he finishes, and we cheer him again.

Victor, the President of IUP's Student Government and an English major, has joined our cause. He holds out the microphone toward me. "Come on, Dr. Pagnucci, this is the English Department's moment. Give us a rallying cry."

"You're the politician, Victor," I say. "I'm just a teacher."

But I take the microphone and think for a moment. Then I say into it, "What do we want?"

A few people answer, "Contract."

I give the reply, "When do we want it?"

The response comes a little louder, "Now."

"Come on, Dr. Pagnucci," says Victor. "I know you can do better than that."

"I knew you were trouble, Victor," I say with a smile. Then I turn back to the microphone. This time I raise my voice.

"What do we want?"

"Contract."

"When do want it?"

"Now."

I raise my voice louder again.

"What do we want?"

"Contract!"

"When do want it?"

"Now!"

Even the people across the street have joined in.

This time I SHOUT into the microphone.

“WHAT DO WE WANT?”

“CONTRACT!”

“WHEN DO WE WANT IT?”

“NOW!”

The chant is still echoing in my head as I drive home at the end of the second day of the strike.

Friday, October 21, 2016

8:00 A.M.

The third day of the strike rain pours out of the sky. The night before I went to Walmart and bought a waterproof hooded jacket and matching pants. The packaging claims the outfit is warm and breathable. I dress in layers underneath, but it still feels cold as I step out of the car into the raindrops.

8:30 A.M.

Everyone is talking about an email we have been sent from Human Resources stating that our healthcare benefits have been cut off. No one is supposed to be checking their email because that is a work-related activity, but somehow everyone knows about the message. We all agree the tone is nasty.

“It’s not like we didn’t know they were going to cut off our health benefits,” someone says.

“Yeah, but they didn’t have to be jerks about it.”

“It’s a strike. Things aren’t going to be friendly. Plus that message probably came from the system office. It wasn’t written by IUP’s HR people.”

“Hopefully not because we still have to work together after this is all over,” I say.

“I’m not sure everyone knows that. The system heads don’t seem to care.”

The rain pelts down on us. It’s a grey and dreary morning. Some people carry umbrellas. Most are wear-

ing rain gear of some kind. A few faculty have put up some portable tents, and now and then I stand under one to get a little shelter from the rain. But I'm pleased with my waterproof outfit. At least I'm mostly dry.

10:00 A.M.

A couple students carrying umbrellas walk up to us and say, "Do you need anything?"

"No," we say, "we're doing fine. But thanks for the offer."

"How about some coffee?" one of them says. Then he turns to his friend and says, "Here, hold my backpack. I'll be right back."

He takes off running. We talk to his friend about his major, sociology, and ask how he's doing.

"The first day off was kind of fun, but now we are starting to worry a little."

"They will get the contract settled pretty soon. They have to," I tell him.

"We want you guys to win," says the student. "I don't think anyone expected all of this."

"It's just a matter of time," says Anna. "No higher ed. strike has ever lasted more than a few days." She's mostly right, so I don't point out that I had heard of one strike that went on for months. I pray our strike is short.

The other student returns with coffees from the campus Starbucks. I take a cup and thank him.

"The best thing about this whole strike has been seeing how much students support us," I tell him. "This coffee is great. It means a lot to us. Thank you so much."

As the students walk away, someone says, "I didn't really want another cup of coffee, but now I feel like I have to take the stuff to show my appreciation."

"I wouldn't mind that, but I already had to pee, so more coffee is not going to help!" says Anna, and everybody laughs.

"I suppose the students just want to be able to do something."

"At some of the campuses, they are letting students walk the picket lines."

"I thought the union said that was a liability issue," I say.

"Who knows. I think it would be good to have them with us."

"I think they are with us even if they aren't out here."

"I'm just glad we started the strike with two days of sunshine," I say. "Who knows how things would have gone if we'd had to start the strike in this rain."

"Yeah, we really lucked out with that gorgeous weather. Even the sun was on our side that first day!"

11:15 A.M.

I walk over to St. Thomas More University Parish to use the restroom. We've been lucky to have lots of local businesses and churches allow us to use their restroom facilities, another of the logistical worries we had about the strike.

I walk down the hall and sit for a moment to warm up. A man enters the lounge area and says to me, "How's the strike going?"

"Pretty well," I tell him. "We're not crazy about this rain, but we still have had a great turn out."

"It sure is crazy that they aren't at the negotiating table," says the man.

"Our side has said we will meet whenever they want. The other side left the table and won't come back."

"I'm an IUP alum," he tells me. "I want to see this thing get settled. I don't have kids going to IUP or anything, but there's no reason they can't get this thing worked out. I called Senator White and Congressman Reed and told them both they needed to get everybody back to the table."

"That's great," I say. "Thank you. It seems like reasonable people could just talk issues over and settle

things. Our biggest worry was that they were trying to make the part time people have to teach more classes for the same pay. That just isn't fair, and it won't lead to good quality teaching."

"I told the congressman, just lock them in a room and don't let 'em out until it's settled."

I laugh. "Sounds like a good plan to me." I reach out to shake his hand. "I'm Gian," I tell him.

"I'm Ted. I've seen you at mass sometimes. Good to meet you."

"Well thanks for trying to help," I say. "We sure don't want to be out there picketing. Everyone just wants to get back to their classrooms."

"That's right," he says.

"Guess I better head out into the rain again," I say to him, and walk toward the door.

Noon

Our rain-soaked signs are beginning to sag. Steve's sign is totally gone, but he holds the wooden spike of his picket aloft and says, "This will serve for the vampires at the system office."

Then a car pulls up, and Rob, who's part of our union executive committee, gets out with a box of sandwiches and chips.

"You're a lifesaver," we tell him.

"We need to keep morale up among the troops," he says. "But the best part is there is some good news."

"Really? What is it?"

"Jamie has been called back to Harrisburg. We think they are going to restart negotiations."

"Alright!"

"The word is that the governor called in the chancellor and said he wanted the strike settled."

"That's incredible."

"It's because we've been standing firm," says Rob. "All 14 campuses have had huge faculty turnout at the picket lines. We're staying united."

"Let's hope it leads to a good contract," I say.

"If they thought they could break us, they were wrong," says Rob.

2:30 P.M.

The rain has eased up, and I'm standing with a group of faculty members from the English Department.

"Hey, Brian," I say, "I've been meaning to talk to you about this new ESL Certificate Program."

"Now Gian," says Tanya, "You know we aren't supposed to be talking about work while we're on strike."

"I know, I know," I say. "But all we ever do is talk shop. What are we going to talk about if it's not work?"

"I think you're supposed to have a life outside the English department," says Brian.

"Oh I suppose you're both right," I say. "The department just sort of takes over your life when you're the chair."

"Well I know you could talk football," says Brian, "but I doubt you want to talk about that string of Packers losses."

"Correct," I say with a sigh.

A student named Demi walks up to join us. She is a student worker in the English office.

"Hi Demi," I say. "Good to see you. How are things in the office?"

"Super quiet," says Demi. "It's like a ghost town. Some students went to their classrooms the first day because we were told to, but of course there weren't any professors, so people just waited around for awhile and then went home."

"Hopefully this whole thing will be over soon," I say.

"I guess a lot of students left for a long weekend at home. That's what most of my friends did," Demi says.

We are standing on the corner near a stoplight. A blue Ford pickup sits waiting for the light to change. A

man sitting in the passenger seat says out his open window, "You guys don't produce anything. What good are you?"

Demi turns toward the truck and says, "They made me."

The light changes and the truck pulls away. We don't get to hear if the man had any response.

"I think that may be the best thing I've ever heard a student say," says Tanya.

"We're really proud of you, Demi," I tell her. "You make us look good."

"Thanks," says Demi breaking into a big grin. "Just another satisfied customer."

3:45 P.M.

IUP is bordered on one side by Oakland Avenue. I walk slowly along the long hill that leads down the avenue to the corner where the IUP arch stands. Most of the picket stations only have 2 or 3 people at them now. It's Friday afternoon and, strike or not, people are focusing on their weekend plans.

IUP doesn't have a home football game, but some of the other campuses do. It's not clear if those will be picketed or not. My son is supposed to play in a marching band competition at IUP on Saturday, but I won't be able to watch him because it's on campus property. How many life moments has the strike disrupted? How much trouble could have been avoided if the system had just made a reasonable contract offer?

I stop by the arch to say hello to a faculty member named Sheila Ann that I'm friends with.

"Well, what do you think?" I ask her.

"I think we've held strong. Even the rain didn't really slow us down. There was a solid turnout today."

"How long do you think we can keep it going?"

"We have to keep going until we win. It's the only way."

"Win at all costs," I say.

"Win because the cost of losing is too high. We have to protect all the faculty. Everyone needs to be treated fairly."

"In solidarity," I say, and shake her hand. "See you later."

I cross the road and head off toward the parking lot. Next to the parking lot sits the Robert Shaw Building where IUP houses its art studios. In front of the building, I see a worker putting up a bright red and white sign. It's part of IUP's new signage program, replacing all the old building signs with larger signs in the school's colors. Just like with IUP's arches, some people have complained about the cost of the signs, but they look good to me. Even with the strike, life goes on, I think, as I watch the man drill a screw into the sign.

"The sign looks great," I call out to the worker. "Nice work."

"Thanks," he calls back.

I'm happy the building is getting a new sign. I'm glad they didn't forget about the art students and faculty way out on the edge of the campus. We all make up IUP together, all the students, faculty, staff, and administrators. We need each other. We're better together. I feel that's one thing I've learned from the strike, that together we are part of something bigger than one teacher or one class or even one department. Together we are a university. That's something to be proud of, and you can't put a price on pride.

6:10 P.M.

Scott sends me a one line text:

"Strike's over!"

6:25 P.M.

State System & APSCUF Reach Tentative Agreement, Strike Ends

Harrisburg, PA – Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education and the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF) have reached tentative agreement on a new contract, ending a three-day strike by faculty that began Wednesday.

I read the web announcement again, just to be sure it’s real. Then the garage door opens, and I hear the sound of running feet.

“Hey Dad, guess what?”

“What?” I ask.

“The strike’s over!” says Cormac. “The news was on the radio.”

“So I heard,” I say.

“YAYYY! THE STRIKE’S OVER!” shouts Loughlin, as he comes into the house behind his brother.

“That’s right,” I say. “The strike is finally over.” I give them both a hug.

“So how was swim practice today?” I ask. And they answer. And life goes on.

Nighttime

Somewhere in the middle of the night, I wake up. I want to fall back asleep, but I don’t. Instead, my mind traces the events of the past three days, thinking about what the experience of striking has meant to me.

The world keeps changing. Higher education is not what it once was. Perhaps this was only the first of many strikes I will have to live through. Who can say? It’s hard to make sense of it all. But as universities change and labor struggles grow worse, I know we have to try. Faculty have to help each other, collectively, or the world of academia we cherish will eventually be lost.

And so I get up, and get a journal out, and begin writing down the story. I am a narrative researcher

(Pagnucci). My scholarship has always focused on the ways people make meaning through stories, and I am following a proud tradition built by narrative inquirers like Clandinin and Connelly and Schaafsma and Vinz. Together, we've learned to trust in stories, come to understand that they can show us things no other research method can.

In a story, pride and shame can co-exist, anger can be replaced with joy, indignation can give way to sympathy, and courage can triumph over fear. A story can show us the people we hope to be and the people we sometimes let ourselves down by actually being. Stories can give us hope and understanding.

Surrounded by darkness, under one small lamp, I set out to capture my memories of the strike, the good moments and the dark ones, the moments of clarity and the moments of doubt. There is uncertainty in stories, but Kundera tells us that there is wisdom in uncertainty. On page after page, I write out my story, a diary of the strike.

When I reach a funny moment, I picture Greg Heffley from *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Kinney). I imagine myself drawn like Heffley, a comic book stick figure holding a picket sign and, in true wimpy kid form, tripping as I march down the street. That's how life is. Even when we think we're right, when we know our cause is just, we can still trip up, we can still make mistakes, we can still let ourselves down. But that's where stories come in because stories let us look at ourselves. That can be hard, having to face who we are, seeing our frailties. But the power of stories is that, as we tell them, we remember the moments that brought us joy, that gave us hope, that made us better. Every story has those moments, and every telling of a story helps us to remember those moments.

And so, long into the night, I write the diary of my life as a faculty member on strike.

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After Night of Waiting on State System, APSCUF Heads to Picket Lines

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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APSCUF members are heading to the picket lines after negotiators waited through the night for Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education to return to the bargaining table.

"At 11:35 p.m., we made a last attempt to negotiate through back channels," Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculty President Dr. Kenneth M. Mash said. "We waited until 5 a.m. We are headed to the picket lines, but even on the picket lines, our phones will be on, should the State System decide it doesn't want to abandon its students. They'll know where to find me at 5:30 a.m. I'll be outside the chancellor's office at the Dixon Center on the picket line."

Until the State System negotiates a contract APSCUF believes is fair to students and to faculty, faculty members

will be on strike, starting 5 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 19. The strike will end when negotiators reach a contract.

The faculty contract expired June 30, 2015, and negotiations have been ongoing since late 2014.

APSCUF represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.