**“It hasn’t hit me I’m an IRONMAN yet.”**

- Fort Madison’s Wes Holtkamp

30-year-old finishes grueling 14-hour Maryland event on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay Saturday in first-ever attempt

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**EMPTY NEST**

By Curt Swarm

Wedding day a physical, emotional chore for dad

Brad Heald was still weed eating 45 minutes before his daughter’s wedding. He wanted everything to be perfect for his only daughter, Coral. To the wedding guests, everything was perfect. There was a beautiful display of golden mums, 105 of them to be exact, spilling out of the raised bed of a 1948 Chevy dump truck, like the train on the bride’s gown. Brad, who is really an artist in disguise, had hand made the wooden tables for the entire wedding party to sit at, and built the bench that would hold the wedding cake. It sat proudly on two whiskey barrels. He and his wife, Dawn, had strung thousands of lights outside Heald’s Trucking shop, that lit up the valley so the wedding celebration could continue into the night. Groomsman and guests couldn’t believe that the building for the wedding reception was a trucking company. Almost out of sight, at the far edge of the pallets, Behind the pallet wall, Brad had hidden all the miscellaneous odds-and-ends that a trucking company accumulates. Guests commented that the pallets looked like they belonged there, knitting the scene together.

Opinion:

Motors on Highway 34, east of New London, pulled to the side of the road to gawk and take pictures of the golden mums and dump truck. It had been Brad’s father’s truck, and Brad had made many a trip to the quarry with his father in that truck. It had been Brad’s father’s truck, and Brad had made many a trip to the quarry with his father in that truck. It had been Brad’s father’s truck, and Brad had made many a trip to the quarry with his father in that truck. It had been Brad’s father’s truck, and Brad had made many a trip to the quarry with his father in that truck. It had been Brad’s father’s truck, and Brad had made many a trip to the quarry with his father in that truck. It would now be the centerpiece flower holder for the wedding reception with the wedding cake. It sat proudly on two whiskey barrels. He said, “You’re not allowed to touch it. It’s a whole different ballgame at this level. You’re not allowed to use audio. You’re out there 14 hours just thinking and paying attention to your body. Fighting through the pain and cramping.”

-Wes Holtkamp, IRONMAN participant

The 70.3 are shorter versions of the full IRONMAN competitions and Holtkamp said he started training in 2016 for the Haines City IRONMAN 70.3 that he said he would know more about what he was getting into.

“It’s a whole different ball game at this level,” he said. “You’re not allowed to take pictures and hear the story of the old dump truck”
EUGENE THEODORE “GENE” VONDERHAAR

Eugene Theodore “Gene” Vonderhaar, 81, of West Point, Iowa, passed away at 10:55 p.m. Saturday, September 29, 2018.

Born August 15, 1937 in Fort Madison, Iowa, the son of Theodore and Dorothy (Son-tag) Vonderhaar. On May 19, 1962, he married Velda Rose Moeller at St. James the Less Catholic Church in St. Paul, Iowa.

Survivors include his wife: Velda of West Point, Iowa; one daughter: Joyce (Rick Hudson) Holtkamp of Bonita Springs, Florida; three sons: Tony (Dottie) Vonderhaar of Houghton, Iowa, Tim (Wendy) Vonder-haar of West Point, Iowa and Tom (Leslie) Vonderhaar of Bettendorf, Iowa; ten grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; one great-grandson; three sisters: Imelda Bushman of Urbana, Iowa, Barbara Holtkamp of Donnellson, Iowa and Rosie (Bill) Brune of West Burlington, Iowa; two brothers: Don Vonderhaar of Mexico Beach, Florida and Larry (Diane) Vonderhaar of Burlington, Iowa. Also surviving are several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents and one sister: Elaine Vonderhaar.

Gene was a United States Air Force Veteran. He worked as an owner/operator truck driver. Gene was a member of St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church and the West Point American Legion Holtz-Geers Post #668. He served on the West Point Fire and Rescue Department. Gene was a simple man who was very proud of his family. Spending time with them was what he truly enjoyed most out of life.

His body has been entrusted to Schmitz Funeral Home for cremation.

Friends may call after 12:00 noon Wednesday, October 3, 2018 at Schmitz Funeral Home in West Point where the family will receive friends from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. A Parish Rosary will be recited at 3:00 p.m. and a Christian Wake Service will be held at 7:00 p.m. at the funeral home.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, October 4, 2018 at St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church in West Point with Father Dennis Hoffman officiating. Burial will be at Calvary Cemetery in West Point with a flag presentation by the West Point American Legion.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made in his memory to West Point Fire and Rescue. Schmitz Funeral Home of West Point is assisting the family with arrangements. On line condolences to the family may be left at www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com.

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Heald’s wedding efforts for daughter draw a crowd

with mums—now called “The Mump Truck.”

But there was still one more surprise for the wedding. Truck drivers have a lot of spare time to think while on the road. During long, lonely stretches, Brad had composed a wedding song for his daughter and recorded the verses on his phone through his headset. When it was time for the father/daughter dance, Brad had switched the song his daughter had selected, “Stealing Cinderella,” and replaced it with the song he had written and recorded.

Brad’s brother and niece composed the music for, “Leaving Me.” The music drifted out through the speakers as the wedding guests watched father and daughter dance. “From the first time that I held you, to the day I give you away, I could tell you were so very special, unique in so many ways. If I said raising you was easy, you know that would be a lie, cause even when you needed punishment, it was so hard to watch you cry. But that’s being a dad, some days it ain’t easy, hop’n you won’t stay mad, when it comes time to leave me. From a cry’n baby to a savvy young lady, it’s been fun to watch you grow, tak’n you fishin’, on all those vacations, are memories I’ll cherish for sure. That’s being a dad, some days it ain’t easy, I hope it’s the good times we had, that you recall when you leave me. So today I give you this party, today I give you away, so today I give you this dance, where I have this chance to say. I like being your dad, although today it’s not easy, with the bond that we have, I know you’ll never really leave me.”

There wasn’t a dry eye in the building. The mums, as their name implies, lay quietly, their beauty covering the earth with love and happiness. Good job, Brad.

Have a good story? Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-6526, email him at curtswarr@yahoo.com, or find him on Facebook. Curt’s stories are also read at 106.3 FM in Farmington.

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5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>High Temperature</th>
<th>Low Temperature</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Rainy</td>
<td>79.3°F</td>
<td>55.7°F</td>
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<tr>
<td>TUE 02 Oct</td>
<td>Light Rain</td>
<td>69.0°F</td>
<td>67.5°F</td>
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<td>Clear Skies</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Low: 68.7°F</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRI 05 Oct</td>
<td>Rainy</td>
<td>High: 66.9°F</td>
<td>Low: 47.9°F</td>
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### 2018 Flu Clinic Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>10/2</td>
<td>Twin Oaks Apts. Denmark</td>
<td>8:30am-10:00am</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/4</td>
<td>Newberry Center Ft. Madison</td>
<td>8:30am-Noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/4</td>
<td>Deer Meadow Keokuk</td>
<td>8:30am-9:30am</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/8</td>
<td>West Point Public Library</td>
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<td>Hillview Village Ft. Madison</td>
<td>10:30am-12:30pm</td>
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<td>10:00am-Noon</td>
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<td>Parkview Apts. West Point</td>
<td>10:30am-Noon</td>
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<td>LCHD (#3 John Bennett Drive)</td>
<td>Ft. Madison</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Noon-5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/1</td>
<td>McAleer Hall</td>
<td>Fort Madison</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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Lady Crusaders drop first two sets of the season after going 48-0 to start

BY PCC STAFF

URBANDALE - The Holy Trinity Catholic girls volleyball team went into heavy waters Saturday at the Class 5A dominated Urbandale Invite and came away with a four-match split.

The No. 3 Class 1A ranked Crusaders were 2-0 going into the annual trip to central Iowa and drew a tough pool in the tournament.

Holy Trinity was placed in Pool B which included Centennial, Waukee and Southeast Polk, all rated top 15 teams in Class 5A. The other squad in the pool was Des Moines Abraham Lincoln, which is also Class 5A, but unranked. The Crusaders took to the court at 10:30 a.m. Saturday with a match against Lincoln and quickly moved past the Lady Railsplitters 21-7, 21-2, but then turned right around and played Waukee who downed HTC 21-13, 21-12 for the Crusaders first dropped sets all year.

After those two matches the Crusaders didn’t get a break heading straight up against Centennial, arguably the second best team in all of Iowa and the Jaguars showed their teeth with a 21-4, 21-10 win over Holy Trinity. Centennial would eventually lose to No. 3-ranked West Des Moines Valley in the finals bracket at the tournament, in a three-set affair with Valley winning the tiebreaker 15-10.

For HTC on the day, Emily Box led at the net with 21 kills on 40-43 attacking and had one of her better defensive days with seven solo blocks. Eryn Anderson was 21-27 attacking with 12 kills and Taylor Boeding had 11 kills. Avery Hopper had four blocks on the day.

Bailey Hellweg led the Crusaders scoring going 28-29 with two aces. Boeding had five aces and Anderson had four. Mya Lawlor was 25-26 serving with three aces.

Hellweg also had 32 assists helping fill in for freshman Kassidi Randolph who had 12 assists after returning from an elbow and shoulder injury last week.

Elsie Pothitakis had 29 digs to keep the ball in play for HTC.

The Crusaders play host to West Burlington on Tuesday night at Shotten-kirk Gymnasium with freshman, junior varsity and varsity matchups beginning at 5:30 with the freshman.

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Not finishing was not an option as the day went on

HOLT KAMP - Continued from Page 1

use audio. You're out there 14 hours just thinking and paying attention to your body. Fighting through pain and cramping." He said the family got out to the location on Friday and started setting up itineraries as to where he would be at certain times during the day. The day also provided an opportunity for Holtkamp to set up gear for transitions and started to mentally prepare for what Saturday would bring.

Saturday morning was an early rise at 4 a.m. with a light protein breakfast of hard-boiled eggs and peanut butter toast. Holtkamp said he didn't want so much in his stomach that it became an issue during the day.

"Once I got in the water I felt great and I made the course in 1:21. You have to swim two loops on the course which was like a box and you go through a chute where they get your time for the first half. You have to hit a time or you can get a Did Not Qualify and I didn't want that so I pushed it. When I saw the first time was down, the second lap I swam in faster."

After exiting the water and running to the bike, Holtkamp said he felt fantastic and having the family there cheering him on pushed him to get on the bike and start the 112 mile ride.

"Coming out and hearing the family screaming was a feeling I just can't explain. It was awesome," he said.

The bike course was a looped course as well, with a total elevation gain of about 1,500 feet throughout the course that started and ended at the same point. Holtkamp said he was able to meet up with the support crew at 24 miles and again at 60 miles, and each time it provided him with a renewed adrenaline. At the 60-mile point he was able to stop and snarf down a PB&J within three to four minutes and then headed back onto the course.

He said he set a goal to get the first 20 miles out of the way before he would consider a break, but he pushed through to the first 24 mile support group meet up when he chugged a Gatorade in 30 seconds and then took off. Then every 10 miles after that he would grab a water and do a quick leg stretch on the bike and be off again.

He finished the cycling portion in under seven hours and then moved to the 26.2 mile marathon. Entering the running portion, Holtkamp told himself it didn't matter how long it took, he was going to finish "Once I got off the bike, I just knew I had 26 miles, I was going to get there. I don't care how long it takes me I'm just going to keep going forward. Even when I stopped running it was a walk. I never stopped moving forward and knew I was getting closer," he said.

"It's one of those feelings - I made it this far, but I have so far to go. You see mile markers and I set goals every 10 miles where they had tables for volunteers handing out nutrition. The end goal was just to finish for me."

He said at that point, his forearms were burning more than his legs because of gripping the handle bars and that was different than what he expected, but shaking his hands out as the run started helped

See FINISH, page 9
Family support gave him energy to get across line

FINISH - Continued from Page 8

Wes Holtkamp ran under a banner and passed the finishing line in 872 out of 1,462 participants, since the end, but I have to sit because I don’t want to stiffen up and need to keep the blood flowing. My toes have been numb for sure.

As he ran through the downtown area, and the atmosphere was electric and was awesome...and then you hear everyone chanting. "You’re an IRONMAN...‘You’re an IRONMAN. I have to get there.’”

As he ran through the town he saw people who had collapsed and couldn’t finish the run. "I saw a lot of people go down along the way and I didn’t want to have that happen. My heart was breaking for those people, because the athletes themselves are spectacular. They work together to get through the race. I had a local guy run with me for a couple of miles and that was good for both of us to help each other through that part.”

Fourteen hours, two minutes, and one second after running into the cool Chesapeake Bay waters, Wes Holtkamp ran under a banner and passed the high tech gadgetry that recorded his final time into a database that recorded him crossing the finish line. I told myself I could cry after that, but I was gonna make it,” he said.

"The last mile you run though the downtown was just electric and I didn’t know if that transition really started to hurt and I started cramping, “ he said. "It was a lot of thinking and knowing if I'd set this goal nine months ago,” he said. "I started training and part of that was training mentally. I'm gonna do it. Whatever it takes I need to to cross that finish line.”

The 14-hour time was pleasing to Holtkamp but he said his goal now is to deal with the soreness and make sure he’s healthy, but he said he felt good and was going to celebrate with a bottle of champagne and have an easy day. "I haven’t done a lot of things...But you never know. The future may hold some shorter distance events that involve three or four hour works. "The all day thing, I don’t see myself doing another one. Obviously, with the sweat and tears I put in, the outcome was fantastic. But I may look at doing Warrior dashes or something like that. I see these things and pick them as I go. I say, ‘Hey that looks like fun,’ and then I set goals and just try to achieve them. I don’t even know what the next thing is.”

Holtkamp said this isn’t something you do everyday and probably won’t ever do again. …But you never know.

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8am - 4pm
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