



MIKE ULLERY/STAFF PHOTO

Wilder Intermediate School custodian Richard Cruikshank reads the school gymnasium for an event last week.



No two days the same for Cruikshank

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PIQUA — Wilder Intermediate School custodian Richard Cruikshank starts his day at 5:30 each morning by unlocking the building and turning off the alarm. After that everyday ritual, it's anybody's guess how the rest of the day will unfold. "No two days are the same," he said. "I might be cleaning up this mess, or fixing that locker, or hurrying along a student to class, or searching to find Wilbur the turtle when he escapes his third floor

aquarium."

Cruikshank was born and raised in Piqua. He graduated from PHS in 1984. "We were the last freshman class to go Wilder," he said. Cruikshank spent his junior and senior years at the Upper Valley Joint Vocational School (now, the Upper Valley Career Center). He completed the auto mechanics program at UVJVS. During high school, he worked part-time at the Piqua Country Club doing a little of everything.

After high school, Cruikshank worked at

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Paul Sherry as an auto mechanic. "It was a good job," he said. "But, after 20 years, I was ready for a change. Paul Sherry was downsizing, and I knew it was the right time to do something else."

He saw an ad in the paper for a custodian opening with Piqua City Schools. "I applied, took the test, and was hired," he said. "I started in 2005, working at Springcreek and Nicklin schools." During budget reductions, he was temporarily laid off for eight months in 2008. When he returned, Cruikshank worked at Springcreek and Wilder, then, became full-time at

Wilder last school year.

There are two custodians at Wilder. Cruikshank works during the school day, and Lee Perkins comes in for the second shift. During the summer, both men work the day shift. "Summer is when we do the big projects," Cruikshank said. "We strip and wax the floors, shampoo the carpet, wash all the windows, and repair things we can't get to during school."

Some days include unexpected surprises. "One summer morning, we spent over an hour chasing a bat that had gotten into the building," he said. "And, of course Wilbur escapes all the time. Once, he made his way from the

3rd floor to the 2nd floor somehow."

Cruikshank's approach with the kids is very simple. "I show them respect, and in return, they show me respect," he said. "The students at Wilder are good kids, but you can't always predict what they will do." He credits the staff at Wilder with providing a caring, educational setting for the students. "This is a great staff and a good place to work."

Cruikshank said there is no truth to the rumors that Wilder is haunted. "The kids are always hearing strange noises, but this is an old building with all kinds of creaks, moans, and groans," he

said. "We have over 260 kids with very creative imaginations, so they come up with interesting stories."

Away from school, Cruikshank enjoys doing yard work and being outdoors. Family is a big influence for him. The bachelor who lives in Piqua is quick to thank his mother and father. "My parents Bianca and Richard taught me about life," he said. "They gave me a strong work ethic, and they showed me how to make it on my own." Richard, Jr.'s older brother Bill is the head custodian at Piqua High School. His sister Chris is a long term sub at Washington School, and his sister Vick works for Industrial Products in Fort Shawnee.