A remarkable story about the War on Childhood: kids can’t walk or bike to school. It’s against the law in a certain town. (Last sentence is the link. Sorry; still tweaking site)

Not that I would ever let my child walk to school, what with the invisible ninja predators in the trees and all, but if I could see the school from my house, and could find a nice spot on the roof – a pillow, a radio, a level spot for the sniper rifle tripod – I’d let her walk. KIDDING. Sort of. Well, mostly. But times have changed, as we all know; we’re so aware of evil men in gray vans that we know they’ll perform their malefactions with impunity – as opposed to the old days, when they could drive around and do as they pleased, because no one suspected that the world was such a perilous place for the young. Folks saw a smelly hairy guy pulling a screaming kid into a van, they figured, well, it’s a Man’s World; fella has rights. Probably the dad. Or an uncle.

Right? No, of course not. But somehow I managed to walk to school every day without incident. Twice. I walked to McKinley elementary from my house, a distance of several blocks. In fact let’s take it together.

Turn to the left, and head north.
On the right, as you go, you'll see the back of Northport Shopping Center. There was a large incinerator that floated white pieces of ash throughout the neighborhood sometimes; one kid said it was radioactive fallout, and we laughed. Hah! It's just dioxin. At the end of the block was a tiny shack that sold pizza, and had some pinball machines. (I was thrown out once for applying too much English.) The parking lot was once unpaved, and that was the end of the Northport strip mall before the addition was built.
The boy across the street, a childhood playmate, once shoplifted some tiny bottles of Testor's paint from the Ben Franklin and threw them against the wall. They made bright colorful stars. This was the same kid who sawed a groove in the school's sandbox, which led everyone to wonder A) why, and B) where the hell did he get the saw? The other boys wondered where he got the Playboy magazine, which, months after the Testor's experiment, he produced in a makeshift snowfort we built in the vacant lot. He also took a piece of jagged metal and scratched a hideous scar in a neighbor's new car; I was there. We were a gang, you see. We called ourselves the Ortho Brothers, after the bottles of garden-poison in the garage. I was horrified, ran home, and squealed. Thus ended my criminal career.

The other side of the block had duplexes. These houses were confusing to me, but fascinating; the idea of something being exactly alike but reversed was cool. You wondered if people who wanted a change just swapped with their neighbors. Familiar, but different. Like those parallel universes we read about in the science-fiction comics.

Past the bowling alley; more duplexes, bigger apartment buildings.
Finally, the border between the free world and Duty:

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head HERE for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ulta links is HERE!
Scroll right and proceed. To the left, the school; to the right, my paper route. Identical featureless brick apartment buildings that always seemed as though kids would come out the door at the exact same moment, bounce a ball for a certain period of time, then head back in. If you know what I mean. (Do you? It was one of the most unnerving images of my youth, right up there with the shears in the bloody neck in the painting.)

I did this route twice a day. Yes, grueling and hazardous; no sherpas carried my gear. (I actually had a briefcase in grade school. Yes. I did. A red plaid briefcase with a handle composed of a kind of plastic they don’t seem to make anymore – thick but light, cloudy, prone to flaking.) I walked home for lunch – chicken soup in the winter, Saltine crackers – and walked back afterwards. Of course my mother drove me in lousy weather, but otherwise it was expected I’d walk. I don’t remember which grade I started walking, but I remember how every block had its own character, its own milestones and landmarks. For some reason I think I spent a lot of time studying the sidewalk; I was fascinated by the name and dates engraved in the concrete. I still am. When I go back to the old neighborhood and walk around I look down for the mark a man left a half century ago. When you see those old dates, or note the way a sidewalk curves around a tree long ago uprooted, you suspect sidewalks cannot be happy with their lot. Long memories, and no tongues.

The rule against biking or walking was probably justified in the name of Safety, since it’s a busy street. But you suspect the school, and most parents, prefer to have the kids conveyed in one sealed container, delivered to another, and returned the same way. Such paranoia! But there’s one thing I remember about walking home: The front door was always locked. I don’t know if my Mom was worried about City Folk, having grown up in the countryside, or was just being prudent.

The drapes were deployed in the picture window, too.

People might be walking by and look in.

I’m sure there were undraped naked windows in the houses between my house and school, and I’m sure I must have looked at them, but I don’t recall seeing a thing. I never saw anyone between my house and the school. Once I passed 24th, it seemed as if no one lived in those buildings at all. Fargo kept to itself. The men appeared at twilight, coming home; the women appeared at noon, at the grocery store, in dresses and lipstick and nylons that went skrrr skrrr skrrr as they walked across the asphalt to the Super Valu. At a certain magic point in the day, everything smelled like new bread. On certain days in the fall, the wind would shift, and we’d have a headful of the reek from the sugar beet plant.

I remember walking home once with a girl. I remember walking home with a classmate who was angry at me and cold-cocked me at the corner of 8th and
24th, knocking off my glasses. I stood on that spot last summer and looked around: everything was exactly the same, the houses, the apartments, the SuperValu. All still here.

Of course you can go home again. You'd better.

The answer to the Out of Context Ad Challenge can be found HERE (Yes, it's a link) – three pages of interestingly bizarre anti-hangover medicine ads. Later: the thrilling, back-by-popular-demand First Day Covers! And a video at Startribune.com, which I'll twitter-link when it's ready. See you around.

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**82 RESPONSES TO **_Thursday, October First_

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
October 1, 2009 at 11:24 am

hey, didn't they use the Munster house as well? Not as scary, just as a nice older house.

**JBeuks says:**
October 1, 2009 at 11:45 am

When I was in kindergarten and first grade (early 1950s) in a citified suburb of Pittsburgh, I would walk down to the end of the street we lived on and catch the PUBLIC bus (the kind people commute to work on) to the stop nearest my school. As my mother used to tell it, my grandmothers were horrified by this, but my only choices were this or walking a mile or so along a busy city street, so the bus
seemed to be the better alternative. The times were definitely more
innocent then.

Rob J says:
October 1, 2009 at 11:46 am

In the town where we lived when my kids were in elementary
school (1990-1995), we lived close enough to the school that there
was no bus service for them; they walked every day. We considered
it a big plus.

Andrew says:
October 1, 2009 at 12:09 pm

I actually could see my school from our house, and I still didn't
walk. Of course, that was in high school when having a car was a
major status symbol. The sad thing was, since we were on a one-way
street, I had to drive two blocks up and over to get back around to
the school. It actually would have been faster to walk!

Steve G. says:
October 1, 2009 at 12:23 pm

“every block had its own character, its own milestones and
landmarks”

Boy, did that line set off the ol’ memory device. Walked to school
from 1st grade (I think) through 5th grade, first in a suburb of
Milwaukee and then of Green Bay. The trip was longer in the
former, so landmarks played a big part when I was walking alone,
because I would get bored along the way.

Jimmy H says:
October 1, 2009 at 12:49 pm

Part of my high school experience 40 plus years ago was walking the
3/4 mile to my house (My mother worked not far from the school so
I was usually driven to school). This was a time to share the
experiences of the day with friends who lived in the same
neighborhood. In this area, northeastern PA, you can still see some
kids walking to school but not as many as in the old days. What a
shame that this has changed in so many parts of the country. I guess
I can understand why it has changed but so many small life
enriching opportunities are vanishing for young people in the name
of safety or for the avoidance of lawsuits.

Pat says:
October 1, 2009 at 12:54 pm

The pizza “shack” was called “Pinky's Pizza”. I believe that they also
had a location on the south side for a while. A favorite junior high
hangout. I also bought my Testor model paints at the Northport Ben
Franklin. I also bought comic books at the drug store (Johnson’s??)
and Mother's Day presents at the gift shop (Carousel Gift Shop??). I
think I got the names right.

wiredog says:
October 1, 2009 at 1:10 pm

I walked to school in Elementary school (Churchill Road in McLean
VA), Cooper Junior High (before the renamed it Cooper Middle), Langley High School, and college. Dad's house is a mile from the SUU campus.

ScottG says:
October 1, 2009 at 1:19 pm

**bgbear (roger h) :**

Star Trek connection for Ghost and Mr. Chicken? He is a two timer in TOS.

Skip Homeier as Dr Sevrin in “Way to Eden,” and as Melakon in “Patterns of Force.”

It seems most of the commenters had the same childhood!! I also walked to elementary and junior high school. No middle schools yet. Of course, the schools were next door to each other and only two blocks away. I always walked or rode my bike unless it rained. High school was over five miles away and we went by older brothers car, then my own.

No walking for my little girl either, the school is too far for that. Too bad in a way too….

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 1, 2009 at 1:23 pm

@ScottG
Herbert!

MikeH says:
October 1, 2009 at 2:01 pm

I'm glad this decision is being challenged, but weird that it's been in place for so long and parents are now challenging it. I only lived a few blocks from elementary school and many blocks from jr. high, guess what I did most days, WALKED!! Yeah high school was different cause only nerds and stoners walked to school. Wait I was a stoner too, but had a car, WHAT THE HELL??

Vader says:
October 1, 2009 at 2:22 pm

I walked six blocks to school, way back when. Six very short blocks, to be sure, but still. Everyone did.

I think we all had this basic belief in the goodness of adulthood, so, deep inside, we figure that if anyone tried to snatch a kid off the street, my neighbors would spontaneously emerge from their homes and feed his brain to zombies.

It turns out that the neighbor two houses up was eventually charged with lewd conduct when he tried to rape the 12-year-old girl next door. I don't remember why she went to his home in the first place. Selling Girl Scout cookies, maybe. Fortunately, in addition to being a senile old goat, he was unable to overpower a 12-year-old girl. Still.

Not making any of this up.
jeischen says:
October 1, 2009 at 2:27 pm

Ironic that those google images show kids walking and riding their bikes to school. So your mother locked the door and pulled the drapes after you left for school? Did she do her housecleaning in the nude?

I walked or rode my bike to school in grade school, about 5 blocks. Boys carried their books and other stuff in gym bags. I don't know what girls used, their arms, I guess. I also remember that sixth grade boys got to be safety crosswalk monitors and you had to be at school 30 minutes before class started. We wore bright yellow “Sam Browne”-style belts and sashes and carried red or yellow flags on a small stick. We escorted the younger kids across the cross-walks at the four corners of the school. Now it seems you usually see retired folks doing that work. Sixth grade classes also took turns setting up tables and chairs for lunch and taking them down and sweeping after lunch. That probably goes against school custodian union rules or child labor laws now.

JerseyAmy says:
October 1, 2009 at 2:28 pm

Oh, the interesting things one can accidentally read when the eyes skip over lines. I read, “Fargo kept to itself. The men appeared at twilight in dresses and lipstick and nylons…” I've never been there, but I certainly didn't think Frago was that kind of town.

swschrad says:
October 1, 2009 at 3:04 pm

the city motto was “Gateway to the West,” not “Hey, silly, come on up and see me sometime.”

JamesS says:
October 1, 2009 at 3:06 pm

I would have sent that school board into a nanny-frenzy when I was in middle school.

My favored route to school was to go out my back door, across the alley and down the embankment to the railroad tracks. If there was a train stopped there I either ducked under it or used the ladder and climbed up and over the coupler (I didn't like that as much 'cause it was always real greasy) and down the other side.

Once past that deadly obstacle, I would walk on the shoulder along the four-lane divided highway — against traffic, of course; I wasn't insane — for a mile or so to the on-ramp, which led me to the sidewalk about two blocks from school.

That was the short cut. The safe route was about three times longer, and I liked my sleep.

Gibbering Madness says:
October 1, 2009 at 3:08 pm

GardenStater:
I had a Zorro briefcase when I was a wee bairn. Made of some sort of vinyl, I think. Backpacks didn't come into fashion until
the early 80s, I think, after I was out of HS and in college. We just carried our books, notebooks, etc in our arms. Rather inconvenient, but I guess we didn’t know any other way. What I really wanted was one of those strap-type things that I saw in old movies, that wrapped around your books, and you’d carry them over your shoulder, holding on to the edge of the strap. But back in those days, we couldn’t just google “book-strap,” or whatever. If the local stores didn’t carry it, you were out of luck.

People could just carry their books back then because they didn’t weigh as much (in the days before they all had heavy glossy paper). Schoolkids’ textbooks now weigh so much that they are inducing spinal curvature if a full homework load is carried on the back. There’s a reason why some kids now use wheelie-luggage instead of backpacks.

I think the book-strap was just an old belt. Again, works as long as the books themselves aren’t so heavy that they would pull themselves free.

Nevicata says:
October 1, 2009 at 3:18 pm

You can’t go home again.
I used to live where you used to live. Walk down Irving until you get to the pink brick apartment building. There. School was Harrison; we rode the bus. Then Barton; we still rode the bus. We did walk or bike wherever else we wanted though. They stopped doing fireworks at Lake Calhoun, they put a median in the middle of 31st street, and Cramer Electric is gone. So is everyone else. You can’t go home.

juanito - John Davey says:
October 1, 2009 at 3:24 pm

Ah the evolution of schoolbook accoutrement / acutriments.

Slap in the head from the School of Hard Knocks – typically at planting or harvest time.

The small Chalk Board and Books restrained by the ‘carrying strap’.

Books, carried sans accompaniment (‘can I carry your books for you?’ What an opening!)

Book bag.

Back Pack.

Myself, I was usually rawkin’ the duffel. Had to carry my football / track / basketball gear in something, plus in Catholic Boy’s high school I had to buy my own books, so you better believe I took good care of them. Big market in used books meant that you could recapture some of your expenditures. Working in the School Book Store gained a marginal discount as well.

Susan says:
October 1, 2009 at 3:31 pm

I was always a little jealous of the “walkers” when I was in school. I lived in the country and always had to ride the bus. sigh....
Good Grief says:
October 1, 2009 at 3:32 pm

I walked to school, maybe a mile or so away, every single day of third grade (1975). Took me less time to get to school, or home again, than waiting for the bus and circling around gathering up the kids in my neighborhood who simply stood at the end of their driveways. Mom and dad never made me walk, and to this day I have no idea why I stuck to it that particular year, walking every single day (rain, snow, etc.). I'd taken the bus before, and in the years afterward. Wasn't like I was on an eco-crusade, or a hiking fanatic. Just enjoyed the walk.

One time, not sure how old I was, I was walking down the main road, when a car pulled over and the man driving asked me if I was walking to school. I said “yes”, and he told me to climb in, that he'd give me a ride. It wasn't raining (that I remember), and I was only about a quarter mile away from the school at most. But I hopped in.

We drove in (as I remember it) relative silence for only a minute or two until he turned into the elementary school parking lot, and pulled up to the drop-off curb. As I got out he said “Do you know who I am?” I admitted I didn't. He continued... “My name is Mr. F —–, I live around the corner from you on Hawthorne Street. Please listen to me... I don't ever, ever, want you to get into anyone's car ever again if you don't know them, do you understand?” He said it kindly, not mean or as chastisement. “It's not safe to get into a stranger's car.”

I remember only thinking, “sounds logical to me I guess”. Not scared, no epiphany. Just years later in remembering it, I get a shiver down my spine.

curtside says:
October 1, 2009 at 4:10 pm

I almost always walked or rode my bike to school including Kindergarten (the elementary school was about 4 blocks away.

One thing I won't forget is winter, sitting in homeroom during high school, and having things like my eyelashes thaw after they had partially frozen on the walk to school.

WalterPeck says:
October 1, 2009 at 5:11 pm

Why yes, I did know what you mean about the bouncing ball. Very strange passage from that book, presuming you are talking about the same thing.

Droptma Styx says:
October 1, 2009 at 5:23 pm

“Identical featureless brick apartment buildings that always seemed as though kids would come out the door at the exact same moment, bounce a ball for a certain period of time, then head back in”.

Read “A Wrinkle in Time” in third grade. Permanently warped my brain. Re-read it for the first time two months ago. Still can see why.
Glenn says:
October 1, 2009 at 5:56 pm

It would be interesting to know more about the debate (such as it may have been) that went into the original bike-riding and walking ban in 1994. Still, it seems from our vantage point to be quite an overreach on the part of the school board. And why are the police agreeing to enforce it? Is it actually a city ordinance? Note, though, that all the reported opposition against the ban seems to be based on promoting health and exercise, not because the reign of pedophiles has somehow ended.

As to the question of emotional overreaching when it comes to children, turns out it's not much different than emotional overreaching when it comes to other situations.


ScottG says:
October 1, 2009 at 6:16 pm

* bgbear (roger h):
* @ScottG
* Herbert!

“I am not Herbert.”

Marjorie J. Birch says:
October 1, 2009 at 7:28 pm

Oh, I wish I COULD have walked to school! As a country kid, I lived ten miles away and had to ride a school bus crammed with screaming kids aged 6 through 16 (and beyond — some of the teenaged boys were eighteen). If I had walked to school, I might have learned to love regular exercise (I associate exercise with gym class, humiliation, and a ridiculous obsession with scoring points). I might also have grown up less of a misanthrope. Riding the school bus meant that I saw human development at all stages ALL AT ONCE … and what I saw of puberty made me vow that I would have nothing to do with it. (dream on)

But teenaged girls were really scary in the late fifties and early sixties — riding my school bus was like being an involuntary extra in a John Waters movie. The hair! teased to mushroom cloud size and lacquered with hairspray. My theory was that it was a reaction to the Atomic Threat; the goal was to have a hairstyle that could double as a fallout shelter.

And what is it with teenaged girls that they get the Giggling Disease around age thirteen? And that thing where they start to shriek like weasels in the presence of boys? (A disease I didn't catch — according to all reliable reports, I was a silent, brooding teenager. Nowadays, they'd have a suicide watch on me.)

cgm says:
October 1, 2009 at 9:44 pm

I reread “A Wrinkle in Time” as an adult. It stood up well. The bouncing ball scene is still grim. One part that must have gone over my head as a child—IT tells a joke, describing itself as “The Happiest Sadist.” Chilling.
Tacobo says:
October 1, 2009 at 10:09 pm

Meh. The Ghost and Mr. Chicken didn’t do anything for me, but I really like the music. Reminds me of music for the Haunted Mansion ride over at Walt Disney World.

marymargaret says:
October 2, 2009 at 2:05 pm

Our county in Alabama has lots of bayfront and beachfront. My husband went to the Council meeting to fight the proposal to ban children under 12 from walking on the beaches by themselves. We’re known as a safe, family friendly county and people move here for that reason. If it’s so safe, why not give our children a real childhood?

It makes me sooooo angry when people say that long ago was a more innocent time and just not safe today. Where do we get the info that it’s “just not safe?” The media. I feel sorry for John Walsh and his family but the media ate up his story and scared the bejesus out of 2 generations of parents. Think about it. Who has the most to gain from parents keeping their children locked in the house with electronic nannies? Whose best interest is served when our kids are glued to the television fed a steady diet of soulsucking commercials promoting a dissatisfaction with life (“Something isn’t right in your life! This product will solve all your problems”? Young Humans need to be out of the house running the streets. They need to make decisions w/o adults. They need to go into a wooded lot, sit under a tree and read a book. They need to explore a gully, or just fish by themselves and think about life. They need to walk down the bay alone dragging a stick behind them. That’s how they learn to solve problems. If they do this enough, neighbors and shopkeepers will know who they are allowing them to benefit from a real, nonvirtual community. Scardy-cat parents, are making American children, fat, stupid and cut off from the rest of society.

JerryT says:
October 2, 2009 at 4:48 pm

Fargo is too cold in the winter. It's too flat. I'm glad I didn't grow up there.

(It also sometimes floods.)

So why, I wonder, would anyone want to go home to Fargo? Beats me.

Tracey R says:
October 5, 2009 at 12:06 pm

It's actually not true that it's not as safe now as it was in the 70's. It's actually safer. Take a look at this blog: http://freerangekids.wordpress.com.

It's just that we hear more about the few cases of crimes against kids. I say this as a mom of 3, ages 12, 10, and 4. My kids are now safer than I was as a child, but most parents think otherwise. And it's not based on real facts. This blog, however, is.
Ran out Thursday night in the rain to print photos. Daughter has a scrapbook party tomorrow – yes, I know, AND SO IT BEGINS – and needed 30 pictures. This is the modern world: it’s easier and cheaper to burn them to a disk and drive to a store than use the printer sitting by my side. I just assume that the ink, which is made of saffron and ambergris, will run out halfway through the job. No matter what job. I could be printing the letter i in 3 pt. type and it would run out. So rather than run out, I ran out. Hah! I made a funny.

In the olden times you handed over the film, got the top strip of the envelope as your souvenir, and came back in 7 to 10 weeks. Now you can sit at the machine and do it all yourself, which I did. Wished there was a button that said “converting these digital images into physical items may steal your soul. Accept / Do Not Accept”. When I was done, the screen said I should ask for my arrival time. Since I was at the photo counter, I turned to the clerk and said “What’s my arrival time?”

She looked at me with an expression of mild confusion and slight alarm, as though I’d just said something perverse.

“What?”

“The photo machine. I just ordered some pictures, and it said I should ask you for my arrival time. Well, not you. Someone.”
She checked the machine, and said there was nothing in the queue. She called a manager, who looked at the same screen, and said there was nothing in the queue.

“Did you use this machine?” he asked, and I nodded. “Did it say you were finished, that the prints were ordered?”

“Yes. I don’t think it would have suggested I inquire about my arrival time if I hadn’t placed an order.”

He nodded; airtight logic, that. He took the CD and said he’d take care of it, and I could come back in 30 minutes. But it was raining and I had nowhere else to go and work to do, so I said I’d be back the next day. Because the alternative was standing around Walgreens looking at the Halloween merchandise.

Looking forward to it this year; looking forward to October. Perhaps it’s just the utter disgust we felt for last summer, or the realization that this October will not be a nail-biting mess like the last one. What with the collapse and all.

Not everyone watches Mad Men, so I won’t go on and on about that. But something caught my eye the other day, and yes, I’m behind. This scene, like so many in the show, gave me a quick jolt:

—

—
Those were my grade-school chairs. They were a curious piece of design – the big round belly ensured that smaller things worked their way to the bottom. (There was a small hole at the bottom, as if for ventilation.) The faux-wood desk could be written upon with a pencil, but it washed off. Some kids jammed their legs underneath, as if they wanted to become one with the desk, part of its structure; others sprawled.

Then there's this. Don's making late-night hash while his wife's in the hospital.
Again, it leaped right out at me LIKE A FACEHUGGER ALIEN! Well, no, but I couldn’t help but notice it.

Used it as a main index graphic a few years ago.
Read in the paper today that Christopher Robin is going back to the 100-Acre Woods. Wondered when, exactly, he'd left. When Natalie was a toddler there seemed to be a vast amount of Poohage on the Disney channel – a CGI version, animated series, animated movies, the New New Adventures with a female Christopher Robin, and so on. The ghost of Sterling Holloway floated through them all; less so John Fieldler. Whoever did Tigger did a good job of continuing my ongoing irritation with the character. Yeah, you're a Tigger, you bounce, I get it. Eeyore was always my favorite. Say what you will, it takes some doing to live in a state of perpetual disappointment but have enough hope left so you can still be additionally disappointed. Once at the Harry Howland Swimming Pool a kid said to me in a withering tone: EEYORE CLUB. I didn't know what he meant, because I didn't belong to, nor had I considered forming, an Eeyore Club, but I must have seemed like the sort of dork who would. I removed my earplugs and asked him what he meant, and he said “Earplugs.” Because it was stupid to have earplugs, I guess.

If I replied “I get infections,” that would have just earned me a wet-towel-snap later on.

The Pooh books were some of the first stories I remember. I had “The World of Christopher Robin” poem collection – in fact I have it on the shelf a few yards away – and while it wasn't as good as the stories, it had those marvelous drawings. Without Sheperd's drawings Pooh would have been different; they're so English, so twenties, so bittersweet: the adult observing the child with foreknowledge of everything that the child will lose as it grows.

Later today: Forgotten Hooch, and 100 Mysteries. In the meantime, a column can be found HERE (yes, I will make the links a new color this weekend) and the latest installment of the Flu and You video series can be found HERE. I am wearing a robe that says BATES MOTEL, given to me by some friends. I had no idea such a wonderful thing existed until I saw it.

See you around.
60 RESPONSES TO *friday! october 2*

**Don Tuite** says:  
October 2, 2009 at 12:59 pm

Palmer cursive is hard to read. See:


Palmer was a degenerate form of copperplate anyway, right?

**canajuneh** says:  
October 2, 2009 at 1:19 pm

$2,000 a gallon!! Wait'll the Arabs hear about that.

**jeischen** says:  
October 2, 2009 at 2:33 pm

Someone mentioned “Wacky Packs.” I think those were the gum packages that came with the stickers of monsters driving muscle cars. Those were my favorites and we stuck them on everything. I’d like to have some now, just for old times’ sake.

ArganikM, I’m 47 and play bass too. I played in a “classic rock” band last winter with some guys. Except I was the baby in the group. The others were in their mid to late 50s and grew up in the 60s. Wish that group had stayed together, we played some great songs.

**Brad** says:  
October 2, 2009 at 2:36 pm

Have you seen the spoof Sesame Street did of Mad Men?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgvKCFzqxrQ

Pretty funny.

**ArganikMark** says:  
October 2, 2009 at 3:03 pm

@jeischen

Wacky Packs were parodies of consumer goods. They were often drawn in the style of those Monster/Muscle cars. Some series had gum. They are still available at WackyPackages.org. Old series and new ones. I have nephews who love them and we also pass them out for Halloween. They also have t-shirts and beach towels. Some of the classics were drawn by Art Spiegelman who did Maus.

**Cory** says:  
October 2, 2009 at 9:44 pm

Read Pavatsas interview – OK, understand that you’re not simply looking for a year but a mood.

Still her interview has some stuff out of whack:

A: The ’60s were a time of great change in American music. We’re about to experience the beginnings of folk. It’s a little later than ’62, but it’s about to start. When we began the ’60s, it was Rosemary Clooney… And at the end of the ’60s, music transitioned to an entirely different place.
Rosemary Clooney is late 40's to mid 50's – by 1960 she is no longer a top recording star (altho still a major talent). The folk trend didn't start a little later than 1962- it started in the 1950's (early 1950's with The Weavers then late 1950's after they were blacklisted- Tom Dooley, the Kingston Trio folk song was #1 in 1958. The folk movement was at it's zenith in 1962-1963 with Peter Paul and Mary but the Minnesota boy who picked up on the trend in 1960-1962 and took it to its zenith helped kill it by 1965 -1966, when it went electric.

Like the settings there is something slightly amiss in the music of the show.

Emily says:
October 3, 2009 at 7:25 pm

I'm going to be honest here. I cannot abide when they “authorize” a “sequel” to a book whose author is dead. Start your own darn series. Start fresh.

Chris says:
October 4, 2009 at 12:41 am

I think we're being a little too picky here...if you look close enough, you can find flaws in anything. Take Mad Men for what it is, and enjoy it while it is still good. For whatever flaws it may have, it is still better than the 8th spin of "CSI", the 49th version of "Law and Order", or any of the new crop of "ER" clones.

Of course, once we're past 1965 and Don starts wearing plaid suits, gains 20 pounds, grows big sideburns and/or a mustache, and starts to lose his hair, all bets are off.

John Greene says:
October 5, 2009 at 7:31 am

I'll be honest – I such a fan of that era and all of the cool things that came into American life at that time, and I desperately want to watch and enjoy Mad Men.... but I just can't get past the whole SD picture on DirecTV. I reached a point about a year ago where if it's not in HD, I can't watch it. If only DirecTV would start carrying AMC in HD, I'd watch that show all the time. Maybe I should just buy the DVD's, eh?

Ross says:
October 13, 2009 at 1:41 am

James, that little “Arriving At The Party” illustration is absolutely my favorite of all your choices for either the main index page or The Bleat.
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

3: Black & White World
4: Sears 1934
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
Screeblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

Please install and activate the “Twitter for WordPress” plugin to use this section.

MORE
Thanks for dropping by!
Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Dear CEO of Best Buy:

You must be so proud.

To which you might well say: why, yes! But have you a specific reason in mind? I do. Two years ago I bought an Electrolux Icon dishwasher from your big flagship store, the one a few blocks away from the corporate mothership. It wasn’t the cheapest on the floor, but it matched the new fridge, and I was assured of its top-notch quality. Slam that door, feel the solidity! Whisper quiet. You could run it during a performance of John Cage’s 4’ 33” and no one would hear it.

I’ll admit that I didn’t love it the way I loved the fridge, because it didn’t have Theater Lighting. You’ve heard the term? You open the door of the fridge, the lights come on . . . gradually. They rise to the occasion, as though every meal is opening night. I’ve gotten used to it, of course – isn’t that just how things go? The most extraordinary things become commonplace – but guests are still impressed. They wonder if they should get an Electrolux Icon appliance, and I have to tell them to be careful.

The fridge broke the first day we had it, after all.

Well, no. That’s not true. Something can’t break if it doesn’t work in the first place. The complex electronics that governed the ice and water dispensers were DOA, so the installers had to send away for a replacement. I wasn’t
particularly happy about this, but it did take my mind off the other faults of the installation, the way the plastic sheeting was ripped off with such carelessness it left knotted wads on the hinges that had to be removed with a small scissors, or the fact that the doors didn’t quite line up, and the handles of the fridge had to be tightened – by me – so they were flush with the door. I might have gotten alll bent out of shape about that; you know how ridiculously fussy “consumers” can be when everything isn’t perfect. Are you rolling your eyes in amused sympathy? Me too! People. They expect so much.

Anyhoo, sir, the dishwasher worked for a while, and that was just great. After a year, it seemed unhappy with its lot in life – you had to press the “START” button repeatedly to get it to work, but hey, I hate Mondays too. Then it quit working. All the buttons went dead. If you know the Icon series – and I’m sure you do; you sell it – the buttons are located on the inside of the door, and it seems that the clever engineers at Electrolux didn’t quite take into account the presence of “water” in a dishwasher. A little googlin’ around told me this wasn't an unusual complaint, but you know people on the internet. Bitch, bitch, bitch.

Still, it did seem odd that a dishwasher should stop working because it was confounded by moisture.

But it looks great! And it’s so quiet. Even more so when it's not working.

We washed the dishes for a week, by hand, waiting for the technician. He showed up, took a look, and said the problem was the control panel. It’s always nice to have your suspicions confirmed by a professional, eh? He ordered the part and went away and we washed dishes by hand for a week and then he returned, put in a new control panel, and went away. Nice fellow. Had breath that would melt the paint on a battleship, but nice guy.

That was two months ago. Saturday the control panel stopped working again.

So I went to the store, the flagship store of which the company seems so proud, and asked to speak to a manager. I forget her name, but if you ask who’s the most emotionally remote and unfriendly manager in the store, I’m sure you could get an ID. I explained my situation. I said the product was unacceptable. I said I was willing to exchange it for a dishwasher from a brand I trusted, even though the unit was $300 less than I’d paid. (LG, if you’re curious. I have 4 LG appliances, and they’ve performed like champs for years.)

She said it wasn’t Best Buy’s problem. After 30 days it was out of their hands. I would have to take it up with the manufacturer.

I want you to consider how one might feel in such a situation, because “the manufacturer” is located God knows where, and seems quite unlikely that “the manufacturer” would say oh hell yeah, here's your money, buy something else, sorry bro. She said the unit would have to fail four times before it was Best Buy's problem.

Well. I went home, called the Geek Squad. Asked to speak to a manager. This
would be Saturday, Oct. 03. I got “Tanya.” I began the conversation by telling Tanya she had an opportunity to keep me as a customer, and -

What? Do think I was yelling? Being abusive? Sarcastic? Listen to the tapes. After all, I was informed that the conversation might be recorded for quality assurance. You’ll hear me speak with a certain . . . conviction, but I was civil. I explained my frustrations.

As it happens, I was on a cordless, and I was outside, so I was literally facing a brick wall while I was talking to one. Tanya explained that the unit had to fail four times before anything could be done. That was the alpha and omega of the situation. It would have been nice if Tanya had expressed sympathy or tendered an apology at that point, but it's not her job, I guess.

It's Tanya's job to tell me what the customer isn't going to get. If that's what the rules say.

Now. I don’t run a big company, and I have no inside know-how on the vagaries of handling customer complaints – Gosh, I bet you get a lot! But I would suggest, with all due respect, that the customer profile database be tweaked somehow so you can see, for your own benefit, that a customer who bought two top-of-the-line appliances has had failures with each one, and tie this information into a repair / failure database. Surely some program could tell you that the cost of satisfying the customer NOW is less than the cost of making four trips to repair the SAME. STUPID. POORLY. DESIGNED. PART, and said customer might buy another appliance, or speak favorably of the experience to others, or refrain from issuing twitter updates to 10,000 people.

Heard of Twitter? Yes? Okay, then.

Since she couldn’t do anything for me, she set up an appointment to repair the unit. We had to choose a date on a Saturday, because I work. I suggested they order the defective control panel now so it can be installed on Saturday, but she said the technicians don’t get their assignments until the day they go out. So next Saturday's visit is just a formality, I guess. It will take a week to get the part, and I hope they can show up on the next Saturday, because otherwise I will be washing dishes for three weeks.

There was a problem with the computer while Tanya was setting up the appointment, by the way. Long periods of silence. I had to keep saying “hello” to make sure we were still connected.

I’ll give Tanya this: she did apologize for the delay in setting up the repair. It was the only moment of apology I got, but at least there was that.

I mentioned that you should be proud. When I was at the store – you know, the flagship store, where over the years I've bought the fridge, the dishwasher, three coffeemakers, a microwave, a vacuum, an electric guitar, two TVs, four hard drives, and innumerable other items – I asked the manager what she would say if the CEO of Best Buy came to her and said he’d bought an expensive dishwasher that failed once, and failed again two months after a repair.
She said she would tell him it had to fail four times.

There you go! Little person, big cheese – the same laws apply to all. If the appliances you have in your home fail, and you have to go through the same things I've been through, I've no doubt you'll take time off from work to wait for the repairman; can't possibly imagine you picking up a phone and telling someone to swap out that piece of crap for something that works. Rules are rules. Why, the manager may have thought I WAS the CEO, and was testing her.

She went by the book. I'm sure there have been many seminars and team meetings and internal memos about the absolute importance of going by the book. They worked! Mission accomplished! Customer lost, but procedure observed.

As I said: you must be so proud.

Sincerely,

James Lileks
Reward Zone member

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105 RESPONSES TO *monday, oct. 05*

**Dave S. says:**
October 9, 2009 at 12:32 pm

My first reaction to reading this was, “Best Buy? Why didn't he go to Warners Stellian?” Everybody's experience is different, but we have had nothing but positive experiences there.

I won't go to Best Buy anymore. Bought a TV from them and had the geek squad install it. They sold me over $100 of needless cables that I found on the floor while trying to get the TV to work after the “geeks” left. When I returned the cables, they would not refund my money. They finally gave me a gift card with a partial credit. I still haven't used it because I cannot bear to go into their store.

I do think James would have better retail experiences if he stayed away from the big box guys and patronized his local merchants a little more often.

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**BJM says:**
October 9, 2009 at 11:52 pm

@Seattle Dave

Crocs is having the same problem with their eponymous mules/sandals, not enough replacement turnover.
bubba says:
October 12, 2009 at 10:28 am

I've had good luck dealing directly with manufacturers. Both Vizio and GE have bought back defective items. In the case of Vizio, it was well after the warranty expired. Viewsonic took good care of me.

The merchants are just middle men.

Buba says:
October 14, 2009 at 12:21 pm

The big box stores put the mom and pop stores out of business. Mom and pop lived in the community, their kids wen to school with your kids, and you saw them at the firehouse barbeque. Of course they stood behind thier product, they could not afford the public humiliation! Of course, everyone really only buyus based on price. SO if the LG is cheaper that the Whirlpool, they buy it, assuming the excess price is pure profit big wig. Did you ever think better parts may cost more money? O maybe a higher price is used to cover a decent repair/coverage policy? Best Buy buys many thousands of dishwashers, so the get a volume discount. Of course to offer the cheaper product, the product has to be outsourced overseas, and purchase through buying groups, distribution cartels, and a million other middlemen. So Best buy cant call their Whirpool sales rep and say fix Mr. Jones appliance, there is no salesman, just a corporate contracts team. Face it, it the hunt for CHEAP, we dug our own grave!

Robert says:
October 15, 2009 at 7:08 am

This seems to be common since Best Buy is the only store of its kind left.
WHY A STORK?
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! […]

MORE
Thanks for dropping by! Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
I was on my way to interview semi-drunk people standing in the rain with purple hats when the phone rang. It was Charles from Electrolux. Suddenly the day was looking so much better.

It began poorly. Daughter is having odd stomach problems that seem to occur when she's just exhausted and hasn't gotten enough sleep. A morning barf, a long sleep, no fever, right as rain upon awakening, complete with appetite. We have the annual in a week, so I'll ask the Kindly Doc what he says. This morning I got the call from the nurse, and went off to get her. If anyone wonders exactly what parenthood is like, it's this: you're driving down the street, four blocks from home, hoping you can make it to the garage before your child rupes, but just in case you don't you grab the bag of emergency supplies in the passenger area, zip open the side compartment, feel for the squishy-thick packet of plastic bags – purchased a half-decade ago for a contingency just like this – and get out out before the trouble starts. I was successful at doing all these things, and felt a small sort of triumph: once again, the bag of emergency supplies came through. If someone would get a snakebite I could die happy. Well, no, not if it meant the snake bit me too and I'd used up all the antidote. I would die knowing I had done my duty, but "happy" seems too much.

So we were home today. I wrote this and that, looked in occasionally to check her breathing make sure she hadn't keithmooned, or bonscotted, or hedrixed,
depending on your age and genre preference. When she perked up we played UNO, talked about this and that, read books. It was actually a sweet way to spend a cool, rainy afternoon, and reminded me of days past. That's not hard; a small stone in a cardboard box reminds me of days past. Everything can remind you of days past, even tomorrow. Sometimes it's just a tiny trigger that finds a sympathetic vibration in something packed away in a unconsulted neuron; sometimes it's a vague but familiar assemblage of circumstances, like today. Sitting in her room in the doldrums of the afternoon on a day caught between seasons.

Watched some Disney – been a while since the Silly Symphony DVDs came out. I have the same reaction to most of them I had years ago, when this was a staple in Natalie's hit parade. Some – well, most – are saccharine and overdone and often a bit creepy. Some are remarkable pieces of art, such as “The Old Mill,” and some are unaccountable favorites, like “Flowers and Trees.” (That one reminds me of sitting in the theater on Main Street in Disneyland, alone, killing time. It plays in constant rotation, and I always see it when I'm cooling my heels, waiting for supper at Tony’s, waiting for wife and child to finish shopping. I have no doubt that eight months from now I will be sitting in the theater in the same set of circumstances, watching “Flowers and Trees,” content.)

Watched the “Three Little Pigs,” now elevated as a Depression parable that gave the masses a tune to sing with glee and bravado: who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf? An odd conclusion to draw, since 2/3rds of the pigs sang the tune while oblivious to the imminent peril of the Wolf. It's like a cartoon that had everyone capering out while they expressed a cheeky disrespect for the implications of the Anschluss. It's the brick-laying practical pig who saves them, of course, and he dispatches the wolf with something modern eyes may not fully understand.

When the wolf attempts to come down the chimney, he pours something in the stew pot:
The wolf lands butt first:

He is expelled into the air on an invisible pillar of pain:
And scoots away.

This is the sort of thing you’d put in a movie if you expected that the majority of your audience had experience, first or second hand, with a particular form of animal abuse favored by bored youth. Apparently everyone dipped a cat in turpentine once, or knew someone who did, or was familiar with the effects.

Then again, the Three Little Pigs cartoons always ended with someone having butt trouble.
Off to work.

But I had to leave at four to work.

This was work:
Since the Vikes and Green Bay were colliding for the first official game since the Wisconsin QB defected to the Vikes, we were tasked with a great responsibility: find out what the tailgaters think! And do it fast. Aimee B. did the Vikes; I got the Packers. But I couldn’t resist interviewing a Wookie. Also got to shoot canned cheese down a very large and inhibition-free Vikings fan. I didn’t get the crazy odd characters Aimee B did, but you go to war with the weirdos you have.

Here's the video.

It's so much fun to head into a parking lot full of sporting-contest enthusiasts who've been drinking since noon, and are eager to display their team spirit. It's less fun to have them stand behind you and shout WOOOOO while you're interviewing, but I suppose it adds to the atmosphere. I just can't imagine drinking so much before the game, since I assume drinking will be happening during the game as well. (Could; you never know.) Then you have to get out of the place and get to your car somehow and get home somehow.

That was it. Oh, the Electrolux fellow. We'll talk again tomorrow, but they're
interested in making things right. This of course relates to yesterday’s long complaint, which prompted some chiding in the comments. (Note: the site migrated to another server yesterday, and it appears some comments got lost; if you posted between one and four, your comment may have been evaporated. I didn’t delete any of them. Not even the anonymous ones from you guys in Herdon, U of Maryland, and down there toiling away at Westlaw.

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**54 RESPONSES TO tuesday, oct. 06**

**Doc says:**
October 6, 2009 at 6:30 pm

I think the closest he’s ever come to threatening on here was with his contractor over the sisyphean adventure known as the ‘Oak Island Water Feature’

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**Larry says:**
October 7, 2009 at 3:52 pm

In the summer of 1972 after my freshman year of college, I was painting houses and stuffed a turpentine soaked rag in my back pocket. As I continued to work I felt a mild itch on my left cheek which over the next 15 minutes escalated to a wild burn. After stripping down and hosing my self off I was left a terrible grapefruit sized scar of motled eaten skin. Two weeks later I took my draft physical and this was my last hope for being rejected. Alas, no such luck. I think the wolf got off easier.

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**Fred says:**
October 10, 2009 at 5:51 pm

**Nancy:**

Vlad the Impala:

OK, I give up. What’s the secret to getting Star Tribune videos to play in Firefox on a Mac?

My Macs have never successfully played one, even after turning off Adblock plus and clicking everything in sight..

What Vlad said. I have tried everything and I can’t get the videos to play. I’ve followed all suggestions from the Strib site and all my stuff is up to date. This is the ONLY video that will not play on my Mac. Every other video in every other blog or news site works fine!

Same here, I have three different web browsers and not a one of them will play Stib videos… They used to work. I watched the first Jimmy Lileks video and several since but the last one that seemed to work was from last years visit to the Halloween store.

And I can’t find the place on the Strib site that even makes suggestions as to what to do.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=4014
I wonder if there's a Stib CEO we can email???

**Fred** says:
October 10, 2009 at 5:59 pm

**Nancy** :

**Mark** :
*The videos work for me on my updated Macbook Pro running 10.6.1 and Safari. Do you guys have Flip4Mac and VLC? They seem to help me when I have problems with video.*

*I am running 10.5.8 and Safari 4.0.3 with the latest Flip4Mac I will give the VLC try though I am not sure i understand exactly how to utilize it. Guess i will actually have to read that “read me” thingy. Thanks for the tip though…*

I've got VLC and Flip4Mac and it still doesn't work for me…
adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
The weather has unmoored us all. The rain feels like snow in beta form. It's dank and dim and mean and far too early for this. After I dropped off daughter at choir practice tonight I drove to the video store to return the DVDs wife & child had rented, then went to the post office to mail the Netflix. Who's a member of the 21st Century? Thank you. Afterwards I parked at the grocery store to get some supper, and as I left the vehicle I saw . . . a Netflix envelope.

What had I mailed?

Well, the DVDs. Of course. Dang. Drove back to the post office. First I tossed in the Netflix envelope so I didn't forget it. Went inside. Expecting to have to fill out forms and stuff. Expecting procedure and process and the stony wall of the official rules. First I tossed in the Netflix envelope so I didn't forget it. Went inside. But no; heck, people do this all the time, it seems. And I knew the guy behind the counter. He opened up the box for the usual 5 PM pickup – I wasn't putting him out, thank heavens – and pawed through the mail.

“That?” He pointed to the Netflix envelope.

“No. I put that in. They're DVDs. Rentals.”

We found them; I thanked him; I drove back to the grocery store. Since child would be eating wretched doughy pizza in the church basement, I could give
my wife Actual Food. Got the requisites for Indian chicken, drove home, parked the car, got the bag -

– and saw two DVDs on the seat.

Well, they're not due until tomorrow.

Not that the day was difficult. I spent the morning as my stand-in. We're finishing up the new studio, checking the lighting on various sets, and I had to do three fake newscasts in various postures and sets. Afterwards I did a run-through for the new noon headline show. Lots of pretend. Drove home in the rain, listening to a Dragnet, because nothing on the radio seemed to fit the general mood.

Hollywood is broken, it seems: the budgets are too big and people are unwilling to spend money on large noisy things that look like a witness smirky CGI-fest populated with overgrown boy-men and the exasperated women who love 'em anyway, at least in the final reel. For all I know that's the description of “Land of the Lost,” which cost X and made half-X; didn't see it. I'll give Will Farrell this much: he makes a lot of movies, and that's good. Worked for the star system, back in the old days before they busted the studio system and ushered in the age of the auteur, the independents, the angry young gritty men with angry gritty movies to make. I'm sure it made sense at the time, and it changed the medium; gone were the old glitzy glamour parades that had no discernible relationship to real life, and seemed to be broadcast from a planet full of flattering light and immaculate rooms.

I watched a 40s music the other day – Stork Club – and there wasn't a moment in the film that corresponded to real life. It was a compendium of tropes from the time when movies were movies, not cinema. A rich man is saved by a hat-check girl, but she doesn't know he's rich. He gives her lots of money, but masquerades as the poor man she thinks she rescued. The boyfriend is in the service – there's that war going on over there – and he's while he's suspicious of her newfound wealth and mysterious sugar daddy, it doesn't stop him from carrying on his band-leading career while he's on leave. And so on. Not a moment was relevant to anyone's life. Sheer bright fantasy, with a few hooks to ground it in reality. There was a Stork Club. People were rescued from drowning. Some hat check girls could sing.

This is pure 40s, here, from the hair to the composition to the facial expressions:
Did any women’s clothing store look like this?
No, I think not. Did any 40s service-fellow boyfriend come through the door with a new gown in an apartment with a modernistic bas relief?

No, I think not. Could they make these again? Sure. The movies they make now are just as disconnected from real life, except for the ones where Jennifer Anniston is single and on the prowl, but they're weak tea compared to the old movies of the 40s. It wasn't a great era for Cinema, but it was a tremendous era for movies.

**Well, this week** has turned hellacious in short order – my co-host / co-anchor is on jury duty, column deadlines are being rejiggered, and something else came up as well. You'll see me tomorrow, but Friday is doubtful. At least we
can count on Out of Context Ad Challenge a little later today, and at least a non-Bleat treat or two at the end of the week. As always, I appreciate your patronage & patience. See you soon.

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**Pass it along, if you wish**

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**50 RESPONSES TO *wednesday, oct. 07***

**Kensington** says:
October 7, 2009 at 12:31 am

Woah, it looks like that woman in the the first three pictures had a skin cancer pop up on her chin between the 2nd and 3rd pictures. I hope she had that checked out!

**Rob** says:
October 7, 2009 at 3:32 am

In the ’40’s, servicemen were portrayed as just part of the larger society, normal as a banker, gas jockey, soda jerk, etc.

After Viet Nam, Hollywood could only portray vets as damaged, outcast from society, slightly unhinged and ready to soliloquize on how the war had changed them. Very few movies or TV shows allow for a lead or minor character to have a veteran's backstory, unless that can explain why they're troubled.

As veteran of the current conflict, it really disappoints me to see the military veteran to be a stock character equated with either victim or maniac.

Hollywood can sink into the sea as far as I am concerned.

**Lulu** says:
October 7, 2009 at 5:39 am

Good Lord, that's Ozzie's neighbor Thorny Thornberry romancing blowsy blonde Betty Hutton. Don “Thorny” DeFore also was the unlikely spouse of Whitney Blake (mother of Meredith Baxter-Birney-no, wait, back to just Baxter) in TV's “Hazel.” Would you believe I didn't once consult IMDB for all that utterly useless, yet fascinating, info? Could you possibly care less?

Betty Hutton played to the rafters. Her style was BIG, BOLD, and BRASSY even for the ’40s. She has her adherents, but I can't honestly claim to be one. Probably she found the purest expression of her art belting out ANYTHING YOU CAN DO, I CAN DO BETTER in “Annie Get Your Gun.”

I am disappointed to discover that spellcheck apparently doesn't admit the existence of the word “blowsy.” First the word “random” seemingly becomes a synonym for odd, and now this. Come now, must we allow such blandification of our proud American lexicon? (Shockingly, spellcheck doesn't admit the existence of “blandification,” either.) Let's bring back the good ol' words like “blowsy,” and give back the slang meanings to such words as “drip” and “sap.” Who else is with me on this?
Cory says:
October 7, 2009 at 6:58 am

Hazel—along with Grindl. The idea of using really two great actresses as domestics. Shirley Booth and Imogene Coca. One of those TV ideas that must have sounded good at the time but never worked out.

Josh says:
October 7, 2009 at 7:13 am

is that Lyle Lovett in Betty Hutton’s band?

Grebmar says:
October 7, 2009 at 7:34 am

Judy Garland was originally intended for the Annie Get You Gun Role, and even filmed some of the sequences. They are on the DVD special features Betty Hutton was so much better—even made Ethyl Merman look like she was on tranquilizers.

hpoulter says:
October 7, 2009 at 7:37 am

@Lulu

Fine with me, but I don’t think you’re using “blowsy” right. Unless you really don’t like Betty Hutton.

Tom Stiff says:
October 7, 2009 at 8:01 am

Betty’s unfortunate predilections to B complex vitamins and lousy cola beverages are revealed here.

Lulu says:
October 7, 2009 at 8:02 am

@hpoulter

The word “blowsy” has a kind of spectrum of usage. Yes, on the extreme side it can mean downright slatternly and slovenly; however, I was thinking more towards the benign side of the spectrum, ie: coarse, unrefined. The way Ethel Mertz was blowsy, I do find Betty Hutton coarse and unrefined; others may differ.

boblipton says:
October 7, 2009 at 8:04 am

I never cared for these musicals which always claimed to be about real life but never were. I much preferred the MGM stuff from the Freed Unit.
Bob

juanito - John Davey says:
October 7, 2009 at 8:16 am

Grebmar:
Judy Garland was originally intended for the Annie Get You Gun Role, and even filmed some of the sequences. They are on the DVD special features. Betty Hutton was so much better—even made Ethyl Merman look like she was on tranquilizers.

My thought about Betty Hutton was always: Ethyl Merman – only more so.

When we firsts started using Netflix my Wife returned a DVD with the spindle from one of our portable DVD players still stuck in the DVD. Checked with Netflix before the DVD had even been picked up in the mail, and they couldn't be bothered to help out. DVD Manufacturer wouldn't sell us a replacement spindle either... Used the screen as a second display for one of the other portable DVD players for the kids on car trips (6 hours never passed so swiftly).

GardenStater says:
October 7, 2009 at 8:35 am

Lulu: Let's bring back the good ol' words like “blowsy,” and give back the slang meanings to such words as “drip” and “sap.” Who else is with me on this?

I'm with you, Lulu–you sound like one right dame!

Jennifer says:
October 7, 2009 at 8:47 am

I never understood the whole deal with men buying women dresses in those films. I find it really weird—and presumptuous. I do like the apartment, but I could do without the bas-relief; I'd like to be able to tend to the fireplace without getting kneed in the jaw.

Rob says:
October 7, 2009 at 9:27 am

Amen brother Lileks! Those cheap movies from the 40's weren't about Special Stars making important contributions to Special Social Issues or calling attention to Important World Problems or otherwise moralizing about items of dubious morality. They were about entertainment.

Sure, the stories they told weren't grounded very firmly in reality, but that's the point of the movies. However, the actual form of the alternate reality you choose is important: when it's done to pull you out of your day-to-day world and entertain you, it works. When the alternate reality is chosen to show you how discerning and important and Socially Aware the players are, it's just tedious.

hpoulter says:
October 7, 2009 at 9:29 am

What is weirder is men buying panties for women that they are not engaged or married to. Was referred to frequently on the Benny show in a way that showed the audience was familiar with the custom. Talk about weird and presumptuous.
DryOwlTacos says:
October 7, 2009 at 9:45 am

Kensington: Woah, it looks like that woman in the first three pictures had a skin cancer pop up on her chin between the 2nd and 3rd pictures. I hope she had that checked out!

I thought she had inadvertently expectorated her cough drop while hitting that big note.

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 7, 2009 at 10:09 am

@hpoulter
But if Benny didn't buy undies, then you wouldn't have the race track tout giving him shopping advice.

Nancy says:
October 7, 2009 at 10:21 am

Jennifer:
I never understood the whole deal with men buying women dresses in those films. I find it really weird--and presumptuous.

I imagine, from an historical perspective, there was often a pretty wide gulf between the average female's income compared to the average male. The gift was the presentation of something frivolous and fun albeit a little personal. A gift certificate would not be nearly the visual impact and we have already noticed these movies aren't particularly realistic. Besides, it gives her the perfect reason to go buy a new pair of shoes!

Preptile says:
October 7, 2009 at 10:25 am

Could an electroluxurious existence be better? Whether or not weather upon you puts,you live in some Fargoish remnant of 1954, where taking Gnat to Choir practice illustrates she will be there for the big performance too,wearing a jr sized robe,and possibly marching onward in.
Does present protestant practice allow the singing of “Onward Christian Soldiers’? Is it perceived to be in poor form? A pity if that is so.It was always a favorite of mine.
Riots in Istanbul this am (Constantinople last Millenia),indicate some there still fight the crusades.I would favor their continuation until civil rights,and consequently Civilization might prevail.Attaturk thought the same.
Civil laws are kinder to Women ,infidels and Jews. Supporting Sharia seems seriously simplistic.
Count me in on that'Onward'choir.
Not singing well at all I hope ya'll will forgive my ‘infidelity’. I intend to celebrate it.

BTW,OT,Several threads back earwear was mentioned. The Ignatian style is recommended,as flaps on either L or R could be raised to allow in the flappage,or not.
hpoulter says:
October 7, 2009 at 10:28 am

@bgbear (roger h)
Sheldon Leonard?
You don't want silk. Silk will fold. It can't handle the stretch.
Cotton? Gets caught in the bunch.
(und so weider)

browniejr says:
October 7, 2009 at 10:36 am

@Rob
Rob,
Just let me say- Thank you for your service! Nobody likes being turned into a stereotype.

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 7, 2009 at 10:45 am

@hpoulter
perfect 😊

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 7, 2009 at 10:52 am

I also thank Rob for his service.
Maybe I missed something subtle but, I was all ready to not like “Jar Head” but, was actually surprised to see a pretty fair treatment of Marines and their commanders for a Hollywood film.

Jan says:
October 7, 2009 at 10:53 am

@Lulu
I've heard of the word “frowsy.” A very unpleasant and difficult to please elderly man referred to my co-worker at the bank as “the frowsy one” as he pointed to her. I was shocked when I looked it up to find it meant slovenly or unkempt, which she was not. Oh, well... we had our private descriptives for him, too.

GardenStater says:
October 7, 2009 at 11:00 am

@Preptile
What the hell are you talking about?

*Di* says:
October 7, 2009 at 11:03 am

Blowsy = Shelley Winters
Betty Hutton always a little too OTT for my taste, too much mugging (remembering “Murder He Says”).
Al Federber says:
October 7, 2009 at 11:10 am

**Rob** As veteran of the current conflict, it really disappoints me to see the military veteran to be a stock character equated with either victim or maniac.

In the case of the “current conflict”, veterans can also be portrayed as hired killers for U.S. corporations, the largest one being the Federal Government. Does that make them victims or maniacs? Both, I think.

hpoulter says:
October 7, 2009 at 11:14 am

**GardenStater** :@Preptile What the hell are you talking about?

Er, one thing he is talking about is Ignatius J. Reilly (Confederacy of Dunces). I think Reilly was a little more coherent, though.

Just taking a spin on Fortuna’s wheel, eh Preptile?

Al Federber:

**Rob** As veteran of the current conflict, it really disappoints me to see the military veteran to be a stock character equated with either victim or maniac.

In the case of the “current conflict”, veterans can also be portrayed as hired killers for U.S. corporations, the largest one being the Federal Government. Does that make them victims or maniacs? Both, I think.

Al, go stand in traffic.

GardenStater says:
October 7, 2009 at 11:33 am

**hpoulter**:

**GardenStater** :@Preptile What the hell are you talking about?

Er, one thing he is talking about is Ignatius J. Reilly (Confederacy of Dunces). I think Reilly was a little more coherent, though.

Just taking a spin on Fortuna’s wheel, eh Preptile?

OK, hpoulter. It's probably been 20 years since I read that book, so I'll take your word for it....
And I see Al's feeling himself again. (sigh)

dc says:
October 7, 2009 at 12:23 pm

I would like to see more of the Hutton sisters. In any film. Great entertainers!

Mary Margaret Thomas says:
October 7, 2009 at 12:34 pm

1941 – An Alabama jazz musician turned policeman turned border patrolman strikes up a conversation with a checkout girl at the Union Cafe in El Paso Texas:
“Hey, I see you're married but do you know where I can meet a girl, a nice girl?”

“Brother, I sure do!”

The girl invites him to her family's house. Her mother is a proud mexican woman who narrowly escaped the wrath of Pancho Villa. Her Father is a Greek who speaks 5 languages including some ancient dialects. The player piano is tinkling out some opera tunes. She introduces the border patrolman to her 18yr old sister who looks like a dark haired Maureen O'Hara.

1942- Days before the wedding, while sitting in a booth at the diner, the beautiful young girl tells the patrolman that he needs a bestman. He sees an enlisted man sitting in the next booth. “Hey, Pal, you want to be my bestman?”

“Sure.”

These were my parents. How were those movies apart from reality?

fizzbin says:
October 7, 2009 at 2:09 pm

GardenStater – “ And I see Al's feeling himself again. ”

That's because no one else will, har har de har har har 😏 I am such a card, what a joker!! OOOoooo, somebody SPANK me :]

Andre says:
October 7, 2009 at 2:27 pm

I can claim to be an “adherent” of Betty Hutton. She was truly one-of-a-kind. Here's my favorite song of hers:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwkYXqHGDhI

“What a night!”

RaRa says:
October 7, 2009 at 2:28 pm

@Rob
Precisely. That's why I love the contemporary “Ocean's...” movies. They're all just enjoying being movie stars in an untethered caper flick. Fun to watch.
Terry Fitz says:
October 7, 2009 at 2:53 pm

Our host mentioned he was watching a Dragnet. Funny, I was just recently thinking about how, as a kid who watched a lot of TV in the late 60's and early '70s, I witnessed one of the many little skirmishes of the culture war when I watched Dragnet reruns on the same day I watched Room 222. I think 1969-70 were the overlap years for both series to be in first-run. What chance did the Jack Webbs of the world have against the Karen Valentines? Don't get me wrong…I liked both shows. Quick, somebody find something profound in this.

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 7, 2009 at 3:13 pm

@Terry Fitz
I think Lileks was listening to the Dragnet radio version circa the late 40s early 50s.

Jack does a lot less lecturing in the earlier radio and older TV version. You may be on to something that Jack Webb felt the country needed a lecturing in the late 60s.

I love all versions of Dragnet.

John Robinson says:
October 7, 2009 at 4:14 pm

Check out Jack Webb's titular performance in The DI, from the fifties. A far cry from his Joe Friday character. Almost a pre-R. Lee Ermy, Gunnery Sargeant Hartmann, but without the langauge.

Sgt. Mom says:
October 7, 2009 at 4:41 pm

Weirdly enough, I was very slightly acquainted with Betty Hutton, in the late 1950s. For a time, she was a member of the Lutheran church that my family attended then, and for six months, she coached the children's choir, and taught us all how to belt out “Shine On, Shine On Harvest Moon”… which was great fun, but a little irregular for a Lutheran church children's choir, even in Southern California.

Mike Walsh says:
October 7, 2009 at 4:55 pm

On television right now I'm seeing a fair number of characters who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan, and relatively few of them are junkies or psychopaths. They may have some issues, but the treatment seems better than the crap Hollywood tossed at Vietnam vets. One interesting point is that a lot of these characters are definitely working class, acting as cops or nurses. There are no english teachers who enlisted and ended up as majors returning to the workforce anymore. Perhaps this is just a reflection of the reality that in today's armed forces officers are professional soldiers, not 90-day wonders.

Pam-EL says:
October 7, 2009 at 6:08 pm

hpoulter: What is weirder is men buying panties for women
that they are not engaged or married to. Was referred to frequently on the Benny show in a way that showed the audience was familiar with the custom. Talk about weird and presumptuous.

Maybe they weren't gifts. Who knows what goes on in another person's underwear drawer?

**grs** says:
October 7, 2009 at 6:30 pm

Mary Margaret,
That's a nice story.

**steveH** says:
October 7, 2009 at 8:15 pm

hpoulter:

Al Federber:

*Rob*: As veteran of the current conflict, it really disappoints me to see the military veteran to be a stock character equated with either victim or maniac.

In the case of the “current conflict”, veterans can also be portrayed as hired killers for U.S. corporations, the largest one being the Federal Government. Does that make them victims or maniacs? Both, I think.

Al go stand in traffic.

And don't forget your plastic bag.

**Preptile** says:
October 8, 2009 at 12:05 am

To clarify the above mashed potatoes I recognize that I trollishly attempted to sway the topic of this post. I regret it as rude. When James talks about his very middle American existence, I hear an echo of an era that remains steadfastly pre apocalyptic Pollyannish? No, but public professions of faith in a multi/cultural society was a more promising topic than stylish sets. Hence the mention of that little cultural iceberg we scratched upon in Turkey, where the evils of western capitalism were the topic of the day. So, the choir marches on, me, right behind them.

Piano lessons persist as well, and Minneapolis sounds pretty nice. This becomes screedy for a beatnik so in exit...

Lost in my postal intentions were the regrets for never seeing one clip of Jame's shows or much of his other produce available here either.

It is a nice suprize to tune in Hewitt on time, and hear him tho. Near as I can tell this is where he puts his “A” material.

I cannot read as fast as he types tho, and only wish I had not messed on his lawn. I should have brought
my own plastic bag to clean it all up, because..
Any post that needs that much splainin isn't much of one.

Dave in Cedar Rapids says:
October 8, 2009 at 8:24 am

“The weather has unmoored us all. The rain feels like snow in beta form.”

If it makes you feel any better, James, my flight connected through MSP on Tuesday. On our approach, I could swear it was snow, not rain, flashing by the plane's window.

buzz says:
October 8, 2009 at 12:21 pm

2nd picture down = Sarah Palin's inspiration?

TeeOc says:
October 8, 2009 at 2:42 pm

A while back we had a cartoon Lileks posted that looked like Don Defore, now we have the real guy, how kewl! Next: “Did any women's clothing store look like this?” Sure, there was one in every Hollywood Studio. They also looked a lot like the 40's movie version of Night Clubs. How could anyone really dance on the shiny black floors?, they looked awful slick to me!

bkd69 says:
October 9, 2009 at 2:57 am

bgbear (roger h):
@Terry Fitz
I think Lileks was listening to the Dragnet radio version circa the late 40s early 50s.
Jack does a lot less lecturing in the earlier radio and older TV version. You may be on to something that Jack Webb felt the country needed a lecturing in the late 60s.
I love all versions of Dragnet.

A true gem is the 1954 Dragnet movie. I've seen much more of the later series than the earlier series, but in the '54 movie, you could recast it with the actors from Law and Order, film it in NYC, and leave the direction and script completely intact. Unfortunately, it's entirely too frugal with location shots.

bkd69 says:
October 9, 2009 at 5:02 am

Also, for those looking for happy escapist productions with no ties to reality, I posit that that genre is being filled by television as opposed to cinema.

Christian Louboutin Boots says:
October 9, 2009 at 10:28 pm

Also, for those looking for happy escapist productions with no ties to reality, I posit that that genre is being filled by television as opposed
to cinema.

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Thank you for dropping by!
Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
It's Thursday afternoon, around 3; I'm down to half a tank. When I was in college, that meant half full; now it means half empty. Top it off before you go on. I was watching for gas stations, and noticed a big shiny Holiday a few blocks off the road. It didn't make sense: you build those on the highway. My dad could drive me around Fargo and West Fargo, point out a dozen stations that died from poor access.

Then I remembered: this was Staples. They built a bypass. Last time I came through I noticed that the road no longer plowed through town, past the Batcher's Department Store (long closed) or Lefty's Bar (still open) or the movie theater or the sign that promised Wifi down the block at the coffee shop. Ten had moved south, and you slid through town quicker than before. I'm not a fan of this. The point of Ten isn't speed, it's the way it puts towns and red lights in your way, and makes you stop. Makes you look. But I don't live in Staples; I don't have to deal with traffic clogging up the nexus of Northsouth Street and Eastwest boulevard. If I had to cross the intersection with a kid in tow I'd be happy there wasn't a line of cars completely accustomed to doing 65 moving my way.

But not if I had a gas station. Bypasses are death. So I pulled over, turned left, drove back, and filled up. I went inside and used the restroom, noting the remarkable assortment of prophylactics and marital enhancements sold in a
vending machine on the wall. I suppose that's your only private option in a small town, aside from Amazon. A fellow needn't go to the drugstore, stammer his way through an order – *uh, a comb, some Sen-sen, Chiclets, and er – oh nevermind.* Just drop by the gas station, whistle your way to the back, put in the quarters one at a time and turn the knob and hope no one comes in. Someone hits the door, you have a half second to pretend you're not doing what you're obviously doing. The only mystery would be whether you went for the standard, colored, or the Marital 6-pack.

I bought a cup of coffee.

Interesting day, so far; did Newsbreak in the morning in Anchorman clothes, changed in the office head, wound my way out of town by my usual route. Bounced along the washboard road to St. Cloud, grabbed a Filet-o-Fish from the four-corner Nexus of Carb Options, then headed up the Minnesota Mother Road to Fargo, alternating between the XM old-time radio channel and the iPod. Cloudy day. The leaves had been convinced by autumn, utterly; they bought the plot, and were playing their role with conviction. I shot movies and chased trains and made good time. When Staples showed up on the list of cities yet to come I knew Wadena wouldn't be far, and then it was a jump to New York Mills, a sprint to Detroit Lakes, and then the triplets – Hawley, Glyndon, Dilworth – and then home. The westernmost point of the journey was a small white church on the prairie with a boneyard in the back.

But that was tomorrow’s duty. For now:

Driving.

As I said, I stopped in Staples. As long as I was here I thought I'd stretch my legs and have a small cigar. I pulled up next to the three-story department store, closed for decades, its ANTIQUE sign a lie for as long as I can recall. I got out and fired the Zippo and wondered whether anything had changed since I'd taken pictures a few years ago. I saw a building across the street with one of those old dead names carved in the upstairs brick, and considered taking a photo, but there was a woman standing outside smoking a cigarette, and a little girl riding a bike back and forth on the sidewalk. I figured she'd wonder why I was taking pictures. So, no.

Wandered into the parking area behind the old store.
Went around the corner, shot some video of the street. I figured I'd put this all together for some Bleat treat that brings Ten to life. But, well, it wasn't happening. Went back to the car to get back on the road.

The women who was smoking a cigarette across the street said EXCUSE ME. I stopped.

“What is your job?” she said.

To tell you the truth, I’m not sure how to answer that question anymore. I said “Well, I have many jobs.” By now she was crossing the street.

“You're a developer, aren't you,” she said. The tone of her voice indicated that she was not happy with the idea of developers. Whatever that meant. She came closer; short, late 20s, doughy, pimply, suspicious.

“What are you doing?” she said.
“I’m taking pictures.”

“Why? Who are you?”

I held up a hand. I got out my wallet. I showed her my press ID.

“I’m heading to Fargo for a funeral,” I said. “I take Highway Ten when I can, and I like to stop and take pictures of the towns along the way.”

“I saw you go in the alley there. What were you doing in the alley there.”

Of course I could have said lady, calm down and go away. Or none of your business. Or I’m a government man. Step away from the vehicle, please. But you want to make a good impression as a Member of the Media. You don’t know if she’ll call the cops. And the little girl on the bike had just run across the street to join us.

“Mommy I looked both ways,” she said. She was just adorable. She was as cute and sweet and bright as her mother was brackish and blunt.

“How old are you?” I said.

“I’m six. I’m going to Alabama,” she said.

“My daughter is nine,” I said. “She never got to go to Alabama. You’re lucky.”

“What were you taking pictures of?” said the mom.

“The old signs. The big signs for Batcher’s.” By now I was annoyed, really, and I spread my arms. “Is that illegal?”

“No it’s not illegal but I see someone weird taking pictures, I get suspicious.”

“I’m weird?”

She looked me up and down. “You have sunglasses and a black coat.”

I wanted to say to the little girl: run. Run as far as you can as soon as you can. No, not as soon. Not for the wrong reasons. Run to the right time. Run to the right place. Oh, child. What do you have ahead.

“Well,” I said, “I understand your concern. It’s your town, and you’re curious about -”

“It’s not my town,” she said. She looked away. “But I was born here.”

She shooed her child across the street. I got back in my car and drove away. I thought: Staples is dead to me now. Which is a pity, because otherwise I’d stop at that gas station.

It’s a pity they have to suffer from the bypass.

I fired up the iPod to a Johnny Dollar series. As I’ve mentioned before: best detective series on old radio. It’s now part of my Highway Ten ritual. Halfway through episode two the phone buzzed. It was a representative of the Best Buy Corporation.
“Hello!” I said, the Troubles of Staples suddenly forgotten.

They’d read the blog post and the Consumerist post – whoa, wait, what? This made Consumerist? We had a cheerful conversation about appliance replacement strategies, and when I hung up I drove a while, thought a while, then burst out laughing. Unbelievable. I put in a call to the Electrolux fellow who also wants to make sure this turns out right, and drove on. Shot more video of the leaves. Returned to Johnny Dollar. Finished the mystery just as I slid into Detroit Lakes, and for the first time I stopped at the antique outlet on the outskirts.

First I trolled through the parking lot of the adjacent store, a dead Pamida.

![Pamida Storefront](image)

Then I parked and went inside the antique mall, and found . . .

Well, that's tomorrow.


NOTE: Post updated to remove bizarre reference to Alabama, which I didn’t known what I meant when I wrote it late at night, and forgot to remove as I had planned. So that explains all the “hey, why are you slamming Alabama?” remarks in the comments, which rightly took me to task.
Jan says:
October 12, 2009 at 12:30 pm

James, are you sure the woman wasn't Frances McDormand trying out some Coen Brothers' dialogue on you?

Regarding Alabama, I didn't pick up a slam toward the state—I thought James meant that wherever the mother and daughter went, the mother had that joy-sucking element that takes the sunniness out of a child.

swschrad says:
October 12, 2009 at 12:42 pm

“I didn't think those things ever closed.”

this is the second one to fold in DL, if memory serves. they've crumpled all over. it's a cyclical thing, if the local managers are thinking they're a bottom-tier discount store, and running it that way, it's just a matter of time until the thing gets closed.

you want to see one that you couldn't destroy with a hydrogen bomb, get off Camp street in Ely, get onto Sheridan, and check that Pamida out. it's never packed, but it's always selling.

Jose says:
October 12, 2009 at 12:50 pm

Reply to the black jacket comment: “but it's after Labor Day, madam!”

There you have it, you can't just be wandering somewhere you're not from, looking closely at and taking pictures of mundane objects and people, outside the list of Officially Authorized Things To Look At And Take Pictures Of (a.k.a. tourist stuff). Otherwise there's got to be something you're up to when taking the pictures. I won't blame her, though, she's probably been getting bombarded with that POV all day and night on the TV news and the crime shows… the outsider poking his nose around must be casing the joint, or stalking someone, or is a narc/fed on stakeout, or a developer who's going to tear down half the town to build a mall/arena and the other half will get too expensive to live in after outsiders move in; or he runs a website where he sends people's pictures thru the intarwebs tubes without their consent, with captions implying they're into some skeevy kinks. You keep hearing that long enough and it'll wear you down…

*Di* says:
October 12, 2009 at 1:00 pm

areader :@Andrew
I guess nobody here read the bleat where James gave the evil eye to a very suspicious single man (gasp!) who was near children at a recent neighborhood carnival.

But that guy WAS evil because he had urine colored eyes – always a dead giveaway 😊
bgbear (roger h) says:
October 12, 2009 at 1:56 pm

C'mon it is not like James recorded a cover of “Southern Man”

Well I heard mister Lileks sing about her  
Well, I heard ole James put her down  
Well, I hope James Lileks will remember  
A Southern man don’t need him around anyhow

Sweet home Alabama  
Where the skies are so blue  
Sweet Home Alabama  
Lord, I'm coming home to you

hpoulter says:
October 12, 2009 at 2:27 pm

chaiselounge :@hpoulter A recurring theme on Instapundit is being suspicious of people different than you.

Absolute gibberish.

SullyAg says:
October 12, 2009 at 2:42 pm

Love to see what would have happened if James had admitted to being a developer. The trip to Staples might have ended up like “Uneasy Rider“. Or “Uneasy Writer.“ Get it? Ha ha.

I heard Mr. Lileks wrote about us.  
I heard ol' James put us down.  
Well I hope Jamea Lileks will remember,  
A southern man don't need no developers around, anyhow.

Lileks says:
October 12, 2009 at 3:23 pm

Yes, I don't know what I was thinking. I do, but it was poorly phrased, and even if it had been correctly phrased, it was wrong. So I took it out.

Double forehead-slapping d'oh. I mean, I'm from North Dakota. I should know from such unearned reps.

Droptma Styx says:
October 12, 2009 at 4:12 pm

Love the L'Engle AND Weebl references. That's all I got …

Nancy says:
October 12, 2009 at 4:29 pm

When you know the body of a person's work, you pick up on their character. It allows one to assume that no ill-will was intended by the off-hand comment.
Matt says:
October 12, 2009 at 6:04 pm

[She looked me up and down. “You have sunglasses and a black coat.”]

Lileks changed from his ‘Ted Baxter’ outfit after Newsbreak and into his ‘Morpheus’ threads for the road trip. Sha-Zam!

Did the Disturbed Mother and Darling Daughter have banjos on their knees perchance?

steveH says:
October 12, 2009 at 6:05 pm

Staples, Wadena, New York Mills, …

Shouldn’t mean anything to someone born and raised in Southern California, and living since in Northern California.

Except that one daughter moved to Brainerd with her husband, to be near his relatives. And they take us to church often in New York Mills when we visit, the pastor being a college classmate of my wife and me. (Said pastor having grown up in Singapore and Taiwan, where his parents taught and practiced medicine for several decades.) Which all was a surprise to everyone concerned the first time we attended services there.

As was my “hey, I’ve been *there* before” reaction to seeing the video just now.

Small world.

*Di* says:
October 12, 2009 at 7:03 pm

Nancy: When you know the body of a person’s work, you pick up on their character. It allows one to assume that no ill-will was intended by the off-hand comment.

Baby M says:
October 12, 2009 at 8:28 pm

“Staples is dead to me now.”

Guess it’s Office Max from here on out, eh? 😃

Mark says:
October 13, 2009 at 10:52 am

<I think maybe just ’cause the right place for her wouldn’t necessarily be near the one taking her to ‘bama. Unlike some commenters on this site, our host seems to be quite free of prejudices against those who differ from him.

I agree, that’s why the comment seemed so out of place. James’ innate goodness merited a pass on my part, and so I should have looked at it from another perspective. I hope I haven’t added to the oppressive political correctness of the world and tipped the balance towards causing the post to be redacted.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=4047
Hookhead says:
October 13, 2009 at 11:19 am

“You’re a developer, aren’t you?”

Could be worse. She could have pegged you as an encyclopedia salesman.

metaphizzle says:
October 19, 2009 at 11:00 am

I think I know the real reason this woman was so offended:

Staples ain’t got no Batcher’s. They don’t need no Batcher’s. They don’t have to show you any stinkin’ Batch’er’s!

Fred says:
October 27, 2009 at 9:28 pm

Sue Dunham meet Al Federber
Al Federber meet Sue Dunham
A match made in heaven.
default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
I'd never been in the antique mall at Detroit Lakes. It's the same as every other one in the United States of America. For all I know they pack everything up, and ship it off down the road, and set it up in different configurations. The same collection of Mom's Stuff and Dad's Beer Memorabilia. No, strike that; there were some impressive collections of old VHS tapes, including a gigantic Godfather set ("Wide-screen") that looked as ancient as a stack of kinescopes. Lots of Hot Wheels in OP. A few reminders we were in Farm Country:
Farm-Oyl! Olive's rustic brother.

Not sure what you'd lubricate with this – animal leavings? Cab Calloway's vocal cords?
A large cigarette machine:
From the early Mad-Men era of gracious outdoor living:

UNTOLD RICHES AWAITS YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head HERE for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is HERE!
Empire Oil and Chemical! You knew what they made. Now they'd be named Envirogrean, or Oyltec, or something without all those nasty naughty connotations.

Otherwise, everything seemed to occupy that capacious genre, “nothing I wanted.” Except: ah hah. a 1941 Sears catalog. I picked it up with reverence; I was already imagining the website I’d build around it.

Found some Fargo matches. There were also postcards; found one of West Acres shopping center the year it was completed. Went up to the front counter, where the Sears Catalog fellow was standing; he left when I approached. I spread out the matches, and the cashier toted them up. One of them I decided not to buy, and walked back to the booth to return it. The Sears Catalog fellow was sitting in a wheelchair a few yards away, tapping his shoes in the metal footrests.

**Back on the road.** I was in Moorhead in an hour, and drove past a building I thought was torn down. Pulled over to take some pictures. There were security cameras outside; I tried to find angles that wouldn’t alert whoever was watching the monitors, because God Forbid someone should take a picture of the old bank, now a sugar-concern HQ. As long as I was on foot I thought I’d step into the Moorhead Center Mall, which was a 70s response to West Acres and Fargo urban renewal. A sign informed me that security cameras observed the terrain, and they weren’t kidding: every 30 feet, a camera. It was absolutely oppressive. I wanted to take pictures of the old-style 70s mall, but I didn’t. I just walked, astonished. It was all gone. Nearly every storefront was empty, except for a few clustered around the entrances or near the still-vital department store like vagrants around a fire. Nothing new, really; all my life, downtown Moorhead has been dead. But this was the deadest mall I’d ever seen Why, I don’t know, but the only stores that seem to survive in guttered malls are GNC Vitamin stores. It’s as if they sucked the vitality out of everything else to survive.

I walked outside, and my cell sprang to life. I’d gotten calls while inside, but some sort of NO SIGNAL dampening field had rendered my phone inert. It was my dad.

He’d meet me at the funeral home. Did I know where it was?

Yeah, I know where it is.

Had some time, so I went downtown to get some coffee. Get this: drove around downtown Fargo for ten minutes before I found a parking spot.

Got a cup at Atomic; the boombox was playing “Animals” by the Talking Heads.

“Fear of Music!” I said to the clerk, and we all know what the response was: *not my iPod.* Ah well. I sat by the window in a comfy chair, and was catching up on the web when I caught a scent: big-time BO, caked and recaked. An old man – tall, thing, bony, fleshless – tottered into the window seating area, sat down, and exuded a gust of ancient perspiration. Hmm. He picked up a
newspaper, started to read, then leaned forward to cough. It was one of those
coughs that begins in the soles of the feet, and was eventually deposited in a
handkerchief – which he studied like Keats looking for the first hint of TB.
Well, I think it's okay to decamp in such a situation. I moved to another table
several yards away, but still within the range of his BO field. As soon as I sat
down he got up, walked over, and began to hack as he passed. I covered my
coffee and didn't breathe.

In the old days he would be living at the Fargoan or the Donaldson or the
Powers, but they're upscale now. Rehabbed. Downtown Fargo, according to a
story I read in the paper, has had $100 million in new investment in the last
few years. It's a going concern.

The old man got a napkin and went back to his chair and coughed some
more. When I finished my coffee I left by the side door; heard music.
Followed it down the hallway and found an art gallery with a couple of
musicians playing in a corner of the room. In Fargo.

I drove south, had a bite, texted my brother in law: the funeral home on
Cheyenne? Halfway through a taco the phone buzzed. Text. Yes.
Parked in the lot next to an Element, like mine. On the other side: Dad's car.
Walked to the front door; my sister was standing there. We hugged.

Let's go inside and say goodbye.

Uncle Myron had been gone for two years already, really. Lost in an
Alzheimer's fog. Towards the end of the lucid period he'd discussed, with
relish, flying a 747 over Fargo with Richard Nixon, or something like that. He
was usually flying in his fantasies, and they were recounted in serious detail.
The other men nodded and listened and nodded some more. The other men,
after all, had known him for sixty years, and if he wanted to believe these
things, then he believed them.

There's the prayer service at the funeral home the day before the funeral. I
was up there at the end of '07 when my cousin's son died. As before: a wall of
photos, one of which was taken from my Fargo website. Ladies and
Gentlemen, I give you mid-century America:
Myron was a Shriner, and he loved to play the trombone. Many other pictures, but we’ll get to that. You sign the guest book, hug and handshake, and head into the room. The guest of honor is present in corporeal form. This is when the tales are told.

One by one, the menfolk and the daughters and granddaughters and longtime friends get up to talk, and it didn’t take long before I remembered the thing I always forget about these events: the laughter. Story after story, punchlines, chuckles, guffaws. A good life leaves laughter in its wake; these sounds are the last waves slapping the shore.

One of the sons of the men described a night when Myron, my Dad, and some other fellows from the Harwood side of the world decided to surprise his dad with a shotgun salute on his birthday. Shotguns! At midnight! (I filed that one away to ask my dad about later.) I watched men I’d known all my life totter up with difficulty, speak in voices that lacked the punch and brio of their early incarnations. My Dad stood with ease and spoke as always; he is a stone and time is a river. When it ended the mood of the room was merry and kind, sighs and tears in the margins for the moment.
Warren braced me by the door. Warren was one of those force-of-nature fellows with a tenor voice that could pierce any hubbub. Short, round, gleeful, the extrovert's extrovert. He was one of the Men, a farmer; hung around with my folks, arranged things, instigated things. Always entered a room like a string of firecrackers, that one. I hadn't seen him in a while. He had a crutch.

"Were you on the trip to Lake 15?" he asked.

Lake 15! I hadn't thought of that in 30 years. Decades. We'd had some stag trips, with the Men and the Boys. Camping trips, a journey on a houseboat. Thirty years.

"Yes," I said. "I was."

"You boys buried something on the island," he said.

I looked around the room, saw my cousins, his son, a few others.

"All the cousins and sons are accounted for," I said, "so it wasn't one of them."

He told a story about Myron yelling at us kids to SHUT UP when we were camping out on an island on Lake 15.

"Was that when we had the houseboat?" I asked, because I remembered the houseboat. All the Men stayed up late telling jokes, a few of which were exceedingly filthy, and to this day I remember a punchline: *I ain't going in that mudhole without chains.* I remember sort-of getting it, but taking it literally as well.

"No, that was when your dad busted the window." He laughed. I heard the old Warren laugh.

I'd have to ask about that, too.

Went to a coffee shop, did some work, caught up on the internets, went back to Dad's house. Dad and Doris were up, bustling around. Cumulative age > 150 years, and they're up and bustling. House is clean, counters neat, photo frames dusted. I fixed a sandwich and we all had a G&T and talked. We got to talking about the farm, where Myron lived, where my mother lived. I drew the floorplans from memory, even though it's been a quarter-century since I set foot in the house. My second memory, after all, consists of walking down the stairs of the farmhouse on a bright morning, immeasureably happy. We lived there for a year between the rental and the homestead on 8th. I can still see every inch of the farmhouse.

"What about lake 15?" I asked. "Warren mentioned it." He rubbed a hand over his face and made a rueful smile. "I was supposed to bring the houseboat into the dock, and they let me do it because I was in the Navy, you know, they figured I knew what I was doing. I had this big long pole I was supposed to use to pull the boat in. Put it right through the plate glass window of the houseboat. Broke the whole thing."
All the Men have their stories, and they're all the same on the surface. I'm sure the details vary when you get them apart. There's one less voice in the chorus now, one less fellow to lean over and point a Winston and say "that's not how it was, Ralph. It was like this."

But they knew each other well enough to know each other's objections. Sit them down and they'd tell you what Myron would have said.

Sleep came easily. Sometimes the day runs right out of you the moment you hit the pillow.

**Tomorrow:** the church, the graveyard, and the fields.

—

Note: this was all written early Tuesday evening, before I discovered something that requires a trip to the vet. Hence the twitter remarks. Jasper has a very enlarged lymph node, which could mean all kinds of things, but let's just say there are other factors and leave it at that. He's not sick; he has a good appetite and bright eyes, and is his usual self, which could mean good, or could mean it's not the run-of-the-mill causes. Don't know. But: while I appreciate everyone's good wishes & hopes, I kindly request that we keep the comments today free of dog-talk and sympathy for worst-case scenarios. We'll deal with that when we deal with that. For now, I know you're pulling for the furry fellow. Thanks. Updates soon.

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**Pass it along, if you wish**

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**33 RESPONSES TO tuesday, oct. 13. highway ten, pt. 2**

**Andre** says:
October 13, 2009 at 12:50 am

“A good life leaves laughter in its wake.”

I think, Mr. Lileks, that that is one of the most profound things you've ever written here. I certainly hope it's true in my case.

**Seattle Dave** says:
October 13, 2009 at 1:10 am

Yep, that's a fine turn of phrase. Well said.

On another note, my late stepfather had that same cigarette vending machine in his rec room, but his had original gold paint and was pristine. It was illuminated by internal fluorescent lights which shone through the lettering on the mirror front and looked very cool. Made by the J.H. Keeney Co., as I recall, as we were never able to find the keys after my stepdad passed away and I tried hard to track some down before giving up and loading the damn thing in the truck and hauling it to a locksmith. Weighed a metric ton. At Mom's request, we donated it to a charity auction but I couldn't bear...
to wait and see if anyone bid anything for it, cigarettes being out of fashion these days.

Still haven't found the original keys, and I probably won't until whenever my mom leaves that house. They must be somewhere.

**hpoulter** says:
October 13, 2009 at 5:08 am

I wouldn't buy that cigarette machine – it has push buttons, for gosh sakes. A real cigarette machine has those palm-polished chromium pull handles for the satisfying ka-chunk. It would be like buying a Zippo with no thumb flick cover and click-snap sound.

I think Lileks left out a paragraph. Where did the Sears Catalog Man appear from and why is he so named?

**GardenStater** says:
October 13, 2009 at 5:30 am

> hpoulter: A real cigarette machine has those palm-polished chromium pull handles for the satisfying ka-chunk. It would be like buying a Zippo with no thumb flick cover and click-snap sound.
> I think Lileks left out a paragraph. Where did the Sears Catalog Man appear from and why is he so named?

hpoulter, you're absolutely right about the ka-chunk and the Zippo click-snap. My dad always used a Zippo, and I love that sound. And I'd buy that cigarette machine just for the cool mirror. “The pack you see is the pack you get.”

As to Sears Catalog Man, I was a bit confused at first, too. Here's what I think happened:

- Far corner of the store sits SCM, manning a booth. Lileks picks up catalog, walks away to do more browsing
- The store being empty, and SCM bored, SCM strolls up to the front counter to shoot the breeze with Doris, the cashier
- Lileks approaches the front counter; SCM retreats back to his booth and sits down in a wheelchair
- Lileks decides to return a matchbook, walks back, sees SCM in wheelchair
- GardenStater and hpoulter read Lileks' comments, and think “Huh? Is that some weird Twilight Zone reference?”

**NavySeabee** says:
October 13, 2009 at 6:04 am

So, what did you and the boys bury?

(I like to believe that there's still a small treasure chest bank buried in the back yard of my childhood home. One day I'll knock on their door with metal detector in hand and a big smile.)

**MikeH** says:
October 13, 2009 at 6:12 am
What does that sign in the cigarette machine say? Looks like sex fay buterman. I'll blame that on my crappy eyesight and it being way too early in the morning.

Mr_Lilacs says:
October 13, 2009 at 6:22 am

MikeH:
What does that sign in the cigarette machine say? Looks like sex fay buterman. I'll blame that on my crappy eyesight and it being way too early in the morning.

Six Fat Dutchmen. Polka music to go after the Jolson to its left. Odd to stack LPs in a ciggy box.

kc duffy says:
October 13, 2009 at 6:59 am

James, your posts often make me homesick...this one is no exception.

Myron says:
October 13, 2009 at 7:29 am

One fewer Myron in the world. Sigh.

And of all the other Myrons I know, only one is younger than me. (I'm 36).

Double sigh.

-Myron, Sioux Falls

Nancy says:
October 13, 2009 at 8:02 am

Andre:
“A good life leaves laughter in its wake.”
I think, Mr. Lileks, that that is one of the most profound things you've ever written here. I certainly hope it's true in my case.

This made me pause and wonder what I would leave in my wake...

Lou Shumaker says:
October 13, 2009 at 8:04 am

I don't have a family like this. I miss it.

Nancy says:
October 13, 2009 at 8:07 am

Clarify please. Did Sears Catalog Man have the aforementioned catalog in his possession? Was James waiting for SCM to put it down so HE could buy it? He mentioned wanting to have it, but then did not purchase it. These are the great questions of the day!
Russ Shackelford says:
October 13, 2009 at 8:09 am

You have to appreciate the functionality of the mirror on the cigarette machine. The type of characters that buy smokes don't need anyone sneaking up on them in the bowling alley. I remember the handles being yellowed knurled plastic forty years ago.

GardenStater says:
October 13, 2009 at 8:30 am

MikeH: What does that sign in the cigarette machine say?
Looks like sex fay buterman. I'll blame that on my crappy eyesight and it being way too early in the morning.

“The pack you see is the pack you get.”

Gibbering Madness says:
October 13, 2009 at 8:39 am

@Myron
If it makes you feel better, my son's beloved stuffed dragon and boon companion is named Myron. We needed a distinctive “voice” for him, so my wife did Myron Cope, and the name stuck. Myron accompanies him everywhere, in either plush or invisible form.

Bonnie_ says:
October 13, 2009 at 8:55 am

What a beautiful story. Thank you.

Of course I want to know what you buried on the island. That story combined with your Oak Island Water Feature name makes me think of treasure…some sort of dangerous treasure.

juanito - John Davey says:
October 13, 2009 at 9:02 am

Hale and Hearty folks up in the Northern Plains. May they continue to be, ever so.

MTW says:
October 13, 2009 at 9:04 am

“It was absolutely oppressive. I wanted to take pictures of the old-style 70s mall, but I didn’t. ”
You shouldn't let those security camera stop you, because there is 75% chance no one in the office to see you, and if they are asleep. Most security camera are used after the fact.

jeischen says:
October 13, 2009 at 9:10 am

Lake 15? Did they run out of Indian names or is it a secret Air Force site like Groom Lake/Area 51?
Ron Ramblin says:
October 13, 2009 at 9:27 am

Your Stepmother's name is Doris? That made me smirk.

*Di* says:
October 13, 2009 at 9:41 am

I selfishly hope that you DID buy the Sears catalog.

And I'm not from where you are from, James, but every since I started coming here, I've been swimming in a sea of nostalgia, remembering so many things I thought I had forgotten forever.

Al Federber says:
October 13, 2009 at 9:44 am

The Shrine, and Shrine parades, used to be a very big deal. Main streets and storefronts would be festooned with Shrine-themed banners, as seen in James' photo. According to what I read online, Shrine membership has been on the decline since 1979.

Freemasonry and the Shrine attract your more Manly kind of men, and that quality has been largely bred out of Americans.

swschrad says:
October 13, 2009 at 10:13 am

hush, don't talk about Lake 15. they're listening. it's all good.

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most of the lakes in the far north of Minnesota were named by the fur traders on their various routes. some had more imagination than others. some knew the Indian country. and some were just roughs pounding through, grabbing pelts, and getting back to the bar a couple weeks away. those are probably the types that named lake 1, and so on.

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 13, 2009 at 10:16 am

“Sears catalog man” makes me think of some male model in a cheap leisure suit, a cardigan sweater, or maybe even just in his underwear.

(did I just say I thought about a guy in his underwear? NTTAWWT)

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 13, 2009 at 10:20 am

I heard an old Burn and Allen and they had a Miss Minnesota and she presented some sort of certificate stating that they named two lakes in MN George and Gracie. I found a Lake George in Google maps but, not a Gracie.
Kim says:
October 13, 2009 at 10:29 am

I swear when I go to Minneapolis it feels like home and something tells me if I visited Fargo I'd feel the same way! I love these stories!

JP Gibb says:
October 13, 2009 at 10:46 am

Gibbering Madness: @Myron If it makes you feel better, my son's beloved stuffed dragon and boon companion is named Myron. We needed a distinctive “voice” for him, so my wife did Myron Cope, and the name stuck. Myron accompanies him everywhere, in either plush or invisible form.

And Lord knows voices don't get much more distinctive than that! “Yoi and Double Yoi!”

PatchtheBun says:
October 13, 2009 at 12:01 pm

It's really relaxing reading your stories, makes me feel like I was there.

Stephanie says:
October 13, 2009 at 1:40 pm

I've never been to a pre-funeral gathering, we always just have the one funeral, and it's quite a formal and somber affair. A few years ago when my aunt died I was the only one left to do the arrangements. She had never married and had no kids. So I contacted all her friends, and everyone I knew of to try and get the word out about the funeral. I was disappointed to find only about 15 people showed up that day. I thought she deserved much better, as she was such a fun and loving person, and had always been my special aunt.

The funeral started out formal but the preacher didn't really know her so he just read what I'd written for the program. Then something special happened, people started telling stories, and people were laughing, and adding to, and suddenly I was so happy that only a few of her real friends had shown up because they felt relaxed enough to talk and tell these great stories. By the time it was over it was the best funeral I'd ever been to, and a fitting send off for a very special lady.

Lee says:
October 13, 2009 at 2:10 pm

James,
I love your stories about family and the great North. Back before he decided to become an angry lone Democrat, your cityman Keillor would do the same thing, and I loved PHC. Then is was all squeezed through his angry BDS filter and left no joy for me. You have a great touch when you describe your travels. Thanks

Nancy says:
October 13, 2009 at 3:50 pm
bgbear (roger h):
“Sears catalog man” makes me think of some male model in a cheap leisure suit, a cardigan sweater, or maybe even just in his underwear.
(did I just say I thought about a guy in his underwear? NTTAWWT)

Or maybe he was wearing a Sears poncho...

Daniel says:
October 13, 2009 at 4:25 pm

The patio torch oil says “Hooker Glass & Paint”. Hm. I thought hooker paint was more of a Maybelline thing.

Dave says:
October 13, 2009 at 6:38 pm

The funerals I went to while a youngster were the old fashion somber events. Then, partly because I lived quite a ways away right after college, partly because there were no close relatives expiring, I had no funerals for about 10 years. Then when the last of my grandparents generation passed on, I noticed the change. Lots of photos up in the funeral home. People getting up to tell stories. Sad, but a good way to send you off. If you don’t have this going on, it’s probably because you outlived all of our friends.
updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later.

Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
First things first – the dog's okay. It wasn't what I thought it was; turned out to be another fat glob, albeit a large one never before noticed. Poor fellow: just hanging around the house in the morning, and then it's off in the car to go to the Place that Smells of Cats and Fear, and get a needle in the shank. I wouldn't have done this except for the location, which was in lymph territory. Now that I think about it, the entire event brought back my own lymphatic panic from college, when a careless doctor palpated some raised kidney beans on the side of my neck and said “in these situations, we usually look for Hodgkin's Disease.” Sent me into a year-long anxiety trough, that did. Coincided with an ill-advised move to a high-rise apartment, an attempt to stay away from the place where all my friends hung out (wasn't getting enough done) and a stalking by a deranged customer I'd 86'd from the bar, only to have him come back the next day and show his friends his shiny gun. Oh the joys of your 20s.

After I took Jasper home I sprinted to the office, did the run-through for the upcoming headline newsbreak. It'll be a simple 90-second shot, telling people what's coming up. Get the stories from the news huddle, bang out the copy, walk to the other end of the office, mike up, and read. Done! The only problem so far: we're shooting back in Chez Barbara, the area where folks get coffee and microwave their meals, so it's a brief imposition. But we'll all adjust. Add to this the return of NewsBreak in our new digs, and we have some crisp & useful products coming up.
It's all such fun.

Ducked out to fetch daughter for check-up. She didn’t want a shot, but who does? I reminded her that needles today were practically painless, compared to the Number 2 pencils they ground into our flesh in my time, and besides, anticipation is the worst part. Also, she’d get a little something if she got a shot. In my day, kid, you got a balloon. That was it. Printed on the side: “From my doctor for being good.” Never forget those. You could scream like an opera singer being disemboweled, bite the doctor and kick the nurse, and you’d get a balloon.

“Plus, in my day, you only got a cloth bandaid if you got a shot or a finger poke. That was the sign you’d been to the doctor. Now you kids get cloth bandaids anytime you want.”

“Unrecognizable Zebra Hat,” she said from the backseat.

“Universal Zither Hate,” I said.

We drove along a while in silence.

“Vikings Kick Packers!” she said. Ooh: good one.

“Venus Knickers Please,” I said.

“What?”

Nevermind.

We were playing the license plate game. You assign words to the letters on the plate in the car ahead of you. I’m still surprised by Vikings Kick Packers.

The appointment was for 2:30. We were out at 2:31. Obviously, we got in early, but still: it was quick. No shots. Poke, thump, test, questions: my child is sturdy and healthy and on track to be 5’3”. She shot me a dirty look. Sorry, kid. The downside of being the offspring of the head of the Lollipop Guild and the Lullabye League. And in the name of those groups, we welcome you to Lileks Land. Afterwards we went to Target, where I returned a lamp that had stopped working after a week. It had a fancy touch-feature: simply pat the base, and it turned on. Except when it didn’t. Exchanged it for an old-fangled one with a chain. Also bought two Reveal CFLs; if they can match the incandescent Reveal-quality light with a CFL, I have no problem making the switch. I would prefer to make the switch as a matter of choice instead of a response to the abolition of choice, but what’s a little free-will between friends, eh? Grrr. Or Sigh, although I prefer Grrrr.

Can I just say one thing about this flogged-to-a-pulp horse who has pierced the mortal vein and joined the choir eternal? I like the shape of the old bulbs. I like the classic round contours, the gentle swell, the endearingly awkward proportions. When I see an incandescent bulb, I think: Idea. When I see a CFL I think “robot pigtail.”

The conclusion of the trip:
The Funeral was held at the old country church.

I parked on the road, by the rustling field:
In any direction you look, North Dakota, and lots of it. More than enough for all.

It was a good funeral. You don't think of a funeral as “good” until it's done, and then you tote up the last 24 hours, and you get the sense of completion. The way it feels when you slide in a bookend – it goes under the volumes, holds them tight, stands straight. the choir – hardy men from the farms that stretch for miles around the church – sang one of Uncle Myron’s favorite songs. (He was in the choir.) My cousin sang a solo in a clear fine tenor, which surprised me a bit, although it shouldn't. He's the do-all guy, the one who took over the farm from his dad – who took it over from his father. The one who knows land and business and vehicles and hunting and all the necessary skills of pulling a living out of the dirt, the one who stood over the casket of his own son in this very spot a while ago. I shouldn't be surprised he can sing. Nothing any of these people do should surprise anyone.

Stand. The Lord's Prayer. Amen.

Hotdish in the Fellowship Hall.
I had to make it back, so I said my goodbyes all around, and slipped out. But: the church was founded by my ancestors. They're out in the boneyard out back.

A child, gone these hundred years:

I like to walk around and visit, even though I never met them. Stopped at my Mom's grave. Grandma and Grandpa are in the ground as well.
The entire family is together again. Paragraph, period.

Space.

New paragraph. That's me and mine. Time to go home and write the rest.

Not much to say about the trip back; it's always different. It's longer, and lacks that energizing “lighting out for the territories” mood you get when you're headed away from home. Of course, that aspect is constrained by the fact that you're headed towards a home, as well. But: the trip up Ten begins with the tedious stagger through the northern burbs, a drive that has the exact character of those dreams where you're running but not running fast enough, and ends with an easy slide through small town until Moorhead, the border, and the Proud Towers of Fargo rise from the prairie. Going back you know another hour awaits when you hit the edge of town.

I always lie to myself about this. Well, past St. Cloud, it's a walk. Home in a trice. I've started taking different routes once I get into the city, just to see something new. One of the joys of living in a big place is coming across something from the north you had previously only met from the south. Ah! Context! The vast urban tapestry is knit anew! And so on.

Two shots from the return trip. Signage.
Is it okay if I cluck tomorrow?

It's like someone filled his mouth with letters and did a spit-take on the sign:

There's more Highway Ten to come later this year, too. Will I find something different? Guar-an-fargin'-teed.

Out of Context Ad Challenge around 10:30 or so; see you then.
Ed Driscoll says:
October 14, 2009 at 12:31 am
I keep expecting to see Cary Grant running out of that corn field with a crop-dusting biplane zooming after him.

And speaking of suspenseful movies, wasn’t “Tatanka” the code name for 007’s contact in Japan in You Only Live Twice?

Karen Hoy says:
October 14, 2009 at 12:46 am
Poor Natalie, the once and future Munchkin!
She’ll still be an inch taller than me.
I would have to be the only one in my family to take after my short Grandma from Minneapolis! Well, someone has to keep the petite clothing industry in business.

kahall says:
October 14, 2009 at 12:50 am
Ed Driscoll:
I keep expecting to see Cary Grant running out of that corn field with a crop-dusting biplane zooming after him.
[...]
If you build it, they will come.

Ross says:
October 14, 2009 at 2:11 am
Do the Sioux know Subway is muscling in on the buffalo market?

Terry says:
October 14, 2009 at 3:33 am
“... only to have him come back the next day and show his friends his shiny gun. Oh the joys of your 20s.”
Had a similar occurrence with the boyfriend of a girl I met occasionally for a drink.
No, I don’t miss my twenties. Nevertheless I am currently watching Fright Night. Next up, Night of the Comet.

Lulu says:
October 14, 2009 at 5:06 am
My pediatrician’s balloons assured me “I am a good patient.” Also, they didn’t have any newfangled wizardry that could predict your future height. Dad: 6’2”. Mom: 5’2”. Turns out I lean more towards the “Mom” side of the spectrum. Coupled with Dad’s big bone structure, of course. Sigh. Tell Natalie it could be worse.
Chuck says:
October 14, 2009 at 5:21 am

A Dr. scared the bejeebus out of me as a kid after diagnosing ‘osgood schlatters’ disease and indelicately said, ‘you can’t do anything for a year’ which immediately brought to mind images of laying in a hospital bed for the duration, like those poor people in traction. Turned out I just got an excuse to skip Jr High gym class and public showers for a year. WooHoo!!

Nancy says:
October 14, 2009 at 7:28 am

“Sorry, kid. The downside of being the offspring of the head of the Lollipop Guild and the Lullabye League. And in the name of those groups, we welcome you to Lileks Land.” My laptop just about got a coffee-bath when I read that!

Gary says:
October 14, 2009 at 7:33 am

Once again, James, I’m struck by your resemblance to your grandad. Take a good look at those photos 20 years from now.

Hm, 20 years from now. 30+ years of Bleat archives!

John says:
October 14, 2009 at 7:36 am

“Guar-an-fargin’-teed?” I never liked this fargin’ business: either say the naughty word or don’t even try to imitate it. However, this does get one on the subject of rhetorical devices, of which “tmesis” is, if not the most persuasive, certainly the funkiest-named.

kc duffy says:
October 14, 2009 at 8:18 am

Lovely Daughter is the first girl child in 5 generations to be taller than her mother. A week after she turned 13, she was about an inch taller than me. She's topped out at 5’1” – I’m 4’11,” her daddy is 5’7” – so Natalie’s practically a giant in MY family.

The older I get, the more I love being the littlest one in the room… people tend to underestimate me a lot…

Moishe3rd says:
October 14, 2009 at 8:38 am

Oh heck. In the event you think about such things – I miss your links on the sidebar to “Your Host Elsewhere.” I enjoy your Strib work, but I really don’t want to link there voluntarily… If you know what I mean… (It's sort of the same visceral reaction to that former wonderful blog site that we all apparently de-linked from due to his having gone off the deep end on his pet peeves. The Strib is just too far gone for me to want to go there other than reading My Host Elsewhere…)

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=4092
Lars Walker says:
October 14, 2009 at 9:00 am

@Ross
“White man destroy everything. Cut down forest. Fence prairie. Tear wings off buffalo.”

Lars Walker says:
October 14, 2009 at 9:01 am

What's this about getting a balloon when you got a shot? I never got any stinkin' balloon. I got whacked if I made a fuss.
And I liked it!

juanito - John Davey says:
October 14, 2009 at 9:12 am

RE: The Spit Take photo – do they perform any weed abatement in that town? Looks like the Earth is pulling the town back in.

juanito - John Davey says:
October 14, 2009 at 9:18 am

I'm 6' 2", my wife is 5'3". Our 8 year old was the tallest kid in her group for the longest time, and has seemingly slowed down, while her peers have shot up. Our 5 year old is off the charts in terms of height – literally. The goofy "percentile" chart of child stats that the doctors use to quantify your kid – she is no longer on the chart. She always gets the older sister's clothes from last year, even though they're 3 years apart. And get this, she loves hand-me-downs. Weird kid. The routine morning challenge is picking out her outfit for the day. Many is the time that an ensemble has been deemed "not cute enough". Polly Pocket come to life....

RebeccaH says:
October 14, 2009 at 9:40 am

Glad to hear Jasper is okay.

We don't discuss height in my home. I'm 5'4". My 15 year old granddaughter is 5'8".

Mark E. Hurling says:
October 14, 2009 at 10:11 am

Wonderful account of family. I've lived 2000 miles (Los Angeles) from home base (Illinois) since 1980. I've missed several funerals for uncles and aunts because both sides of my family tend not to dally in getting the services and burial done with a minimum of delay. Being so far away I have found out about their demise a day or two before the funeral backstopped by assurances that it's OK, we know you can't get there in time. Doesn't stop the guilt though.

On a brighter note, I love the drive description in this segment. It reminds me of the Great West Coast Road Rally from L.A. to Corvallis, OR, I have partaken in for the last few years since my daughter went off to school at Oregon State (Go Beavers!). It's a 940 mile trip each way on the I-5 that breaks down into a 60 mile segment of L.A. and the Grapevine Passes, 500+ miles of The Big Empty punctuated by Stockton and Sacramento, 300 miles of
mountains just North of Redding, CA, and finsihed off by 40 miles of nice easy driving from Eugene, OR, to Corvallis. One day up, one day to unload and regroup, and one day for the return trip. Oh, and one more for a visit to the chiropractor to get my spine re-aligned from the long sit.

**Trogdor** says:
October 14, 2009 at 10:12 am

@juanito – John Davey
I'm 6'4", my wife is 5'3", I'm by far the tallest in my family, but her entire family are descendants of Liliput. My boys aren't the shortest, but it's close. However, I was 5'6" when I got my first drivers license, and I was 6'0" 6 months later.

**Al Federber** says:
October 14, 2009 at 10:18 am

I'm with you on this one, James; I fully intend to buy and use black market incandescent lightbulbs. Who do they think they are?

**Kristin** says:
October 14, 2009 at 10:25 am

That's a fantastic family photo. Interesting variety of poses and attitudes.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
October 14, 2009 at 10:37 am

*Ed Driscoll*:

And speaking of suspenseful movies, wasn't “Tatanka” the code name for 007’s contact in Japan in *You Only Live Twice*?

Oh, yes “Buffalo Tatanka” kind of stood out in Tokyo. (^_^)

**prescott** says:
October 14, 2009 at 10:38 am

Mmmm, roast bison submarine sandwich…

They need to sign up Ted Nugent as a spokesperson.

**JamesS** says:
October 14, 2009 at 10:45 am

*bgbear (roger h)*:

*Ed Driscoll*:

And speaking of suspenseful movies, wasn't “Tatanka” the code name for 007’s contact in Japan in *You Only Live Twice*?

Oh, yes “Buffalo Tatanka” kind of stood out in Tokyo. (^_^)
Well, actually it was “Tiger Tanaka,” and he was the head of the Japanese Secret Service. The character was also a former kamikaze pilot, which must have required some explanation among Japanese when he brought that up.

**darthlaurel** says:
October 14, 2009 at 10:48 am

I am going to buy up a lot of incandescent because I have a rage reaction to those nasty fake lights the gov’mint wants us to buy. It is different light, even the “special” ones and there is something about the wave length that sets me off. Maybe the family picture was a symbolic reaction to bad lighting. The grandparents could see it coming and didn’t like it, but your mom and uncle were young and naive.

**Dennis Whelan** says:
October 14, 2009 at 10:53 am

The first time I heard the word “Tatanka” it was used to describe buffalo by the native americans in “Dances With Wolves.” I don’t think Kevin Costner ever played 007 though.

**Matt** says:
October 14, 2009 at 10:55 am

_JamesS:_

_bgbear (roger h) :

_Ed Driscoll:_ And speaking of suspenseful movies, wasn’t “Tatanka” the code name for 007’s contact in Japan in _You Only Live Twice_?

_Oh, yes “Buffalo Tatanka” kind of stood out in Tokyo. (^_^)_

Well, actually it was “Tiger Tanaka,” and he was the head of the Japanese Secret Service. The character was also a former kamikaze pilot, which must have required some explanation among Japanese when he brought that up.

“The fargin’ plane wouldn’t start. I swear!!!!”

**Patrick** says:
October 14, 2009 at 11:04 am

Ahh, your doctor was a namby-pamby using those No. 2 pencil syringes. My doctors used whale harpoons that would make Capt. Ahab smile. My current dentist uses the same kind of syringes they use on horses and cows for their vaccinations when he gives you a shot of Novocaine.

**juanito - John Davey** says:
October 14, 2009 at 12:18 pm

@Trogdor
I hear you. My wife's family all hover at the 5'3" range. Some need a ladder to get to 5'3". She has 1 sister that is 5'6" and she's the Amazon.

In my father's family all 10 kids were less than 6'. My Dad was 5'9" and my Mom is 5'2". They were smaller than their own kids. My Brothers are 5'11" 6'1" and 6'2". All three of my sisters are 5'5" or more.

Sometimes I see genetics, and sometimes I see that it is just a biological crap shoot.

Dave says:
October 14, 2009 at 12:19 pm

When my great aunt died recently, I took a walk through the cemetary.....at a country Lutheran church. There were two brothers buried there....named "Ole and Thor Oleson". My dad knew them.

Likels, for a something different, take 55 west sometime. A pleasant drive while heading out west.

Wramblin' Wreck says:
October 14, 2009 at 1:42 pm

James,

Thanks so much for the prosaic journey. With your permission, I would like to pseudo-plagiarize something you said here.

My adopted daughter (store-bought) has a very short birth mother; shorter than myself and ex-Mrs. Wreck. Height-wise, my daughter takes after her birth mother instead of her birth father who is 6'4". I would therefore like to tell my daughter that her biological mother was a paid-up, card carrying member of the lollipop guild.

This is something we can have a lot of fun playing with. She and I never EVER let perceived problems or disadvantages get us down. We invent something positive to bring out the best in the situation. This would just follow up what we have been doing the past 20 years with her adoption.

Spud says:
October 14, 2009 at 2:46 pm

You missed an Ad Challenge right in this post with the spit-take sign:
FILL IN THE LETTERS!

S – Z
SLUGFEST 11 – 2
TASTY OVEN GRILL
SLUGS 5 – 7:30

canajuneh says:
October 14, 2009 at 3:33 pm

juanito – John Davey :@Trogdor
I hear you. My wife's family all hover at the 5'3? range. Some need a ladder to get to 5'3??. She has 1 sister that is 5'6? and she's the Amazon.

In my father's family all 10 kids were less than 6?. My Dad was 5'9? and my Mom is 5'2?. They were smaller than their own
kids. My Brothers are 5'11" 6'1" and 6'2". All three of my sisters are 5'5" or more. Sometimes I see genetics, and sometimes I see that it is just a biological crap shoot.

I think its all the growth hormones in the hamburgers

Ed Singel says:
October 14, 2009 at 3:51 pm

My 11 year old nephew Danny has been told by his doctor that he is headed for 6'4". If he doesn't make it there he is going to be mighty disappointed.

On the other hand, ask Natalie which of the two heights she would rather be when sitting down in a coach seat on a plane.

Loge says:
October 14, 2009 at 7:00 pm

Haven't said this for a while:

Thanks, James.

Just thanks. Keep it up, take care of your girls, and call your dad.

Wish I could call mine.

Jimmy H says:
October 14, 2009 at 8:34 pm

A stab on the “spit-take” sign;
TUES – SUN
BUFFET 11-2
TRY INVENTING
YOUR MEAL 5-7:30
I don’t think we’ll really know the answer to this one.

ExGeeEye says:
October 14, 2009 at 8:47 pm

As often happens, I’m the oddball in the group, the orange in the apple barrel, the Torx bolt in the jar of screws...

I always disliked the color spectrum of the incandescent lightbulb, though I was well into my teens before I learned the phrase “piss-yellow”. As an adult I always used the maximum wattage allowable in a given fixture, on the basis that more bright = less piss-yellow. I thought I had stumbled into paradise when I saw my first “daylight-spectrum” CFL; the energy savings sealed the deal for me. I equipped the whole house with them (except the fridge, oven and range hood) and never looked back.

Of course, I'm a bit concerned about disposal issues, but I also hear that LEDs are going to be the nxt big thing in household lighting. Of course, they'll be so long-lived that they will have to be priced high—but if they are daylight-spectrum and spare the electric bill, I'm cool.

Ross says:
October 15, 2009 at 2:17 am
@Lars Walker

[ Recovering from choking/coughing up a lung ] Thanks, Lars. Probably time this keyboard got a thorough cleaning, anyway…

Greg Zywicki says:

October 15, 2009 at 8:13 am

As for the touch-lamp, you can get a widget, at Lowes or Home Depot or somesuch, that turns any metal lamp into a touch lamp. It screws right in the bulb's spot, then you screw in the bulb. It even turns the bulb into a three-way dimmer.

Jason says:

October 15, 2009 at 3:31 pm

The pictures of the church outside Fargo remind me of the church my grandparents attended out on the prairie, SW of Mandan, ND. Both are buried there now. I remember that they didn't have indoor plumbing for the church until the early 90's, and we thought nothing of it. It was just the way things were in BFE North Dakota. My family would always attend 1 to 2 services every summer while up there for vacation. There were only 2 or 3 families that actually attended the church. General attendance, without my family, was around 8-10. Service was always followed by a potluck in the basement. Different world.

Sometimes you create a ‘Lake Wobegone’ » Cold Fury says:

October 16, 2009 at 11:51 am

[…] Lileks: The Funeral was held at the old country church. I parked on the road, by the rustling field. In any direction you look, North Dakota, and lots of it. More than enough for all. […]

Holli says:

October 18, 2009 at 10:12 am

My parents are 5'7" and 6'1", respectively, although my mom's abnormally tall for her family-- by far the tallest woman on her side. I ended up at 5'8", but my sister only made it to 5'4"; my youngest sister appears likely to shoot past me any day now. Sigh.

Okay, weird coincidence: I have a suitcase full of old photos, purchased at a yard sale here in Maryland, that belonged to the Monson family of North Dakota. Except I think they lived in Crosby, not Fargo.

Teresa says:

October 21, 2009 at 12:25 pm

I'm a week late, been out of town and was rather afraid to look while on the road. I'm so very glad Jasper is okay! Whew! Funny how attached one can become to a dog one has never met in person. 😊

As for height… my father's family was very interesting in that regard. Both of his parents were 5 feet tall even (I remember how tiny my grandmother was). There were 11 kids in the family – 3 of them (both girls and the oldest son) were around 5 feet tall – the rest (all boys) were 6'4" to 6'7"… one never knows with these things.
A little breathing space here. It's MEA weekend, which is when the schools close down for two days to have a convention, or a caucus, or go the Caribbean and talk smack about this year's crop of brats, I don't know. Don't recall these when I was a kid, but things were so different in my day that the teaches not only smoked, but smoked indoors. They had a lounge off the cafeteria, and a blue fog rolled from it all day long. Any kid who went in there came out like a doughboy after the mustard gas rolled over the lip of the trench. That's if you dared to go in there. I remember doing so once, and everyone stiffened. You would not have been surprised if the English teacher rose, held out his hands palm-first, and used repelling beams to drive you back.

Harold! You revealed your power!

I know, Rhoda, but he had violated our lair. It had to be so.

So Thursday is light, except for column duty. No newscasts. Did a few today – the real Newsbreak, a practice Newsbreak in the new “Studio A,” and a run-through of the headlines. Went home, scooped up child, read a book while she did karate, then came home and did this and/or that.

More tomorrow, but for now: here's a big thing which would be today's blog post if I still put these things on the main page, instead of filing them away in permanent archives. Moonlight and Pretzels.
Back in a while with something else, but not before noon.

Pass it along, if you wish

42 RESPONSES TO Thursday, Oct 15

Mxymaster says:
October 15, 2009 at 3:02 am

Bleh. This looks like some WPA project where half the budget got skimmed off the top. Maltin ignores it, and rightly so.

Of course, all day I'll be singing, “Moonlight and pretzels, never out of date...Hearts full of hot dogs, jealousy, and hate....”

Ross says:
October 15, 2009 at 3:10 am

Depending on who was hiding out there, our HS teachers' lounge was the same. Didn't(or dasn't, as Oma used to say) dare enter during the day, but when the crowd of us that did the musicals/choir/state music competitions used to hang out in the auditorium after school, we talked a classmate who worked there after school as a janitor(sorry, engineer) into letting us use his keys so one of us could leave cookies for specific teachers. They would simply be there the next morning, no “from”/explanation, fueling fevered(& sometimes paranoid) speculation by the staff, & amusing us no end. Kindness & a taste of surreptitious power. We were kind of odd teenagers, at that.

“Moonlight & Pretzels”–Good Lord. Well, Universal wasn't exactly staffed by those who felt called to make musicals. Laemmele was a horror/thriller guy & he set the tone there.

Cory says:
October 15, 2009 at 5:40 am

James:
you completely missed the real story in Moonlight and Pretzels.
The real story is Leo Carillo, the “star” of the picture.
Most of your readers who know him will know him for one thing-
Ho, Cisco
Ho Pancho
In the 1950's he was famous as the Cisco Kid's dimwitted sidekick, Pancho.
Two decades before, as we see here, he played this type of Manhattan sophisticate (and ironically The Cisco Kid is an O'Henry creation). Contrary to his Pancho image Carillo was a well-educated, cultured man, the scion of a long-time California family.

Grebmam says:
October 15, 2009 at 6:25 am

You didn't have MEA, because you went to school in ND! The “M” is “Minnesota.” I remember MEA weekends well, that was all through the 70s. Third weekend in October.
HunkyBobTX says:
October 15, 2009 at 6:56 am

“The extent to which Hollywood explicitly endorsed FDR in the early-mid 30s never fails to amaze. I’ve never seen anything like it since.”
-where you been the last year, James? Or did I just miss the the sarcasm entirely?

Yeah, the propaganda in that movie is pretty blatant: FDR elected. Suddenly everything's good again. That movie was definitely made before the 1940's.

RPD says:
October 15, 2009 at 8:18 am

I haven't seen Hollywood glorify Obama in the movies yet, at not that that explicitly. I recall earlier having seen some clips where movies were also explicitly promoting the NRA (National Recovery Act). I don't expect to see that with Obamacare.

Beatrix says:
October 15, 2009 at 8:45 am

I am so old that when I was in high school, there was a lounge for the STUDENTS to smoke in, blue fog and all. Before I graduated, the rules changed. They re-did the smoking lounge into a non-smoking Senior Lounge and made a new rule: teachers could still smoke in the teacher's lounge, but students had to smoke outdoors. They didn't, of course — they smoked in the bathrooms, and if you went in for any other purpose, the smokers would glare you right back out of there again. This made for some long days for the non-smoking portion of the student population.

rivlax says:
October 15, 2009 at 9:09 am

Dang, James is too fast. Thought I'd be the only one who knew who Leo Carillo was. By the way, my first-ever TV appearance was on WJBF in Augusta, Ga., on the “Cisco Kid Hotdog Party” in 1956. I remember being disappointed that Duncan and Leo were not actually in the studio.

Richard says:
October 15, 2009 at 9:21 am

Whatever. As I've said before, not more cowbell, more 'Diner'. BTW, I'd even support the MSM if you up'd the production a bit and stuck it on the StarTribune site.

Cheers.

Al Federber says:
October 15, 2009 at 9:25 am

My parents thought FDR was right up there with Jesus Christ. I suppose I thought so too, when I was a kid. Hey, he was on the new dimes and all! I know better now.

W. C. Fields called FDR “Old Gumlegs”, which is low and unkind, but illustrates that not everyone in Hollywood was enamored.
juanito - John Davey says:
October 15, 2009 at 9:25 am

We had a smoker's section outside the cafeteria in our Catholic High School. Teachers would frequently light up with the Students. And that was in ‘Anti-Smoking-is-a-religion-California’

Its also where bands could play at lunch. With all the smoke, it really did have ‘concert’ vibe.

mpcdsp says:
October 15, 2009 at 9:54 am

My Minneapolis High School had the standard teacher's smoking lounge; what made that unusual was the inordinate amount of time some teacher's spent there. It wasn't until years later that I realized it wasn't normal for teachers to make an assignment during the first five minutes of the class, and then disappear to the teacher's lounge for the rest of the hour. There were also a few teachers who did unauthorized drinking on a regular basis. Maybe this was because of the students; as a student body, we were no prize. In retrospect, I am filled with gratitude for the good teachers who mucked it out in that environment.

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 15, 2009 at 9:54 am

@RPD
It is done with TV now.

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 15, 2009 at 10:01 am

The best thing about smoking teachers in my high school was that they drove away the non-smoking teachers who ate lunch in their class rooms which gave us kids a place to hang out on a cold or rainy day.

(I should clarify that our cafeteria was converted to a library after the old library was torn down for being not up to earthquake code. I was in my home town a few months back and it appears the library has still not been replaced in the 35 since it was torn down. What do they do with that money?)

John says:
October 15, 2009 at 10:11 am

Sorry, Cory: it's “O. Henry,” not “O'Henry.” I say that only because every morning I bicycle past a school named after him. As for what the teachers do in there, I cannot say, and would rather not find out. At the school where my polling station is, I saw a bulletin board devoted to the teachers – a chance to autobiographize. It just wasn't right. Your own teachers should be fairly distant people: you don't inquire into their personal lives, and you (or at least I) would be surprised if any ever confided anything in you. On this bulletin board, one teacher boasted of her vegetarian diet. Challenged to say something interesting about myself, I'm sure I could come up with something more welcome to parents and their children than the state of my bowels.
DryOwlTacos says:
October 15, 2009 at 10:19 am

Once I had to visit the school nurse's office due to a minor injury I suffered in P.E. (which was always a major injury to my self-esteem, but back in the day self-esteem was an elective and P.E. was required). I went by the teachers' lounge on the way to the nurse's office and took a furtive, guilty peek at my teachers pounding down those Luckies and Virginia Slims with mugs of reeking coffee. Eventually I developed a taste for the latter, but since I thought smoking was compulsory to the teaching profession, I gave it a pass.

rivlax says:
October 15, 2009 at 10:29 am

When I arrived at Fayetteville Senior High School (N.C.) in 1962 from my DoD school in Germany, I was amazed that 1) there were smoke breaks FOR STUDENTS incorporated into the daily schedule, and 2) there was a designated smoking patio to which they could repair to puff their coffin nails. I guess it was the old Tobacco Road culture in one of its last gasps.

Mikey NTH says:
October 15, 2009 at 11:46 am

There was the Calvin and Hobbes where Calvin ducks into the teacher's lounge to escape and sees the room full of slimy aliens.

“What was that?”
“Beats me, Fred.”

jeischen says:
October 15, 2009 at 11:46 am

Our teacher's lounge in elementary school had no windows, or ventilation, I guess, and the smoke would seep out under the door and into the hallway. My overarching memory of my third-grade teacher is her smoke/coffee breath. In junior high/high school, kids who smoked stood on “smoker's corner” (or hood's corner) across the street from the school, during breaks and at lunch. Pot smokers usually had to find a less visible venue. I had a high school vo-ag teacher who chain-smoked smoked in class. He was a Vietnam vet with PTSD (shaky hands) and I think our principal was too scared of him to call him on it. Speaking of musicals, I have recently become a big fan of the TV program “Glee.” It's “High School Musical” meets “Freaks and Geeks.” My favorite character is Jane Lynch, who plays a sadistic cheerleading coach who is the glee club's archnemisis. It one of the few shows I sit down and watch with my daughters.

wiredog says:
October 15, 2009 at 11:49 am

At Langley High School (class of 83) there was a smoking area on campus, but outside, into the mid-80's at least. A covered area right outside the doors for when it rained, and an area known as “the hill” (because that's what it was) where everyone went in good weather. As late as '83 the staff would ignore people smoking weed out there.
Mr_Lilacs says:
October 15, 2009 at 12:17 pm

mpcdsp : . . There were also a few teachers who did unauthorized drinking on a regular basis . . . .

If there were a teaching job that included authorized drinking, I'd very much like to hear about it. 😁

My high school's band teacher (fittingly enough named Mr. Witzke) sometimes used liquid fortification to help him face the music.

juanito - John Davey says:
October 15, 2009 at 12:53 pm

bgbear (roger h) :
(I should clarify that our cafeteria was converted to a library after the old library was torn down for being not up to earthquake code. I was in my home town a few months back and it appears the library has still not been replaced in the 35 since it was torn down. What do they do with that money?)

My all-brick elementary school (Coloma Elementary – T Street Sacramento, CA) was closed due to non-compliance with CA earthquake code. Consequently I had to go to another school over a mile away, as opposed to Coloma, 7 blocks from my house. The City took over the property, and converted it into a Regional Recreation Department. For many years, all the community access cable shows were filmed there. Its a grand old building, and I'm grateful that they could keep it up and in use, but also disappointed. Merits code compliance for City workers, but school kids don't have enough need? Meh.

juanito - John Davey says:
October 15, 2009 at 12:53 pm

Mr_Lilacs:

mpcdsp : . . There were also a few teachers who did unauthorized drinking on a regular basis . . . .

If there were a teaching job that included authorized drinking, I'd very much like to hear about it.
My high school's band teacher (fittingly enough named Mr. Witzke) sometimes used liquid fortification to help him face the music.

Behind the Music, indeed.

Chrees says:
October 15, 2009 at 1:04 pm

“Wild Boys of the Road” was on TV the other evening, another “realistic but feel-good” movie from the ‘30s. Despite the preachy ending, it seemed to be one of the better films of the genre and time. In addition, rather than the token shoeshiner it did take a stab at
showing that poverty was integrated. (Which meant there were two black people shown instead of one)

dcmatthews says:
October 15, 2009 at 1:24 pm

Mxymaster:
Of course, all day I’ll be singing, “Moonlight and pretzels, never out of date...Hearts full of hot dogs, jealousy, and hate....”

Mxymaster FTW!!

jamcool says:
October 15, 2009 at 2:25 pm

@Chrees
Which was followed by the 1940 movie “Wild Girls of the Road”...so much for the “recovery”!

GardenStater says:
October 15, 2009 at 2:35 pm

RPD: I haven’t seen Hollywood glorify Obama in the movies yet, at not that that explicitly.

Not Hollywood yet—just the major news networks, along with some elementary schools. Trust me—Hollywood will soon be singing his praises on screen.

Chrees says:
October 15, 2009 at 2:53 pm

Jamcool, I saw that was on but just couldn’t bring myself to watch it. Obviously someone didn’t do their part after Wild Boys ended.

Cory says:
October 15, 2009 at 5:03 pm

John:
D’OH! (not D. OH!)
You are right, early morning screw-up.
Actually, it’s William Sydney Porter.

browniejr says:
October 15, 2009 at 6:58 pm

OFF TOPIC: Mr. Lileks was just on the Hugh Hewitt Show, talking about how to punish the little kid that DIDN’T fall from/ ride the balloon today, James thought the punishment should be to make him RIDE the balloon. The obvious answer: the little kid should be grounded (OBVIOUSLY 😐)

Back to the broadcast, already in progress: in my high school, late ’70s, we had a smoking area for the kids out in the rain. The idea was that kids would smoke anyway, so why not put it in a place that the janitor could more easily clean/ no judgementalism by the
teachers, etc. What a crappy idea… except that is now what the smokers (regardless of age) are all forced to do now. And all of us non-smokers are forced to walk thru the gray haze to get to work, etc. Rather ironic. And now we have a set of permissive parents letting kids hang around experimental balloons, etc. The “Ballon Kid” will probably end up on the show “Intervention” one day, unfortunately.

I’m just waiting for the media to somehow credit Mr. Obama with bringing the balloon down safely.

areader says:
October 15, 2009 at 7:13 pm

GardenStater:

RPD: I haven’t seen Hollywood glorify Obama in the movies yet, at not that that explicitly.

Not Hollywood yet—just the major news networks, along with some elementary schools. Trust me—Hollywood will soon be singing his praises on screen.

So if someone wants to make a movie with their own money that paints a favorable picture of the president of united states, this bothers you?

browniejr says:
October 15, 2009 at 7:25 pm

areader:

GardenStater:

RPD: I haven’t seen Hollywood glorify Obama in the movies yet, at not that that explicitly.

Not Hollywood yet—just the major news networks, along with some elementary schools. Trust me—Hollywood will soon be singing his praises on screen.

So if someone wants to make a movie with their own money that paints a favorable picture of the president of united states, this bothers you?

@areader

They can spend their own money… Actually it will be wasting their own money or the money of their investors, since no one will probably see the movie. Hollywood did something similar shortly after 9/11 when they made movies critical of the military—no one was in the mood for it, and the studios lost a lot of money.

“Hope and Change” will be like “Moonlight and Pretzels” in ~75 years, and subject to lampooning in a 3-D video blog, with smell-o-vision. Anyone remember/see “Primary Colors?”
areader says:
October 15, 2009 at 7:48 pm

*shortly after 9/11*

Actually it was closer to shortly after the invasion of Iraq wasn’t going so well and no WMDs were found.

browniejr says:
October 15, 2009 at 10:48 pm

*areader :*  
*shortly after 9/11*  
Actually it was closer to shortly after the invasion of Iraq wasn’t going so well and no WMDs were found.

Of COURSE! Because the Truth is ALWAYS what motivates Hollywood…

cgm says:
October 15, 2009 at 10:55 pm

The college where I teach has a faculty lounge near my office. The first time I walked in, a number of older professors looked up, and for a second I felt as if I was back in high school and had walked into the teacher's lounge there. Almost apologized, too.

cgm says:
October 15, 2009 at 10:57 pm


Lou Shumaker says:
October 16, 2009 at 8:45 am

@browniejr  
Actually, it was pretty much most of the last eight years. Wasn’t there at least four or five pictures, including “Stop Loss” with Cruise and Streep?

And recently, we’re reading over at the Big Hollywood site about the networks endorsing volunteer work, organized in part by the WH.

C. Wingate says:
October 16, 2009 at 8:46 am

The thing I want to know about that movie is what the director was thinking in framing that final shot, what with the shocked eyes looming over the lowers.

Lou Shumaker says:
October 16, 2009 at 8:50 am

Sorry, back to commenting about the site … I clicked through the “Next” button on the ’30s site and realized I missed a lot of movies somehow, including the pre-Code one with hints of Hubba-hubba and the marijuana song.

For my book project, I've been researching the lives of writers, and
came across a story about Katharine Anne Porter. In 1921, she was living in Mexico and tried some Mary Jane at a party. It was either pretty powerful stuff or cut with hallucinogens, because she thought she could touch the stars and tried to do so by climbing onto the balcony. They got her down before she could fall and crash into some rocks a hundred feet below. She used the experience in her short story “Flowering Judas.”

One assumes that a number of Americans visiting Mexico brought back some souveniers for the neighbors to try.

Reminds me of the Jimmy Buffett line from “Pencil-Thin Moustache”: “And only jazz musicians / were smokin’ marijuana”

**a reader** says:
October 16, 2009 at 9:03 am

*Lou Shumaker: [@browniejr](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=4109)* Actually, it was pretty much most of the last eight years. Wasn’t there at least four or five pictures, including “Stop Loss” with Cruise and Streep? And recently, we’re reading over at the Big Hollywood site about the networks endorsing volunteer work, organized in part by the WH.

Stop loss was in 2008. There were alot of movies critical of Bush/Cheney policies, but they came out after and were a response to the invasion of Iraq. That’s a fact, and simply a counterpoint to the person above who said it started pretty much right after 9/11, which is not true. If you disagree, how about some facts.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
October 16, 2009 at 9:37 am

@a reader

a reader is correct in that the march of dull anti-war/Bush films came after the Iraq invasion and the increasing unpopular support.

It probably seems sooner because I imagine that just before 9/11 the usual suspects in Hollywood were probably working on their “how Bush stole the election scripts” and then they had to switch to their “why did Bush let 9/11 happen” scripts which mostly got shelved in favor of the “Bush/Cheney stealing your liberties” and “Bush/Cheney evil war monger” scripts.

When you hold people in low regard it is easy to believe anything about them e.g. Rush Limbaugh this week.

**Trogdor** says:
October 16, 2009 at 9:38 am

[@browniejr](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=4109)

No viable Nuclear WMD were found. Plenty of WMD were found. And WMD had been used on the Kurds before. Besides, mad dictators don’t kill people, only Nuclear WMD kill people.
Still not finding what you're looking for? Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

1: Matchbook Museum
2: Comic Covers
3: Black & White World
4: Sears 1934
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
Screedblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

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Please install and activate the “Twitter for WordPress” plugin to use this section.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=4109
Daughter today on the way as we got in the car:

“Hey Dad have you heard that in 2012-”

“It’s nonsense.”

“It is?” She was relieved. “But the Mayans say it’s the end of the world.”

“How would they know?”

“They had a calendar and everything and it doesn’t go after 2012.”

“I got your school calendar today in the mail, and it ends in June. That doesn’t mean the world ends.”
“Oh.”

“Anyway, there aren’t any Mayans. I mean there’s no Mayan civilization. Or Aztec. Or Toltec.”

“What happened to them all?”

“Too much war, and a bunch of guys in tin suits with magic weapons showed up. Germs and politics.”

“Oh.” Pause. “They cut out hearts.”

“Some of them. Where you’d learn that?”

“A book in media class. They were like . . . Nazis or something. Hey can I see that game where you fight Nazis again?”

“Sure.”

“It was funny when I asked ‘Can I play, Daddy.’”

It was amusing: I’d been setting up the game, and she’d come into my studio. She asked if she could play, Daddy, then burst into laughter: the first option for the difficulty setting was “Can I play, Daddy.”

It’s all a variant of Doom. Ask a guy of a certain age how he wants his gaming, and he’ll tell you: Hurt Me Plenty.

The matter of the 2012 issue solved, we drove to her friend’s house.

A day at home, working. I’d hoped for a day with my daughter, but in the afternoon she got a call to see a friend, so I was on my oddy-knocky after lunch. Didn’t even get to make her mac and cheese. Not that she’d know, but: we used to have that for lunch every day. At first it was this . . . stuff that came in a microwavable tin, for pre-toddlers. The great thrill: spreading it over the high-chair table in a sticky paste, jamming fistfuls in the maw, grinning, slapping the hands on the high-chair table to send undetectable molecules to adhere to the woodwork, the wall, the dog. This was followed by Easy Mac, which was slightly less gag-provoking. I’d pick up the chair and fly her over to the microwave, and she’d punch in the numbers, giggling. Just the two of us, at home, on a winter noon. It was like that for a long time. I’m certain that winter lasted two years.

It would be sad to say it seemed like yesterday. Doesn’t. Seems like a very long time ago. But I can still imagine her sitting at the tiny table, playing the annual Barbie game on the computer. We slipped out of the Barbietstream long ago, so I’m not sure what this Christmas’ brand-extension is; she lost interest around Unicornia, or whatever it was called. No: Pegasus. The toy of
the season was a Pegasus, noted for having one wing fall off in mid-flight all the time. I named her Icarus. Each year there was a new toy, a new DVD, a new game. They never hit three-for-three. “Princess and the Pauper” was the best movie, at least from the standpoint of a dad who had to hear the soundtrack six time a day, and it was competently animated; the rest looked like Claymation made by people wearing oven mitts. The game was difficult, though. The dolls were duplicate Barbies who had conversations, mostly of the empowering sort. After that, though, it was all flying horses and fairy-tale nonsense.

But that's where she got her start as a gamer: Barbie. There was a first-person shooter portion in one game. You had to walk through a maze and break through barriers. Doom for kindergarten girls. The point of the game was to rescue Prince Stefan, not be rescued by him. As far as I can tell in the Barbieverse, the prices just stand around and look gallant, and the women do all the work.

So, yes, one of those days, notable for the absences and deletions and other inevitable side-effects of rolling around the sun and passing through time. Although that doesn't sound right; time isn't waiting for us to arrive, and it doesn't exist after we've passed through. Time, like Indiana Jones, is just making it up as it goes along.

Did a Newsbreak interview yesterday about a new galaxy discovered by some Minnesotans. Lots of gas but no stars. “You might think that's a definition of Joan Rivers on Oscar night before the limos arrive,” I said, hardy har. (If you hit the link, wait for the peculiar George Lucas detail.) I love new galaxy stories. I love learning that someone pointed a telescope at an empty patch and found 1000 new spiral galaxies, each of which no doubt teems with life. Yes, I think that's so, and no, I've no good explanation for why we haven't been visited by Vulcans. I'm a fan of the multiverse theory, and I'd also be comfy with the notion that this is one of an infinite number of iteration of the universe, each with their own laws. It would be a pity if we ended up in the one whose laws were A) everything's far apart, and B) you can't get there, but them's the breaks. Some galaxies, however, have it worse off. You get those peculiar ones with enormous rapacious black holes in the middle and just a smattering of stars, you think: bad neighborhood. Imagine being a sentient being in a system that evolves sufficiently to figure out it's going to be eaten by a black hole in a few thousand years, and how this would affect society. If you knew it would be all over in 2000 years, who would build? Would anyone try to escape if there were no systems to which you could flee? Futility would be the handmaiden at every act of creation. Or it might make everything precious. Or, most likely, both, and neither. Some people would still live their lives, go to work, make what they could for their ration of time. A great many would use the expiration date as the validation of the standard-issue nihilism that affects those with attenuated adolescence, and clothe their selfishness in philosophy.

And now, some aspirin.
Yes, over the years people have sent me many things, including old aspirin tins. This might give you an indication of the quantity of stuff yet to be scanned and posted. If I waited a few more years we'd have holographic scanners, and you could see these in 3D, but I'm just an impatient sort.

All that's left of the brand these days is the children's version, it seems:

One dime for 12 pellets of willow-bark, as the Romans would have called it.

Nyal:

The brand, like Woolworth's, has assumed a new life in Australia.

This color can only be described as mid-century medical:
Ever heard of McKesson? No? Largest health care company in the world – now. According to this entry in wikipedia, anyway.

They've come a long way from the scandal that followed when a bootlegger bought the joint and ran some funny-paper scams.

Later today: the start of the 1934 Sears Catalog site. And of course 100 Mysteries! See you soon. Also, column up at startribune.com – don't have the link at the moment, but just scroll yourself down and it's there, by my face. Or my name. Either will do.

Pass it along, if you wish

**41 RESPONSES TO **friday! october 16

**Scott P** says:
October 16, 2009 at 10:40 am

Whew. The Bleat's up, and all's well with the world.

**Marjorie J. Birch** says:
October 16, 2009 at 10:50 am

there was me, that is, Lileks, and my three droogs, that is Jasper, (G)nat, and... oh rats, not enough droogs. Unless you count aspirin.

I believe that “aspirin” was once a brand name of powdered willow bark, but it became a generic name — a brand-name's fate worse than death.
**GardenStater** says:
October 16, 2009 at 10:59 am

*Marjorie J. Birch*: I believe that “aspirin” was once a brand name of powdered willow bark, but it became a generic name — a brand-name’s fate worse than death.

Yep. According to Wikipedia:

“As part of war reparations specified in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles following Germany's surrender after World War I, Aspirin (along with Heroin) lost its status as a registered trademark in France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, where it became a generic name and can be spelled in lower case.”

Haven’t seen any OTC heroin lately, though.

**JamesS** says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:00 am

My take on the “2012″ thing is to ask folks to consider a Chinese restaurant's placemat: they show the Years of the Rat, the Tiger, etc, and they stop at 2007. Does that mean the Chinese, that ancient civilization, knew that the world would end then?

Well, now the placemats go out to 2019. Whew, a reprieve!

**Grebmar** says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:01 am

“Aspirin” was indeed a trademark of Bayer, who for unfathomable reasons, let it lapse. I’m sure the story is somewhere out in the wilds of the internet, but I’m too lazy to find it now.

Powdered willow bark, I'm not so sure. Aspirin is an artificial compound and not found in nature.

**Grebmar** says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:01 am

Well, Garden State beat me to it.

**Jennifer** says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:04 am

“As far as I can tell in the Barbieverse, the princes just stand around and look gallant, and the women do all the work.”

Please. That's my life in this world!

**Spud** says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:07 am

I wonder how sales would have done if instead of aspirin you took the generic salicylic acid for a headache?

The best gift a dad can give himself is to be the primary caregiver for a toddler/infant for a year (six months?). I was out of work and job-hunting in the late 90's. In what would be sad and difficult times
for some turned out to be some of the best months in my life, when I
got the privilege of caring for my year old son. He may not
remember it but I surely do.

Re: Barbie
“Princess and the Pauper” is one of the better video’s in the series.
My five y.o. daughter got “Pegasus” a few months ago but it did not
make her heavy rotation. The Swan Lake video was “awright” too.

DNewlander says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:11 am

By the way, the Woolworth's in Australia is not related to the former
discount retailer in the US. The founder liked the name, found it
wasn’t trademarked Down Under and that’s all she wrote.

I’ll leave it to someone else to tell us what Woolworth’s has turned
into up here. 😊

Spud says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:12 am

Hold the presses. Breaking news … totally unrelated to the Bleat.

The new Taco Bell offering, Blackjack Taco, has been secretly
doctored with some type of substance resembling mayonnaise. Be
warned that your first bite may feel “funny”.

John Robinson says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:14 am

When our sons were small and home sick from school, they had two
“sick movies” they invariably called for: The Last Starfighter and
The Running Man. I have no idea if that speaks to their iffy taste in
films, or to my bad parenting skills.

Gary says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:30 am

“just scroll yourself down and it's there, by my face. Or my name. ”

Sorry, James, but it isn't, at least not for my office or home browsers.
And tell your employers the page is much too crowded. One of those
get-me-outta-here sites.

Will says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:36 am

There are plenty of Mayans around, you know. They're no longer
dominant, of course, but saying there are no Mayans is like saying
there are no Sioux or Hopi around.
In fact, there's an article floating around that interviews a Mayan
elder who says the doomsday predictions are bunk, and that the
calendar will turn over and start again.

Chris says:
October 16, 2009 at 11:56 am

Wolfenstein begat Doom, not the other way around.
Moishe3rd says:
October 16, 2009 at 12:03 pm

Just to repeat and reiterate... As Gary noted – scrolled and saw no friendly Lileks; neither face nor name. I mean, Sid Hartman was there for crinney's sake! Shudder... Sighed and searched for James Lileks – got all sorts of hits, but not today's column... I really do not like the Strib, James. Please, please, pretty please... don't make me go there... Please?

Mxymaster says:
October 16, 2009 at 12:09 pm

St. Joseph's is still around, and I'm told it still has that great orange taste I associate with being home sick and catered to, but it's no longer sold as children's aspirin. Because of Reye's Syndrome, children shouldn't take aspirin. Because of the low dose it's mainly sold as an anti-clotting med (i.e., heart attack prevention). But people still commonly call those children's or even baby aspirin.

This has been your Bleat Health Moment.

Bob Schwartz says:
October 16, 2009 at 12:15 pm

Great column! Downright philosophical. I loved the “Pegasus-Icarus” meme.

hpoulter says:
October 16, 2009 at 12:16 pm

Aspirin – well, any gardener (or crossword puzzle buff) knows that Salix is the Latin word for Willow. In the Boy Scouts, they told us that chewing willow twigs was a specific for headache (it tastes like Aspirin, too). The acetylsalycilic acid in aspirin is obviously derived from salycylic acid, which is found in willows. But I agree, “Aspirin” like “Heroin”, was a trademark of I.G Farben Bayer. Pynchon readers take note.

hpoulter says:
October 16, 2009 at 12:18 pm

@Mxymaster

Now that I am getting older, I find myself using baby aspirin and baby shampoo (for blepharitis). I hope it's a long time before I get to baby food.

juanito - John Davey says:
October 16, 2009 at 12:21 pm

John Robinson:
When our sons were small and home sick from school, they had two “sick movies” they invariably called for: The Last Starfighter and The Running Man. I have no idea if that speaks to their iffy taste in films, or to my bad parenting skills.
Funny, I refer to California Lt. Governor John Garamendi as **The Running Man**.

Barbie movies are back in vogue at our Casa de Estrogen, as my 5 yr old and 8 yr old will both watch them. The 5 yr old got a Fairy Barbie with Butterfly Wings for her birthday in September. One wing or the other repeated falls off. I end up having to stitch them back on twice a week. Bleh.

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**Lars Walker** says:
October 16, 2009 at 12:39 pm

The column can be accessed by clicking on “Lifestyle” and “Blogs,” then scrolling down. I found it by banging around the site at random.

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**Lars Walker** says:
October 16, 2009 at 12:40 pm

@Lars Walker

Nope. I was wrong. That just takes you to the Blog o’ Things.

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**Brian Greenberg** says:
October 16, 2009 at 12:41 pm

I thought (G)Nat's favorite Equine playmates were the My Little Ponies? What is this Pegasus you speak of?

It's funny – I've never even met Natalie, but I have memories of her childhood. This is what I get for having two sons & no daughters…

…and from reading the Bleat consistently for 5+ years!

---

**swschrad** says:
October 16, 2009 at 12:50 pm

Why no Vulcan visits? they are seeking Oneness and intelligence. little of that here.

Aspirin (tm.) Bayer has been buying the “interlopers” back, bought Sterling Drug in the US about ten years ago, and has now unified the copyright portfolio again. If you go Great White North, eh, it's all ASA on the shelf, excepting one familiar yellow and brown label.

as for OTC heroin… there ain't no other kind. Schedule C with “no known medical use,” and if you want some at Walgreens, you'll have to score in the dark corner of the parking lot.

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**Al Federber** says:
October 16, 2009 at 1:32 pm

Futility IS the handmaiden at every act of creation, if you look far enough ahead. Doesn't stop most of us from creating, though. We must occupy our time somehow.

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**Bill McNutt** says:
October 16, 2009 at 1:34 pm

James –
Don't fool yourself. You KNOW that as soon as we get holographic scanners, you're going to go back and re-scan everything in 3D.
‘Cause I know you got all that stuff carefully sorted, filed, and stored in low-acid ziplocs.

You don't think we believe you're discarding stuff after scanning it, do you?

Bill

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 16, 2009 at 2:04 pm

OK here is my IIRC for aspirin.

What Bayer did was buffer salicylic acid so that it did not burn a hole in your stomach (something that would probably make you forget your headache).

Bayer was a dye company and the salicylic acid was an industrial by-product to the dye making process they were eager to unload but, had no market. A clever chemist knew it could be used as a fever breaker or pain reliever but, in its present form was a dangerous cure. The acetyl group added to the formulation buffered the acid while it was in your stomach until the medicine was absorbed.

Alka-seltzer produces sodium salicylate in water and is also a buffered form of salicylic acid.

(like I said, from memory, probably full of errors)

Wramblin' Wreck says:
October 16, 2009 at 2:05 pm

Genuine Pure Aspirin? Isn't the “Genuine” somewhat redundant? What would “Ungenuine Pure Aspirin” be? Aspirin is acetylsalicylic acid no matter what the source; willow bark, mullein leaves or chemical reactor. It is still aspirin.

raf says:
October 16, 2009 at 2:47 pm

There might be a high-margin market opportunity for someone to package willow twigs/bark as “organic” aspirin. Some of that other stuff is made from coal tar derivitives — that just has to be bad, doesn't it? In mad-land, I mean.

KAT23 says:
October 16, 2009 at 2:56 pm

So if packaged will twigs is aspirin what is SNUFF?

gmann63 says:
October 16, 2009 at 5:37 pm

Huh. I used to work for McKesson, although it was called McKesson-HBOC at the time. Easiest job I ever had, which may be why my job was outsourced to CompUSA in Dallas.

Ed Singel says:
October 16, 2009 at 6:42 pm
I get to the Strib column by clicking on “columnists” under the opinion menu item at the top, then scrolling down to our host’s smiling face, which is quite far down.

**Kev says:**
October 16, 2009 at 9:43 pm

*I’ll leave it to someone else to tell us what Woolworth’s has turned into up here.*

I’ll field that one; Woolworth’s is now Foot Locker. I ran across this a few years ago when I was off on a tangent about “dead malls,” which led me to “dead retailers” (or at least ones which don’t operate under their original names anymore).

It’s hard to imagine anything even resembling a Woolworth’s when walking into a Foot Locker, of course; imagine one of them going retro and adding a soda fountain or a record* department, just for old times’ sake.

*For the kids: “Records” are best known to you as either “those big black CDs that skip” or “the things that club DJs use for scratching.”

**HelloBall says:**
October 17, 2009 at 12:18 am

The years when the Loves of My Life were growing up from toddlers to first or second graders were horrible from a financial perspective (I was inexorably failing at self-employment) but eternally rewarding from a Dad perspective. The best memories I will take out of this existence are lying on the living room floor sharing crayons with my daughter or being wrestled into submission by two sweaty, giggling siblings and our dog, with Misterogers singing in the background.

**Tom Gordon says:**
October 17, 2009 at 4:08 am

Assuming they were technologically comparable to us, I should think 2000 years would be a comfortable span of time in which to locate a safe neighboring galaxy, and build a fleet of nuke-propelled starships for escaping the catastrophe. Obviously they’d raise their families/hives/whatever during the millennia-long trip, within habitats on the vessels that replicate their native ecologies.

I guess the real question (as Niven once observed) is just WHEN they’d set to work developing all the infrastructure — O’Neill-style colonies and whatnot — necessary for the exodus. Immediately after they’d verified the black hole was going to swallow their world? Or would they all just go about their business, and not sweat the matter until the final century or so, when their descendents began to see light bending in the night sky?

**Good Grief says:**
October 17, 2009 at 8:41 am

I always wondered how the Mayans could know with certainty of the “end of the world” (Definition, please: End of man kind? The physical world? Culture? …what exactly?), but they couldn’t see the end of their own civilization coming.
Imagine being so dialed into the universe that you could predict with certainty when the calendar should end, and life as you know it would cease (including parts of the world and cultures unknown). …but that you couldn’t see that the Men in Giant Floating Wooden Fish, brandishing Sticks of Fire and breathing sickness would kill you off well before that. Talk about not seeing the forest for the trees.

I am sure there exist folks who fervently deride any talk about global warming, (or evolution, or anything similar…), yet who would go on at length, cornering you near the mantelpiece at a party, describing how the end times will come in 2012, and ho-my-gawd-just-you-wait-n-see.

Reese says:
October 17, 2009 at 1:37 pm

@Jennifer The Jenniverse!

Emily says:
October 17, 2009 at 1:42 pm

Rules of thumb for adventure games:
If you can pick it up, pick it up. There is no such thing as theft in an adventure game. I’m giving bonus points to the first one that requires me to pick up the kitchen sink and cart it around.

Yes, everything is your job. That's why you bought the game.
Has Gnat started playing the Nancy Drew games yet?

jamcool says:
October 18, 2009 at 12:46 am

@gmann63
Before that it was called Foremost-Mckesson, whose product lines included Foremost milk and Sparkletts water.

Jose says:
October 18, 2009 at 8:07 pm

And in any case the Mayans did not foretell the end of the World — just the end of the Age. Mesoamerican calendrics were based on nested cycles so it was not unexpected for one or another of the cycles to regularly hit the end and roll back to 0 on the cosmic trip odometer; the top-level “Long Count” simply runs out of digit places some time in 2012 in a sort of cosmological Y2K Bug (and probably with about as much an impact). The old Maya would have probably done a lot of sacrifices, and then announced that thanks to that it was all fixed and it was 00000.0 all over again.

BTW the Aztecs were the ones that cut out hearts on a mass scale. The original Maya threw people down sinkholes. Later they got into the heart-cutting, under influence from the neighbors, but never to the same scale.

bgates says:
October 18, 2009 at 11:33 pm

Imagine being so dialed into the universe that you could predict with
certainty when the calendar should end, and life as you know it would cease (including parts of the world and cultures unknown). ...but that you couldn't see that the Men in Giant Floating Wooden Fish, brandishing Sticks of Fire and breathing sickness would kill you off well before that.

Yes, it seems odd to be so confident in one's ability to predict a final end state in the far-off future when short term events are such a surprise.

Now, what's that about global warming again?
There's a cold sweeping through the house, so I have to keep my distance. This is a bad week to get a cold. Yes, it's utterly unlike those other weeks where I look around, tote up the paucity of obligations, and pronounce this an excellent time to get a cold. Things to do: the new NewsBreak goes up this week, along with the headlines show at the paper's TV channel, and I have to look reasonably hale. Although perhaps people would like to get bad news from someone who looks as though he's been taken by the grippe. We'll see.

Good weekend. The only movie I watched was “Monsters vs. Aliens,” which bored me dead and annoyed me at the same time. Washed the windows with a Windex Wand. When I went to the hardware store to look for a squeegee, I found this newfangled device that let you clean windows with a pad on a pole. Streak free! Of course, the promise of “streak-free” windows cleaning is a cruel joke which no one believes, but they put the phrase on all the packaging so we believe it's probably our fault for not doing it right. I asked the clerk if they worked.
“I don’t know,” he said, “but a guy came in the other day, who bought one? He said it was a million dollar idea.”

“Did he mean it would have been a million dollar idea if it had worked, or it was a million dollar idea because it did?” Because then it would be a million dollar product, I reasoned.

“Because it worked.”

So I took it home and tried it, and lo, there were no streaks. The streak situation is suddenly less settled than it has seemed in decades.

Saturday I went to the Postcard show, something I haven’t done in a year. I have the usual objectives: 50s and 60s restaurants and motels, and whatever other bits of ephemera swim before my eyes. I was dismayed to hear from a vendor that someone came in early and hoovered up the good motels, and the paucity of material bore out the warning. Whoever it is isn’t putting them up on the web, but not all collectors view their hobbies as a Public Trust, I guess. Also, breaking news: no one wants to collect folders anymore. Those are the linen sheafs of postcards in an accordion fold, usually rather blurry. I don’t care about the cards – it’s the cover art that delights. Like this:

They go for a quarter now. Aside from the cards I’ll add to the motel,
restaurant, New York and Minneapolis sites, I bought some “paper,” as it's called. Ephemera, others call it. Couldn't resist:

The variety of liquor brands in the 30s and 40s continues to amaze. This time I had an objective, and a doomed one: a promotional card for the radio show “Johnny Dollar,” which probably doesn't exist, and a postcard of the Erie Jr restaurant, the foundational jet-age / googie diner in Detroit Lakes that constitutes my earliest memory of high-cool eatery futurism. I don't know if they had a postcard. But poking through the Detroit Lakes bin yielded this:

So? Indistinct ordinary lake scene. So? Well, we went to Detroit Lakes when I was a kid, and I have happy memories of the beach, the water, the fishy perfume, the dank concrete of the pavilion. It was a ripe old structure, overpainted and peeling, and the few memories are just wisps I can't grab. What gobsmacked me on the spot was this:
The slide. I remember the slide. No more than eight, or nine. Bare feet on slippery metal. It swayed a few degrees. It’s frustrating, because the more I interrogate the memory the more it clams up and turns away. But the minute I saw the picture I had it all in my head for a second, the curve of the handles at the top, the mottled paint. Five dollars for the picture. Couldn’t get my wallet out fast enough.

Sat outside in the parking lot later, looking at it, trying to will childhood back into focus. No. Ah well. It was back for a moment, and that was enough.

As I said, I bought paper. A pamphlet from the 1933 World’s Fair Heinz building – it’ll be up in the new 30s site’s “World’s Fair” section in a month or two. A Washburn-Crosby envelope from 100 years ago, notable because the company is still around, the radio station named after the founder’s initials is still around, and I live in the Washburn addition, so named for the plutocrat who owned the land, once. On a whim I bought some ancient drug labels:

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head HERE for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You’ll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is HERE!
Twenty years ago I would have had to drive to Wisconsin to see if the building survived. It's a small town, so unless fire ate the structure, it might well be there. Let's google . . . whoa. They sent the camera-car through. Can we find the building on the ancient label?

I don't want to make rash assumptions, but I think this is it.
Map isn't showing up in preview, which rather ruins the effect.

Back later this afternoon, with Monday Matchbook! O the thrills that will attend the event, I know. Have a fine day.

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**60 RESPONSES TO *monday, oct. 19***

*lanzos* says:
October 19, 2009 at 5:57 pm

@Seattle Dave

I'm just astonished that the first phone call isn't to the Family's Attorney. After all, that seems to be the way things work in the "public" "school system" nowadays. And from "Camp"?!?! – Well don't all of our children have THE RIGHT to Perfect Satisfaction And Convenience?

*vegebrarian* says:
October 19, 2009 at 6:00 pm

Ah, the Sower...to get to the top of the capitol and take in a lofty view of Lincoln one must ride in a creaky little elevator. I remember going there not long after seeing that horrible movie 'Earthquake' on tv...you know, the one where the elevator crashes and is
followed by a hokey, animated red splash?

*Di* says:
October 19, 2009 at 8:04 pm

I see why they call them “the good ol' days” – OTC brandy, opiates, a sociable cocaine-infused soda at the fountain. Scr*w the pharmaceutical companies – bring back the friendly neighborhood pharmacy!!! (who knew!)

And the kid injury thing. Yeah I’m old enough to remember – you do something reckless, you get hurt, you get yelled at, hopefully you are more careful next time. But I blame lawyers for how it is today – everyone whose kid as much as skins his knee on “public” property is hoping to get million$ reward from the deep-pockets. Well, in conjunction with insurance companies, too, because no longer is there any such thing as an “accident” – blame has to be assigned so they know whose policy to charge.

Kind of sucks all the simple pleasure out of life, doesn’t it 😊

Lileks says:
October 20, 2009 at 12:19 am

Wow! Well, my work here is done, then. Glad it all came together thus. The miracles of internet serendipity!

Ross says:
October 20, 2009 at 3:07 am

The German “subtitles” on the labels makes me think of my maternal grandmother(last name: Koehn), who believed(well into the ‘80s) that you couldn’t find blackberry brandy in the stores because “they buy it all for the army”–referring to the laxative properties ascribed to blackberries(there were even nasty Civil War skirmishes over blackberry bush patches for that reason).

Maureen says:
October 20, 2009 at 5:30 pm

Of course Johnny Dollar exists! It was a famous radio show!

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yours_Truly,_Johnny_Dollar

It shocks me that you don’t know about it. Your kind of show, or your kind of conceit for a show.

Lileks says:
October 20, 2009 at 6:26 pm

If that comment was directed host-wise, rest assured I am well-aware of JD, and regard the Bob Bailey eps as the best PI drama of old radio. My all-time favorite.

hpoulter says:
October 20, 2009 at 7:21 pm

hpoulter : “a promotional card for the radio show “Johnny Dollar,” which probably doesn’t exist”

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=4138
What a sly boots our host is.

See my comment #3 (above). He was just trying to see if we were paying attention.

**hpoulter** says:
October 20, 2009 at 7:22 pm

Ok, #8. Dang this no editing.

**Winnowill** says:
October 21, 2009 at 3:28 pm

I bought that Windex window thing and used it just yesterday. It is one of the most marvelous products in the history of the universe. I washed 20 windows with it, and it took an hour and a half. Including removing the screens. Sure, I could have gotten out the ladder, the bottle of Windex, and the squeegee, taken five hours over it, and probably have gotten better results, but the law of diminishing returns says it wouldn’t have come close to being worth it.

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A few highly recommended friends...

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2: Comic Covers
3: Black & White World
4: Sears 1934
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
Screedblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

Archives
All entries, chronologically...

July 2013
June 2013
May 2013
April 2013
March 2013
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January 2013
December 2012
November 2012
October 2012
September 2012
August 2012

Please install and activate the “Twitter for WordPress” plugin to use this section.
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Lovely day, and the last, they say. Highs in the sixties with sun on the grass. Colder tomorrow, as the season collapses. Trees shed. Lawns brown. Hostas rot. I still think it's stupid to end the year when we do; we've nothing to show for it.

But a good day. Busy, if reading into a television camera can be called “busy.” It's not, but it's the work that goes into it, crafting every word with care. Because if I say it on TV, it’s true! Post hoc ergo teleprompter hoc. Posted to the Strib blog and the Hughniverse (my new home for the Screeds, and yes it's a pay site, so don't even bother clicking if you couldn't care less what I have to say about such matters even when it’s free. Otherwise yes, go) and was in place when Natalie got off the bus. That's the great divider of the day. Before: official duty. After: I make up my own duties.

Which means I end up playing “Wolfenstein” after dinner. Hey, I get one, maybe two games a year, and I've enjoyed the previous Wolfie titles. This lacks the breadth and length of the previous one, but I'm still enjoying it. You get to dispose of Nazis, always a plus, and they're the super-evil kind intent on digging up ancient pagan Germanic artifacts for dark nefarious purposes. I do wonder if younger folk without historical backgrounds think the Nazis were in power for
35 years, because they seem to have accomplished a great deal in these games. And they had different uniforms for everyone in their paranormal division! MGM costume department wasn't that good.

Gaming: it keeps you young! Especially if you get the power-ups that improve joint health and automatically steady your aim. I would play games 10X more than I do if I had the time, and if I didn't feel as if I was shirking all the other things that needed doing. That tottering stack of Life magazines isn't going to scan itself. In the 90s I played Doom until my hands were gnarled claws. Now I have to stop after 7, because otherwise the day evaporates and I've accomplished nothing except some saved checkpoints. I think it's a common emotion: all that drama and noise and excitement, and in the end, nothing. People who make games for a living probably feel that way after a while.

But as I said, keeps you young – or at least in tune with a certain segment of the popular culture. I read with interest this VDH essay about dropping out on popular culture, and while I get it, I can't do it. Entirely. Pop music: eh. Don't care. Network TV news: please. No, Movies, I'm split – my love of old movies is matched only by my juvenile love of space operas, which I suppose means I can't bear to live in the present, but in so many modern movies you can barely hear the bad dialogue for the sound of axes bent to the grindstone. The art and artifice of previous generations is often more rewarding, and in their own mannered fashion they say the same things about life as modern films, but in less time, with fewer pretensions. Human nature in those old movies is something the medium accepts as a given, instead of pretending it can be remade to suit the self-flattering preconceptions of an ahistorical generation. (Or three.)

I mentioned – here or on twitter, don't recall – that I didn't like Monsters vs. Aliens. The first reason is rather insignificant, but it bothered me just a little: I didn't like any of the characters. Except B.O.B., who was your generic good-natured oaf. The design on the Missing Link was hideous; that grin reminded me of Tom Waits after his lips were stung by a bee. The mad-scientist bug: whatever. Ginormica: so sweet, so winsome, so . . . oddly rendered. Much of the animation was impressive, but even though the action sequence in San Francisco was well-done I'm at a curious point where spectacle just washes over me, and set-pieces like the Inevitable Climactic Battle in the spaceship make me wish it was done, already.

The larger point, somewhat related to the first: all the male characters were either idiots, fops, or thinly-shaved cliches unaware of their own ludicrousness. The macho preening Missing Link. The vain, weightless weatherman fiancée. That hideous fleshy president (horribly voiced by Colbert, nauseatingly animated) and the eye-rollingly anachronistic military man, Gen. W. R. Monger. For heaven's sake. FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE,
WARMONGER. Was there anyone in there for a little boy to admire? No sir.

I remember some early criticism of “Up,” noting that there wasn’t anyone with whom little girls could identify – aside from the departed wife and animating spirit of the entire enterprise, of course. I suppose it’s a legitimate worry, in the same sense that the limited vocabulary of Eve in “Wall-E” would discourage language development skills in your women, but I can’t imagine anyone looking at “Monsters” and thinking “there’s nothing in this for boys,” because that would seem ludicrous. Hey, there’s monsters! That’s what they want.

And of course they do, but they also want lads who commit derring-do, or G.I. Joe types who are doing the right thing. Surely there’s room for that in a movie intent on telling little girl that they, too, can grow up to be 200 feet tall if they just set their minds to it, and have a meteor fall on their heads on their wedding day, thereby ruining the nuptials that would have kept them from going to Paris and living their dreams. Or following their hearts. Or following their dreams to live their hearts, or whatever banality might be dropped in the appropriate plot-slot by the committee that wrote it.

So, no. And I’m usually not on the lookout for these things, which made it stick out.

Anyway. Tonight I watched a bit of an MGM musical, realizing anew that I’m starting to like these things more than I ever thought I would. Some just seem inert and unappealing, but the more modest examples have charms, sprightly tunes, and gorgeous women with incredible legs, so perhaps I have unfairly based all my reactions to musicals on memories of stillborn 60s productions. This one was “I Love Melvin,” a confection whipped up right after the success of “Singin’ in the Rain.” Debbie Reynolds and Donald O’Connor. Now. I love “Singin’,” but I always found Donald O’Connor AND Debbie Reynolds annoying – the former for his mannered twitches, the latter for her generic all-American Gal routine. “Melvin” aims lower, doesn’t try to remake the genre, just put people in the seats, and as the ads no doubt said, it’s Burstin’ All Over With Fun.

It opens with a “Gentleman Prefer Blondes” sequence; Debbie Reynolds is dreaming she’s a star, which explains the overacting. This is how stars behave, dahling. The next big number, she’s a football in a stage musical, and while gender-studies professors could get tenure out of the symbolism there, it’s wildly energetic, cheerful, and Reynolds manages to be adorable, middle-class – i.e., approachable and attainable – and sexy as hell. There’s something about these movies that’s distinctively American; spirited, cheerful, optimistic, confident, grounded. That last one is something I infer, but you can feel the weight of a settled culture behind these products; they’re not gnashing and toiling and spitting with anger.
Foolish to say that was how it was, because it wasn’t. Equally foolish to say it’s better to paper over a culture’s problems with sheet music and handbills. (Although the father character in the movie reads the paper, complains that taxes and prices are rising, and he’s just a wage earner; what’s a man to do?) But part of the appeal of the movies is the sense of a shared culture – even if this film didn’t do it for you, its terms and conditions were widely understood, its vocabulary spoken by all. At least in public.

I wish I loved contemporary culture more, but it seems to be humorless about small things or imagined fantasies, and uneasy with simple truths and simple joys. If someone did come up with a movie that took an adult attitude towards simple truths and simple joys, they would feel compelled to put Ben Stiller in it so we could believe it was kinda sorta mocking it, in a genuine-but-ironic way. Then again, I like David Lynch. Don’t listen to me about anything.

Do watch Debbie.

73 RESPONSES TO tuesday, oct. 20

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 20, 2009 at 1:11 pm

Present company excepted, this is a non-political example of what many internet comments sound like to me:

Sci-fi fan #1: Star Wars: The Phantom Menace was very disappointing

Sci-fi fan #2: Your just saying that because you're a Star Trek fan

Sci-fi fan #1: No honestly, the story was thin and the writing was . . .

Sci-fi fan #2: whottsa matter not enough green alien sex for you?

Sci-fi fan #1: I think I can have an opinion about the quality of a movie . . .
Scifi fan #2: I bet you dream of having sex with Spock
Scifi fan #1: I don’t see how . . .
Scifi fan #2: Trekkie, Trekking, Trekker. . . go cry to Capt. Kirkhitler. . .

hpoulter says:
October 20, 2009 at 1:17 pm

**bgbear (roger h):** Present company excepted, this is a non-political example of what many internet comments sound like to me:
Scifi fan #1: Star Wars: The Phantom Menace was very disappointing

Typical anti-Gungan racism.

Nancy says:
October 20, 2009 at 1:22 pm

@Al Federber
Oops, left that option out. And ads on blogs are fairly tolerable. I haven’t subscribed to any pay sites in all honesty myself. I did “do” a year of Jib Jab—does that count?

Mark E. Hurling says:
October 20, 2009 at 1:24 pm

The only thing surprising about some of the Gollums emerging from the dark to fling negativity like misbehaving primates is the discovery that Herr Federber was not the tripwire for the rest of his ilk this time.

hpoulter says:
October 20, 2009 at 1:28 pm

I have hit the tip jar on many a site—even Andrew Sullivan’s (way back before the dementia set in). The only sites I have actually subscribed to are non-political (e.g. Cook’s Illustrated and WeightWatchers, which are working against each other in my case). I agree that the Hughniverse site is probably doomed without better marketing. Free samples, people. At least a TOC.

jenifersf says:
October 20, 2009 at 1:41 pm

I completely agree with the last paragraph.

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 20, 2009 at 1:41 pm

I forgot I had a subscription to PJTV, no ads in the videos or at website.

I do agree with Al F somewhat (w/o the snark) the genie is out of the bottle as far as “free” content goes but, people pay for bottled water and cable TV so who knows what kind of model could work until you try.
Mark E. Hurling: The only thing surprising about some of the Gollums emerging from the dark to fling negativity like misbehaving primates is the discovery that Herr Federber was not the tripwire for the rest of his ilk this time.

“Negativity”? Such as having opposing views about certain things? James is the one who invites comments then puts out red meat, and I think we all agree that he knows what he’s doing.

Mark E. Hurling says:
October 20, 2009 at 2:18 pm

How about some well reasoned civil discourse in comments made, rather than what seems to be an Eeyore view of anything that might smack of oh, say the grievance du jour. It is amazing that anything here could be construed to be red meat. But then again I forgot, Gollum preferred decaying fish.

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 20, 2009 at 2:24 pm

@Al Federber
Al Federber can defend himself but, he does get conflated with some of the more aggressive commentators. I have done it myself and I try to be more careful.

After all it would be unfair to credit me with saying something droll that hpoulter said or non-sequitur swshrad said.

boblipton says:
October 20, 2009 at 4:08 pm

I know you like David Lynch, James, and for many years I thought he was one of those people obsessed with the Big Image, the flashy inset that keeps you looking, even when there turns out to be nothing there. Then I saw THE STRAIGHT STORY..... and you’ve just spent the entire Bleat talking about that one picture without even mentioning it by name.

Writing like that is why I keep coming here. Thanks.
Bob

raf says:
October 20, 2009 at 4:42 pm

Al Federber:

hpoulter:

Al Federber: It seems silly to pay for access to a political/opinion website.

So don’t.
I wouldn't.
I'm curious if there are any left-wing or libertarian pay-to-access sites. Maybe there are, but I can't think of any. It seems to be a right-wing thing, like "Rush 24/7?.

Perhaps it's an evolution thing; left-wing pay sites fail for lack of subscribers? E.g., NYT.

crossdotcurve says:
October 20, 2009 at 5:07 pm

People are decrying “grievances” on this site? Puh-lease. Don’t we read a 2000 word “grievance” from our host once a month about some customer service issue, or the discontinuation of some product packaging?

Not that I’m complaining – they’re fun as heck to read. But this site *thrives* on grievance! It courses through its veins. What sort of grad-AAA snark-n-bile from our host do you think we’d find over at the “Hughniverse”?

*Di* says:
October 20, 2009 at 5:14 pm

That Melvin movie – wasn’t there another more “wholesome” version of the Gentleman Prefer Blondes routine where Debbie wore a housedress and wielded a frying pan? Did I see the movie, or see it on one of those That’s Entertainment movies? Or am I crazy???

Debbie’s always been a little TOO cute/perky/spunky for my taste – although I did love her (and everyone else) in Singing in the Rain. I think I’ve watched that 50 times 😊 Yeah she’s had some bad luck in the husband department, but she bounces back and carries on.

Mark E. Hurling says:
October 20, 2009 at 5:56 pm

OK then, let me clarify “grievance” in the context in which it was used. The greater (by far) text from our host are observations of life in general and his in particular, and done in the manner of a good natured neighbor over some coffee. The subsequent claim of thriving on grievance? Thanks for calling yourself out as the tripwire today. Imagine, complaining about the content, and then further grousing about moving some of potentially offending content elsewhere. That’s not looking for something to grieve about? The Roman legions used geese to assist in perimeter security when they camped at night by raising a squawk when intruders got too close. Maybe our host could employ Billy Goat Gruff and some of his herd to do much of the same here.

Mark E. Hurling says:
October 20, 2009 at 6:25 pm

I suppose it would be wiser to just let this go, but this has been building since the September 11 thread. I’ll even go so far, bgbear, as to say that you may have a point regarding my comments about Gollum. I might remind you of this, however,

Al Federber September 11th, 2009 at 17:54 | #50 Reply | Quote Hey,
James...Natalie can enlist in eight years.

I admit it freely, having a daughter of my own, that remark started a low level burn that finally escaped containment. Not contesting anything with you.bgbear, I read you as a man of honor. Unlike some who lacked the courage to mount even a personal attack, but called in a napalm strike on associated family. To paraphrase Zell Miller re: Chris Matthews, It's too bad things like this aren't settled on a field of honor any more.

*Di* says:
October 20, 2009 at 7:23 pm

Honor
Chivalry
GONE – never to return

No such thing as refraining from “hitting below the belt” anymore .

Al Federber says:
October 20, 2009 at 9:13 pm

*Mark E. Hurling* :I suppose it would be wiser to just let this go, but this has been building since the September 11 thread. I'll even go so far, bgbear, as to say that you may have a point regarding my comments about Gollum. I might remind you of this, however,

Al Federber September 11th, 2009 at 17:54 | #50 Reply | Quote
Hey, James...Natalie can enlist in eight years.

I admit it freely, having a daughter of my own, that remark started a low level burn that finally escaped containment. Not contesting anything with you bgbear, I read you as a man of honor. Unlike some who lacked the courage to mount even a personal attack, but called in a napalm strike on associated family. To paraphrase Zell Miller re: Chris Matthews, It's too bad things like this aren't settled on a field of honor any more.

I made that comment because I felt like James ought to put up or shut up about his enthusiasm for U. S. foreign wars.

Hell, I would have never known he had a nine-year-old daughter if he hadn't told us. He dressed her up in combat gear once for some sort of public program, as I recall.

areader says:
October 20, 2009 at 9:17 pm

I would be curious, Di, to know when you date the loss of honor and chivalry, and when and who is responsible for the lack of refraining from hitting below the belt? I certainly remember thinking Bush and Rove's attacks on McCain in 2000 were far below the belt.

*Di* says:
October 20, 2009 at 9:36 pm

@areader
No specific date – just rather an evolution. And maybe “class” and manners* are just delusional wishful memories in my old mind?
But, realistically, anything goes in the world of politics – just try not to step in it, because the smell never goes away . . .

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
October 21, 2009 at 9:51 am

So of course you bear no responsibility for your own words. It’s our host’s fault for putting that red meat out there, eh? Interesting how you decide to refer to someone for whom have so little regard by his first name. Nice use of expletive, also. The true signal of those with little imagination but lots of distemper. Doesn’t this much light bother you?

**steveH** says:
October 21, 2009 at 7:28 pm

> hpoulter:

*a reader*: *I can certainly understand why James would want to get paid for his screeds, and putting them on a website that also gets you free cruises must be nice. The added bonus is not having to face critical opinions, as those going over the pay wall are likely to all agree with you. There is something in general about the right wing movement’s embrace of fiction and isolation displayed in the tendancy to go behind pay walls and, like with The Corner, not allow comments at all.*

*Imagine missing profound commentary like this.*

Sounds like a feature to me.

**Lileks** says:
October 21, 2009 at 11:39 pm

Hah! Secret: before the internet, I wrote for a medium that had a HUGE tall thick pay wall, and ruthlessly controlled comments. They were called “magazines.” This was long before the Times put Maureen Dowd and others behind a pay wall for a while, of course, but that’s where the idea may have come from.
Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
Screebdlog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

October 2012
September 2012
August 2012

Please install and activate the “Twitter for WordPress” plugin to use this section.

Thanks for dropping by! Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
I've just not felt like writing, at all. As my daily duties morph into Standing and Talking, Sitting and Writing seem so retrograde. Ordinary day, along the new lines – up early, shaving at my desk by grinding an electric razor on my mug – even though I'm at home, it seems so days-of-wine-and-roses – then speeding downtown playing Pole Position with the traffic. It's a five-hour grind to get out two shows, and afterwards there's lunch, and meetings. I pick up my daughter from the bus, help her with her math, enjoy an interval of voluntary unconsciousness, drive her to choir, then . . . what?

Buy a camera, I guess. For reasons I'll explain Monday I decided to get the new Kodak HD mini-thing. Passed on the new HD Flip, which cost 50 bucks more. Well: when I went to Target to get a Puffle for a birthday present (you know, a puffle; one of those Club Penguin limbless creatures that are SOOO CUTE) I saw the Kodak camera knocked down a double-sawbuck, seventy bucks under the Flip. So then. It's as light as a pack of smokes, to use a unit of measurement no one employs, and has the portability factor I like. Won't replace the good camcorder, but consider the marvels of the modern age: it's now possible to have an every-day high-def camera. There is now absolutely no excuse for not having good footage of Bigfoot or UFOs. None.

Odd as it seems, I like buying a Kodak. I think it's one of those brands people want to see do well.

The number of legacy brands about which one can say such a thing seems...
small. It doesn't help that so many venerable brands ruined their history with gassy weightless modern names, I suppose.

Another note on yesterday's “I Love Melvin” movie – I caught this, which surely meant something to audiences at the time. At least it meant something to enough of them.

Now. Think of it: There were how many mass-circulation big format weeklies? Life, Look, Saturday Evening Post. The rest were smaller, with fragmented audiences. One of the things I've learned from studying mags of the 30s: there were many big-format picture mags. Life commands our attention because it was the icon brand, the last man standing, and it had the weight of Luce behind it. (You have to love the simple branding of the Luce publications: Life. Time. Fortune. Fitting that the most temporally-bound of the three should die first.) Look was the also-ran, the scrappy Avis, and I remember it as something that branded a friend's house as one of those places – you know, Hunt's instead of Heinz, Look instead of Life, RC Cola instead of Coke. I wonder if that was a way of showing your household was iconoclastic, or if I'm just reading too much into childhood memories. In any case: Life was liberal, or at least covered topics that introduced “mod” themes into middle-American household. The New Permissiveness, The Pill, Nudity on Broadway: has it gone too far, that sort of thing. I think my first introduction to nudity Occidental style, not the obligatory passed-around National Geographic with Actual Breasts From Africa, was a Life magazine. By then the magazine had lost its graphical panache, and like many publications in the 60s, went for a spare look that doesn't hold up well. Look was always somewhat exotic, because it wasn't life, and it had a cool logo.

This was not that logo. But: Hannibal Cobb. A Crime in Pictures. I googled, and discovered there was a short-lived radio show and a movie with the Hannibal Cobb character. Had its moment; had its vogue. This is what I
meant when I was talking about a coherent culture yesterday – the idea that you could use a magazine feature in a mainstream movie with the assumption that most of the audience would recognize it. Today? Drudge, maybe. Little else from the internet, and nothing from magazines. Except perhaps a Playboy centerfold: magazines could disappear entirely and you could still get a laugh in 2020 if someone tilted a monitor perpendicular to unfold a saucy photo.

The movie also showed the HQ of Look:

It's not a famous building today, but deserves to be; it was one of the few post-war skyscrapers, and has more 30s echoes than International Style precursor elements. It plays off the ideas of the Lehigh-Starret, a famous 30s piece of Streamline Moderne, but stacks it up according to the set-back laws. Always loved it. Remember the first time I saw it: underwhelmed. For good reason – everyone comes to New York with their head full of skyscraper pictures, most of which are taken straight on, or from impossibly romantic angles. You realize that the photos you saw were taken from someone else’s office, or penthouse, or suite, or balcony, and such views will never be yours except for a brief moment when you rent a plot in the air in a tall hotel. The moment you arrive you realize how much life is lived at ground level. That's the way it is for everyone. You can visit the clouds, but it's a rental.

And now to watch a little more of “Pursuit of the Graf Spee,” a blimey-lads British movie about WW2, made at a time when the virtues – or cliches – of the war-era films still had some purchase with a large portion of the audience. Notable for its abundance of Decent Germans Who Were Not Nazis, but seagoing equals devoid of ideology; this was the early part of the war, when it seemed like it was business, not anything personal. Respect for the damned Jerrys, and all that. Odd film.

Later this morning: Out of Context Ad Challenge! And it's an easy one. See
I think that there are about four Magazines that could be a social touchstone in a current movie:

People
Us
National Enquirer
Sports Illustrated

Of the four, I browse the last when getting a haircut.

Ok, maybe not a social touchstone then…

Apparently I am Victor Davis Hanson-esque vis a vis current pop culture.

Mike Gebert says:
October 21, 2009 at 12:31 am

The stuff about Look reminds me to suggest you check out the recent bio of Clementine Paddleford, who was sort of Julia Child crossed with Amelia Earhart— a food writer of the 30s through 60s, flew her own plane to discover regional cuisine, described it all in a bouncy career-gal style. She was quite famous in her day— she's basically who Barbara Stanwyck is playing in Christmas in Connecticut, including the fact that she really couldn't cook (but had a test kitchen to handle that side while she got the stories). And then her fame vanished in an instant, because she died right at the time that her publications did (The New York Herald Tribune and its Parade-like Sunday mag This Week). How quickly they are forgotten, until somebody writes a book, that is.

Brian Lutz says:
October 21, 2009 at 3:53 am

You know, I’d be careful about playing Pole Position with the traffic out there… After all, you’d have to do is graze someone’s bumper and it’s kerblammo for both of you.

Lulu says:
October 21, 2009 at 5:51 am

I love old magazines, but paging through them can be kind of depressing. Why? Well, it’s sobering to realize that only a few decades ago, the huge-circulation mainstream magazines assumed that society at large had knowledge of and interest in world politics, science, social unrest, etc. Nowadays the magazines with the biggest circulations are the ones that are exclusively about which celebrity is shagging whom, which celebrity adopted or gave birth to a child with an improbable name, etc. Don’t even get me started on the
covers, which invariably feature photoshopped Frankenstein monsters put together from bits and bobs that some overzealous art director had lying around. Are people dumber now, or do the magazine editors just assume we're dumber?

Mr_Lilacs says:
October 21, 2009 at 6:21 am

“Are people dumber now, or do the magazine editors just assume we're dumber?”
Or are large segments of media trying to make the audience dumber?

“I think that there are about four Magazines that could be a social touchstone in a current movie:
People
Us
National Enquirer
Sports Illustrated”

Seems like some recent flicks use Strolling Bone – er, Rolling Stone — which is kind of a People for those who look down their noses at folks who read People.

Lou Shumaker says:
October 21, 2009 at 7:36 am

Seeing the Look building reminds me of the sheer glass walled buildings in “Working Girl” (particularly the last scene, which seemed sad to me. Despite the happy ending and the bouncy score, she looks trapped, just another office-dweller in the concrete canyon).

So, the Look building looks … humane. Friendlier because of the smaller upper floors. And is that a balcony that stretches around the building at the bottom of the frame? That would be humanizing.

kc duffy says:
October 21, 2009 at 7:47 am

James, I'm kinda slow, and often don't make time to explore new things – but I JUST NOW got a good look at your calendar, and I think it's terrific! Thank you!

grayhackle says:
October 21, 2009 at 7:53 am

“The stuff about Look reminds me to suggest you check out the recent bio of Clementine Paddleford’

I inherited an old cookbook by Clementine Paddleford. Quite good and lots of interesting recipes. I still use her hushpuppie recipe.

rbj says:
October 21, 2009 at 7:54 am

“This is what I meant when I was talking about a coherent culture yesterday – the idea that you could use a magazine feature in a mainstream movie with the assumption that most of the audience would recognize it. Today? Drudge, maybe. Little else from the internet, and nothing from magazines.”
It also pertains to television, which I think is something alluded to in VDH's essay. Time was, we all watched All in the Family or The Jeffersons. Heck, even Chris Rock could make a joke about wanting to shag "Wheeze" (Louise Jefferson) and black and white, we all get the joke. But we have become so fragmented that no one can make a joke about House (I only know about it because my mom watches it) or any of the other network shows. Maybe the Simpsons, but that's only a single straw to grasp at. Heck, even Monday Night Football doesn't have the same feeling of Importance, to say nothing of the network news (about which, saying nothing is the kindest thing to do.)

Sales Geek says:
October 21, 2009 at 8:09 am

You'll like the Kodak HD camera. Don't expect great things from the video part unless you like "shakey cam" videos or get a tripod. But it's an amazing piece of technology and I got passable videos indoors at night in a well-lit room during a family reunion. The pictures are pretty good but you have little choice as to focus (there is a switch for closeup or distant focus; that's it) and framing is done by moving your position. No zoom (they say it has digital zoom but it's worthless).

A very handy item to have in your pocket when Godzilla invades downtown, the dog is doing something cute or you want a quick snap of that building you just discovered. The only real downside is that children (anyone under 25 anyway) will make fun of you since it has no phone built into it.

Steve Biddle says:
October 21, 2009 at 8:25 am

You mention Heinz vs. Hunt's, etc. For me it was always Atlantic (now Mobil)/Shell Republican/Democrat Sealtest/Hood Chevy/Ford Coke/Pepsi

Walking into a home with the "other" brands was like going into a parallel universe of sorts...

HunkyBobTX says:
October 21, 2009 at 8:32 am

James mentioned no excuses for not getting good video of Bigfoot and UFO's now. I have to respectfully disagree with our Genial Host(TM), even though I know he had his tongue firmly planted in his cheek.

Until they invent cheap gyro stabilizers for cameras or tripods that can be deployed in an instant and take up the space of a pack of smokes when stowed, well.. there's your excuse. Granted, I've never seen a Bigfoot or a UFO, but every time I try to get some good footage of something that doesn't seem that far away to my eye I realize I need a zoom lens the size of a gun on USS Missouri after looking through the viewfinder. Objects that appear in good size and detail to my eye seem to shrink to the size of the period at the end of this sentence when viewed through the camera.

When the lens is zoomed, everything becomes shaky and jumpy to the point of uselessness. So now we'll have UFO images in HD that are still jumpy, shaky or the subject is a little dot on the screen. But it will be in High Def!
Rob says:
October 21, 2009 at 9:06 am

Life magazine did, at least once, show pictures of the bare breasts of a non-aboriginal woman:

http://roborant.info/main.do?entry=1131

When we mock the media of the current day for being out of touch or biased or dumbed-down, it's useful to remember that they were not much better in the Old Days. Since it's 1964 Life magazine, I think it has to be safe for work, right?

buzz says:
October 21, 2009 at 9:27 am

When The Comedy Channel started up (before it merged with Ha! to become Comedy Central), they ran a series of “minute mysteries” featuring the Hannibal Cobb character. These were one-room mysteries solved by Cobb noticing some piece of physical evidence that proved somebody in the room was lying; judging from the clothing and hairstyle I'd guess they were produced in the early 50s. The Hannibal Cobb shorts appeared on THE HIGGINS BOYS AND GRUBER show, which was produced by Joel Hodgson of MST3K.

Marsha J says:
October 21, 2009 at 9:37 am

My brother runs the Target division of Kodak. He would thank you very much for your patronage. You are right...it seems very American to buy Kodak.

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 21, 2009 at 9:40 am

@Rob
Life had quite a bit of nudity, check out the archive through Google (some of the pictures are in the archive but, were not originally published).

I believe National Geographic is what JL was noting about “aboriginal nudity” and I have noticed that most NG nudity today is Euro and North American “white” people. I guess they are making up for years of 3rd world nudity.

Uncle Joe says:
October 21, 2009 at 9:43 am

It is too bad that the people that followed in leadership at Polaroid didn't have half the vision that Dr. Land had. Instead of becoming a leader in digital photography, they went bankrupt.

Growing up, we got both Life and Look as well as both The Boston Globe and The Herald. What does that say about the family? I think the fact that we also got both Hydrox and Oreos says that Mom bought whatever was on sale.

Lulu says:
October 21, 2009 at 10:02 am

@buzz
Good God, I can’t believe another human being on the planet besides me remembers this stuff. Higgins Boys and Gruber kicked serious tuchas. Also enjoyed Dead Comics Society and all those old short subjects that Comedy Channel used to show (where else could I see Edgar Kennedy and “Joe Doakes” shorts? Huh? Tell me that, Mr. Smart Guy!). I suppose next, somebody here will work in a “Rich Hall’s Onion World” reference, and I’ll get all misty.

Lulu says:
October 21, 2009 at 10:08 am

@Rob

I respectfully beg to differ. I have a number of old (‘40s and ‘50s) Life and Saturday Evening Post magazines, and the general level of writing as well as the subject matter blows away the mainstream magazines of today (and mainstream back then meant a circulation of 8 figures, at a time when the total population of the U.S. was less than half what it is today). The time to which you refer, the ‘60s, was a time when the American magazine was already in serious decline and they were more and more pushing celebrities over substance.

Jonathan Bailey says:
October 21, 2009 at 10:15 am

By coincidence I suppose, I saw Pursuit of the Graf Spee the other night on TCM. The ship that stood in for the Graf Spee was actually the heavy cruiser, USS Salem, CA-139. It happens that the Salem is still around. It is the only remaining heavy cruiser and is birthed at the old Quincy Shipyard in Massachusetts.

swschrad says:
October 21, 2009 at 11:41 am

TV killed the magazines. what we have today… Keyhole, Pus, and the like… are just vehicles using the occasional picture of Party Boy or Momzilla to wrap a passel of ads and bingo cards up in.

Atari/cable/Xbox killed TV.
da ISH killed Atari and Xbox.
and backhoes kill da ISH.
so, everybody, get on your backhoe tonight and have some fun 😊

juanito - John Davey says:
October 21, 2009 at 11:41 am

@Jonathan Bailey

Now That is a ship.

Pieter says:
October 21, 2009 at 12:06 pm

James

The Captain of the Graf Spee scuttled the ship rather than put his men at risk in what he thought was certain destruction. That is very ‘old school’ and unNAZI like. The fact that he took his life for having lost his ship is also very ‘old navy’ like as well. I would say there was
some grudging respect at that time in the war between the two navies. Plus it's easier to be respectful when the opponents ship is at the bottom of the sea (or river in this case).

**Wramblin' Wreck** says:
October 21, 2009 at 1:40 pm

“...It's as light as a pack of smokes, to use a unit of measurement no one employs...”

Is that weight before the smoke has been let out? Or after the smoke has been let out to visit friends and neighbors? When using obscure/irrational units of measure precision and completeness are important.

The ventilation duct on the LOOK building is very curious IMO. It appears to go from the top of the executive washroom straight into the Chairman's office. It maybe is not the Chairman's office but the main mechanical room for the building. Either way, it seems to be an unusual place to discharge the 'fumes' *(wink, wink, nudge, nudge)* from a bathroom.

**crholt** says:
October 21, 2009 at 2:03 pm

So James, I'm curious – what brand/model IS the “good camcorder”?

**Mike Walsh** says:
October 21, 2009 at 2:25 pm

Another symptom of shared culture in the 50s popped up in movies, where some genuine TV or radio star would make a cameo appearance. In *The Day the Earth Stood Still* columnist Drew Pearson appears as himself covering the landing of Klaatu's elegant UFO in Washington. I believe news analyst H.B. Kaltenborn also shows up at some point. Now, one occasionally sees something like this today, but almost always in comedies. I don’t expect Wolf Blitzer or Rachel Maddow to pop up in a Jerry Bruckhiemer film soon.

**Al Federber** says:
October 21, 2009 at 2:37 pm

Ever notice that old LIFE magazines have a unique smell?

**hpoulter** says:
October 21, 2009 at 3:24 pm

Lulu :@buzz

Good God, I can't believe another human being on the planet besides me remembers this stuff. Higgins Boys and Gruber kicked serious tuchas. Also enjoyed Dead Comics Society and all those old short subjects that Comedy Channel used to show (where else could I see Edgar Kennedy and "Joe Doakes" shorts? Huh? Tell me that, Mr. Smart Guy!). I suppose next, somebody here will work in a "Rich Hall's Onion World" reference, and I'll get all misty.

And the Higgins Boys and Gruber showed ancient kinescoped Bob and Ray TV shows!!! My god, I have searched for those things for
years without success. I loved the comedy cable stuff back in pre-history, before it was all replaced by cookie-cutter standup and smutty movies (and comedy “news” shows for hipster idiots).

Terry says:
October 21, 2009 at 3:30 pm

What is the deal with the RSS feed for your posts? I'm trying to subscribe w/ Google reader. It behaves as though there IS a feed, but it doesn't see anything.

It's possible to subscribe to your comments feed but I am having trouble with your actual posts.

Jason T. says:
October 21, 2009 at 3:52 pm

Wasn't Look Magazine owned by the Cowles newspaper chain, which also owned the Mpls. Star Tribune?

I'm afraid you might be working for Hunt's Catsup! They don't have RC Cola in the vending machines, do they?

boblipton says:
October 21, 2009 at 5:09 pm

Lulu:
@buzz
Good God, I can't believe another human being on the planet besides me remembers this stuff. Higgins Boys and Gruber kicked serious tuchas. Also enjoyed Dead Comics Society and all those old short subjects that Comedy Channel used to show (where else could I see Edgar Kennedy and “Joe Doakes” shorts? Huh? Tell me that, Mr. Smart Guy!). I suppose next, somebody here will work in a “Rich Hall's Onion World” reference, and I'll get all misty.

Warner Home Video is issuing a full set of Benchley's MGM shorts as well as the Joe McDoakes shorts.

Bob

GardenStater says:
October 21, 2009 at 5:33 pm

swschrad:
TV killed the magazines.
Atari/cable/Xbox killed TV.
da ISH killed Atari and Xbox.
and backhoes kill da ISH.
so, everybody, get on your backhoe tonight and have some fun

And video killed the radio star.

(Somebody had to say it.)
Mikey NTH says:
October 21, 2009 at 9:09 pm

The Kriegsmarine had too many left-overs from the old Imperial Navy to be Nazi-fied. And very technical also. Raeder was a big-ship officer, and Doenitz was U-boats – not something that could be left in the hands of a party hack. Back in the US Civil War the Army got the politically-motivated volunteer officers, the Navy didn’t. Too technical – a Navy line officer had to be able to do navigation, and deal with steam engines, and artillery. Infantry officers just had to behave well under fire and look gallant. Artillery and engineering – the specifics – were left to those who actually knew what they were doing.

HMS Exeter was one of the cruisers that brought Graf Spee to bay. Exeter was lost in the Java Sea in early 1942. HMS Ajax was broken up in 1949. HMS Achilles was transferred to the Indian Navy in 1948 and broken up in 1978.

Mikey NTH says:
October 21, 2009 at 9:25 pm

And remember that the Royal Navy had a lot of prestige then – the Royal Navy was nearly synonymous with Great Britain*. The Graf Spee encounter and the hunt for the Bismarck were very much RN shows, and they were done in the regular way.

If there is anything on Cape Matapan or the Taranto Raid, I bet you would find them done in the same manner.

*Churchill insisted that the RN be there in the final stages of the Pacific War, and had to get Roosevelt to overrule Admiral King so that the British Pacific Fleet could be permitted to fight at Okinawa (the actual US Pacific Fleet had no real problems with more targets showing up for the kamikazes).

Jonathan Bailey says:
October 21, 2009 at 9:41 pm

That is a >i>badass ship, Crocodile Juanito!@juanito – John Davey

Jonathan Bailey says:
October 21, 2009 at 9:45 pm

Well, so much for my italics tags. That should be badass ship.

juanito - John Davey says:
October 21, 2009 at 10:59 pm

@Jonathan Bailey

Tags, shmags – that is a badass ship.

Lileks says:
October 21, 2009 at 11:15 pm

It's a Canon – compact and sturdy, captures motion well.

Mr_Fastbucks says:
October 22, 2009 at 12:01 am
The new and ridiculously expensive Leica M9 digital camera uses a sensor made by Kodak in Rochester, New York. The M9 is arguably the best digital camera you can buy right now with a 35mm-size sensor.

Saw “Pursuit” last weekend. Odd movie. Nothing like “Sink the Bismark”. I wish someone would make a movie about Taffy 3. That’s a great sea battle the few people know about.

Tom Stiff says:
October 22, 2009 at 8:53 am

“Photocrime” is a double-plus-good Newspeak word!

Mikey NTH says:
October 22, 2009 at 6:34 pm

Mr Fast...

Taffy Three (the action off Samar; Leyte Gulf) was an epic battle, and it would make a great movie. The Japanese battle-line comes over the horizon, and there is the opposition – escort carriers, a few destroyers, a few destroyer-escorts. Of all sea battles the most one-sided, and the little ships won!

Of course, Salamis would make a great movie also.

Fred says:
November 6, 2009 at 1:54 pm

@GardenStater
“And video killed the radio star.

(Somebody had to say it.) ”

Ya beat Me to it…
What a day: I'm going to have my own promotional ad on the local CBS affiliate station. AND I got a parking spot. I know, I know: your own spot? You're coming up in the world, lad.

Don't be too impressed. It's in the B lot. I will have to fight and claw my way to the A lot -previously reserved for executives, I think, but we're somewhat low on executives these days. Many were culled, few were chosen. Yet we put out a paper anyway. There's a procedure from getting from B to A, but for now I'm content to settle in and enjoy the luxury of not caring whether I've fed the meter lately. It's possible I will grow slack and fat and lazy; wondering if a ticket was imminent kept me spry.

You may ask: how long have you worked there? A long time. But it's been years since I had regular hours. I drifted in and out, attached to no team, a lone atom in its own orbit. That changed when I was assigned to the digital/video team, and for the last few months I've been back in college mode, husbanding quarters. Not for pinball, as before, but for the slakeless thirst of the meter.

Used to be you had to fight for a spot by the building. Not so much anymore. We've been right-sized within an inch of our lives.

As for the ad: we're running spots on 'CCO in a while, and they'll highlight the
people who populate the StarTribune. The wheel turns: once the paper frowned on singling out various “personalities” for publicity purposes, preferring a blank stone edifice that must have connoted Seriousness and Public Trust to someone. Now they’re building individual brands, to use that horrid word, within the larger one. The Newsbreak team – much whittled down from the original cohort – whittled down to two of us in front of the cameras, in fact – will be part of the PR effort.

So I’m glad I got a haircut yesterday. Now the big question: which tie? But we’ll deal with that in tomorrow’s Bleat, perhaps.

Dank sad day; rain. Rain like a wake for autumn, snow in the wings. Halloween has no purchase here this year. It’s the damnedest thing. I remember when it was the New Christmas, with parties and bunting and a month-long build-up; this year it’s . . . eh. No gust of public spirit behind it, which may be a sign that people are, on the whole, preoccupied. We’ve given up on warmth; the long tumble down the hill of October was replaced with a cliff. Diminished expectations – of everything – are the new normal.

Right? Or no? Depends. To me this feels less like the shocks of the seventies than the psychic miseries of the early 80s, when the deep recession was accompanied by stubbled troubadour singing about deindustrialization. Back then we had elegies to the old ways, now gone; this Great Recession feels as if it’s a bitter farewell to the new ways we thought would replace the old. I think something good will come of it all, but down the road. Quick and hard as the shocks have been, I think history will see them in slow-motion. What we see as a breathing space or a sign the worst is over is probably just the gap between swings of the two-by-four.

Well. I neglected yesterday’s Out of Context Ad Challenge, because I got too busy. Also, I forgot. So here it is:

Pretty easy, really, but you could have fun imagining what the ad is hawking. Have at it.
Black and White World is in the can and uploaded, so you can expect that around one. It is a corker. Next week, if all goes well, I may have daily B&W Worlds about the Frankenstein series, and the lesser-known entries. Everyone knows Bride of Frankenstein, but there are so many more Son of House of. School of. Carpool of. Waffle-Iron of. Chia Version of. Checking Account of. Despite the absence of Halloween spirit, I will try to get into the appropriately jokey mood. Frankly, I'm looking forward to fearing fear itself. I'm tired of the rational reasons for concern. Give me some monsters who became so beloved they were co-opted into cereal form.

Pass it along, if you wish

46 RESPONSES TO thursday, oct. 22, now with ad challenge

Steve Ripley says:
October 22, 2009 at 12:27 am

Locusts can be quite tasty, lightly sauteed with a dash of savory seasoning.

Or, “Our laxative is so effective, you'll by FLYING to the john in no time flat!”

Mumblix says:
October 22, 2009 at 12:37 am

That's an ad for Stuebinder's Cedar Chests. It shows a lady getting ready for her 6th wedding. She opens her “Brand-X” chest and out fly a squadron of moths. She holds up her Swiss cheese-esque drip dry wedding gown and wails...“Oh, no! I need to walk down the aisle NOW!

John says:
October 22, 2009 at 12:44 am

There's a dirty Tagalog pun in the seventh sentence.

John says:
October 22, 2009 at 12:49 am

The ad is for locust insurance for farmers, very popular in the 30s (and the End times).

John Robinson says:
October 22, 2009 at 12:58 am

Nope, betcha a ham sanwich it's Flit bug spray: “Quick, Henry, the Flit!” That was the tagline. Srsly.

Baby M says:
October 22, 2009 at 5:09 am
Mothballs. Mothballs now mean your summer clothes will be uneaten next spring.

**MikeH** says:
October 22, 2009 at 5:47 am

It's an early ad for Northwest Airlines

**Jody Morgan** says:
October 22, 2009 at 6:01 am


Don't forget Daughter of. Jesse James met her once:
http://tinyurl.com/7xef7

**hpoulter** says:
October 22, 2009 at 6:24 am


Don't forget Daughter of. Jesse James met her once:
http://tinyurl.com/7xef7

That one is really a stinker. There is also the 1910 Edison version (14 minutes)
http://www.aycyas.com/F1910.htm

There is also “Frankenstein's Castle of Freaks”, as skewered by the folks at Cinematic Titanic, but otherwise not worth bothering about.

I suspect there is a whole genre of shlocky Euro-horror films with the name “Frankenstein” slapped on.

But for really bad films you can't beat the Turks:
http://tinyurl.com/yzqtwmo

**WatchWayne** says:
October 22, 2009 at 6:44 am

Shouldn't that last sentence have read “serial” form– Sun of, Horse of, Cesspool of, Waffle-House of, China of, etc?

**Mr_Lilacs** says:
October 22, 2009 at 6:50 am

**WatchWayne** :Shouldn't that last sentence have read “serial” form– Sun of, Horse of, Cesspool of, Waffle-House of, China of, etc?

Well, there's always this.

Funny, I originally read our host's “Waffle Iron of” as “Waffle House of”. FWIW.
Lileks has complained about the cutesifying of monsters, with Frankenberry as an egregious example, before.

Speaking of Frankenberry, the only time Al Franken ever made me laugh on SNL was when he said he was suing General Mills for using his name and likeness.

Nice typos, me. He was not an ex-maple, actually.

I sure wish this comments interface had an “edit” choice.

Glad that’s cleared up as I was confused. If Frankenberry had a maple component, then it wouldn’t really be Frankenberry, now would it?

Of course once Al Franken found out that General Mills wasn’t a member of the US military, he dropped the lawsuit.

Shouldn’t that last sentence have read “serial” form—Sun of, Horse of, Cesspool of, Waffle-House of, China of, etc?

Think Frankenberry, Count Chocula, Boo Berry.

I wouldn’t worry about it. I read exmaple as example and had no idea what you were correcting in the succeeding comment.

Count Chocula Lives!

Gotta be laxatives. To make you fly off from whatever you are doing, because you gotta go now.
hpoulter says:
October 22, 2009 at 7:59 am

Re; Moths NOW! illustration:
I, for one, welcome our new insect overlords.
(that hasn't been overdone at all, has it?)

Covvie says:
October 22, 2009 at 8:29 am

I gotta go with John Robinson #5 — Flit or some other bug killer. He beat me to it with the “Quick, Henry! The Flit!” line, too. I shouldn’t have dawdled over at Instapundit so long this morning.

juanito - John Davey says:
October 22, 2009 at 8:29 am

Give me some monsters who became so beloved they were co-opted into cereal form.

Tell me you're not a BooBerry man.

Dr. Spyn says:
October 22, 2009 at 8:41 am

An early ad for the National Organization of Women: A woman needs a man like a fish needs a locust. It was only until years later that they realized the campaign wasn't living up to expectations and changed “locust” to “bicycle.”

Lars Walker says:
October 22, 2009 at 8:46 am

Rayon, the new wonder fiber. Starve those moths NOW!

Sam Baker says:
October 22, 2009 at 8:55 am

Maybe there was a sister organization of the National Organization of Women aimed specifically at Moth Man's female counterpart. But then I guess it would be NOM – National Organization of Mothwomen.

AtH2O Kent says:
October 22, 2009 at 9:08 am

Mothra reads his instructions. Nu?
Ad for summer storage of furs.

justnacl says:
October 22, 2009 at 9:18 am

The insect is clearly a grasshopper or locust, not a moth. The message is obviously that the advertiser wants or is offering all of us grasshoppers immediately.
So: it is a political ad, offering plagues of locusts to the voting public. (BTW the candidate did not win.)

FreeState says:
October 22, 2009 at 9:27 am

I have my doubts that it's an ad for Flit. Most of those were drawn by Theodore Geisel. The lettering looks sufficiently Seussian, but not the locust/grasshopper thing. (It can't be a moth – there aren't enough wings, the body is too wide, and the back legs are too big.)

juanito - John Davey says:
October 22, 2009 at 9:34 am

An early ad for our local WNBA team, the Sacramento Monarchs, for ticket sales on N.O.W. appreciation night. Always a hard game to sell. That logo is featured prominently on the throwback uniforms.

Or not.

Pam-EL says:
October 22, 2009 at 10:05 am

MikeH: It's an early ad for Northwest Airlines

*Snicker*

Nice one.

Also, the sentence “Many were culled, few were chosen.” should be carved on a marble monument where it can be worshipped as it deserves to be.

Al Federber says:
October 22, 2009 at 10:13 am

To my way of thinking, there's something strange and awful about promoting oneself as a “brand”. Seems like image upkeep alone would be very tiresome, not to mention the constant self-promotion. Some can pull it off, but others (think Heene) implode at liftoff.

hgbear (roger h) says:
October 22, 2009 at 10:17 am

Don't forget the Japanese “Furankenshutain” movies.

hpoulter says:
October 22, 2009 at 10:31 am

Omigod, how could I have forgotten the funniest bad Frank movie ever? Frankenstein meets the Space Monster – a fantastic Puerto Rican attraction. The bug-eyed dwarf alien monster guy spends most of his time ogling the cleavage of his space dominatrix companion (and who wouldn’t?)

Also featured: long travelogue sequences of the heroes driving around San Juan landmarks.
swschrad says:
October 22, 2009 at 10:43 am


Charlie Young says:
October 22, 2009 at 10:49 am

Your lone atom in its own orbit analogy lacks some scientific correctness. Atoms don’t really orbit anything. They look for something to hook up with, generally, unless you’re an inert gas. Electrons have been simplified into orbits for convenience sake, but they technically don’t orbit; they exist or don’t exist in a defined space around the nucleus ala Heisenberg. Maybe you’re a rogue planet except even those tend to orbit something. Methinks you need a new analogy.

hpoulter says:
October 22, 2009 at 10:50 am

Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster trailer:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9It2mrShP8
“Furankenshutain” Conquers the World trailer:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmEQUnpxgB4

Somehow, I don’t think Lileks will be going this far down the Frankenstein food chain.

Steve Biddle says:
October 22, 2009 at 10:51 am

I’m also thinking it was for a Flit gun. And “Quick Henry, the Flit!” was a line written by the guy who later gave us the Cat in the Hat: Dr. Suess.

Michael Rittenhouse says:
October 22, 2009 at 11:03 am

Manmoth!

We actually had to study that vapid poem in a university-grade English class.

Rob F. says:
October 22, 2009 at 11:38 am

The Bugaloos On Tour – NOW!

Robert says:
October 22, 2009 at 11:43 am

Haha, Frankenstein meets the space monster.

Spud says:
October 22, 2009 at 11:55 am
Our family does not partake of the Halloween “partying”, so I'll take your word on the subdued Halloween spirit. I suppose we could blame the hard times for now, in spite of our unbeloved MSM touting the “we're recovering, we really are ... yes way” horn. Two gargantuan monsters are trampling whole communities, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and our superhero political leaders don’t want to kill them off as they're the ones who created the mess to begin with.

Wonder how many spins in the grave Jefferson and crew are having when they contemplate the federal government in the mortgage business and politicians giving away homes. Now that's monster chiller acary!

juanito - John Davey says:
October 22, 2009 at 11:55 am

Rob F. :
The Bugaloos On Tour – NOW!

We're in the air and everywhere
Flying high, flying loose
Flying free as a summer breeze
Ready with a helping hand

ScottG says:
October 22, 2009 at 12:00 pm

John :
There's a dirty Tagalog pun in the seventh sentence.

It was a name of a company softball team in my area too: A lot B lot....

Greta says:
October 22, 2009 at 4:04 pm

Congrats on the parking spot! After reading your blog for a while, and seeing pics of your vehicle from time to time, I started actually noticing you were parking on the street. Stalkerish? Perhaps – but you'd be the ONLY vehicle parked on the side of the building and the color made it stand out.

Well, that and considering the Strib is the “halfway” point for my walk to work from my car to work (I'm too cheap to pay for parking in the middle of downtown but too anti-people to ride the bus – so I walk a mile each day to/from work), I'm always looking for SOMETHING to keep me entertained on the way there every morning.

Now you'll be added to the list of cars I see or used to see – the SUV with the CATSCAT plate, the cool looking Saturn sportscar, the 70s era car w/racing stripes – And you!

Trogdor says:
October 22, 2009 at 5:16 pm

it's all so confusing. Monster Cereal NOW with fortifying insect
parts! Actually I was a Quisp boy, and I noticed they still make it, just
don't deliver it all over anymore. Quisp was a nice alien though.

Trogdor says:
October 22, 2009 at 5:20 pm

As for that other line of monster cereal, Boo Berry was sickeningly
gross. Frankenberry was ok, and Count Chocula was fabulouso. The
commercials were entertaining. I somehow don't think there will be
much sweet tasty cereal left if the libs get their way controlling
everything we do...oh well, hopefully granola will be available.

Daniel says:
October 22, 2009 at 5:30 pm

It still looks like a moth to me, so I'll say, “Jack Benny Brand Coin
Purses”! And thank you, Mr. Bleat Host, for making me actually
laugh over your, “I will try to get into the appropriately jokey mood.
Frankly...” — “Frank” indeed!

Dave says:
October 24, 2009 at 11:04 am

There's only one thing that can set the Halloween spirit around
here, and that's a proper Diner. Come on, James! Diner!
to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Driving down a sad empty suburban boulevard the other day, I saw this remnant:

I wonder if the owner stood in the lot and threw rocks at the tubes until the name was erased.
Over the last year I’ve been photographing empty storefonts, logo-scars, and other evidence of retail contraction. The best series will probably never see the light of bleat, and that’s the shots I took before the Strib sealed up a few parts of the building. They moved walls, closed doors, shut off power. People say you can still hear the ghostly wails of classified ad reps entombed behind the new walls.

**These six-hour sleep-sessions** are playing hell with my head. I’d go to bed earlier, but trying to reverse, oh, 30 years of habits is hard. I cannot stand to go to bed before midnight. Going to bed at eleven would be okay if I was ten, and had been allowed to stay up to watch the Carson monologue – and maybe the skit, if the Mighty Carson Art Players were on! Oh boy! Anyway, it’s been a loong, long day. Damp and raw. I could blather on about this and that, or I could hit you with a plethora of updates. So don’t be complaining I’m short-shrifting the site, okay?

We have:

- **100 Mysteries #55.**
- An update of Sears 1934: **lingerie!**
- A 16 page update of Comic Ads: **Candy.**

The StarTribune [column](http://www.startribune.com/)

There, that ought to hold the little bastards.

What, is this mike still on? Actually, that story of the radio announcer who said “that ought to hold the little bastards” is apocryphal; he actually said “Send the little SOBs the bedbug letter.”

**UPDATE: Whoa.** According to the time stamp, I wrote that 2 hours and 3 minutes before I learned Soupy Sales was dead. For some reason I thought he was the guy who supposedly said the “bastards” line, but he was famous for asking kids to send him money from their parents’ wallet. (It was the olden days, so the apostrophe can be safely placed after the S in “parents,” instead of cleaving the T and the S.) I missed Mr. Sales’ vogue; he was always the guy who mugging to questionable effect on daytime TV.
So . . . it was actually a hideous insect that had evolved to mimic an ethnic stereotype? And that wouldn’t have been immediately obvious?

So much of my early proto-adolescence was spent watching guys on TV whose day had passed, but were playing out the skein on game shows and variety programs. Soupy Sales was one of those guys who was famous, but seemed to be famous because he was named Soupy Sales. Ha ha! With a name like that he has to be funny. Or, a spokesman for the concept of Murky, Viscous Bargains.

Anyway. Enjoy the updates. Back Monday with a hella good tale, believe me.

---

**55 RESPONSES TO *friday! October 23***

**Wagner von Drupen- Sachs** says:

October 23, 2009 at 6:16 pm

OMG Heather Angel!!!! From the Bulldog Drummond series! How do you type that sound that the Tex Avery wolf makes, when he sees a hot dame?

**boblipton** says:

October 23, 2009 at 6:24 pm

How OOOOOOOOldisshe?

Bob

**Di*** says:

October 23, 2009 at 6:44 pm

As a young girl, those foundation garment ads actually terrified me. They seriously made me NOT want to grow up. The horror!
RIP Soupy 😞 You gave me lots of laughs as kid – SO outrageous. Such unexpected guests, too.

**chrisbcritter** says:
October 24, 2009 at 2:35 am

I think the MAD artist you’re referring to would be Bob Clarke.

**Ross** says:
October 27, 2009 at 3:33 am

I’m kinda shocked that Our Host didn’t remember Margaret O’Brien. Then again, as much as I love old movies, my knowledge is somewhat eccentric, as well. It was better(at least on character actors) years ago when one of us would instigate a game of “Actor”(name an actor, next person names a movie they’re in, next has to name someone else in that cast, etc.). That marshmallow ad cpy lead-in sounds like a guy desparate to lock the den door for ten minutes & inspect the staples in this month’s Playboy…

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Still not finding what you’re looking for? Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

VISIT OUR FRIENDS!
A few highly recommended friends...

0: Main Menu
1: Matchbook Museum
2: Comic Covers
3: Black & White World
4: Sears 1934
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
Screedblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

ARCHIVES
All entries, chronologically...

July 2013
June 2013
May 2013
April 2013
March 2013
February 2013
January 2013
December 2012
November 2012
October 2012
September 2012
August 2012

Please install and activate the “Twitter for WordPress” plugin to use this section.
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
I've seen “Fargo” a few times, but I couldn't remember if the woman to whom I was talking had ended up in the wood chipper. You hate to ask. Was that your leg, or Steve Bucemi's? Not a question you want to put to an attractive lass. She played the kidnapped wife in “Fargo,” and we were in Fargo – in a bar behind the Fargo theater, which has a statue of Marge from “Fargo” in the balcony lobby. But we’ll get to that.

We were at the Silver Moon Cafe, named after a famed supper club that pulled in the quality crowd in Moorhead until it
went up in flames. The owners, keenly aware of the attractions of history, have a small collection of original items on display – menus, an ashtray, press notices. I’d driven past the place when I was last in Fargo, two weeks ago, and it had seemed uncommonly elegant. Now I’m in the backroom with my favorite bourbon, and the executive producer is telling a story about the dog-ghost she saw when she was stationed in Germany while in the Navy -

Perhaps I should step back and set the scene. Summer before last I wrote about being an extra in a movie. My daughter was an actual cast member, right down to a credit at the end. It’s really an exceptional film, and unlike so many independent productions that wither and expire, it lives and prospers: the DVD comes out this week, and the movie’s opening in many cities, including Chicago . . . And Fargo. When the director asked me to come up for the premier and introduce it, me being a Fargo lad, I said well hell yes. So Friday I gassed up the Element, tuned in the limited-run Monty Python Channel on XM, and headed up Highway Ten.

Again. (Mind you, I’m not setting out to make Serious Documentaries about Highway Ten. I’m pointing the camera out the window while looking straight ahead at the road. These were shot with the Kodak Zi8.)

The movie was showing at the Fargo, the renovated jewel of renovated downtown; the theater put us up at the Hotel Donaldson, a former flophouse remade into a boo-tique hotel.
I had a grand room, and more bed than I could possibly use. Possibly the most comfortable bed in which I’ve ever slept. It was somewhat daunting to note that I could purchase the bathrobe for $125; in my days in Fargo, that would have bought you two months’ stay in the selfsame hotel.

I wandered down to the bar, had a bison burger and coffee – $13, total – then edited some video before wandering down to the theater. Went a block north to get some twilight neon:
Then the Fargo.
A quick video tour:

The film was running in the smaller annex theater. The main theater was showing “Paranormal Activity,” and you could tell who was buying tickets for which movie. The older cineastes went to “Temptation,” and the pierced / goatee crowd went for “Paranormal.” There was some confusion – a young blonde collegian came out of the annex theater and announced she was in the wrong place, and couldn't find her friend, even though she was here! She
said this to me and the director, because we were middle-aged men in suits, and hence had the trappings of Authority Figures, I guess.

“How do you know she's here?” I asked. She held up a Blackberry.

“She texted me so!”

“Did you look in the main theater?” She said she did. “How about the balcony?”

She looked at me as though I’d suggested she check the smargo-f’tang, or somesuch equally mysterious place.

“The stairs there go up to the balcony,” I said.

“Are they showing Paranormal Activity up there too?” she asked.

Good. Lord. “Yes! You can see the whole thing.”

She thanked us and headed up the stairs. God bless her: she came down a few minutes later to say she’d found her friend.

When I first got to the theater there were seven people in the room, and one was my father. The other was his wife. Two of them were investors. Ah. Cripes.

“Thanks for coming,” I said to Dad.

Doris gave him an elbow. “He wanted to watch football.”

“There were three games on tonight,” Dad said.

“Who was playing?”

“Well, Army versus Rutgers,” Dad said.

And he gave that up to see his son talk. I love that guy.

By showtime every seat was filled. Nod to the projectionist, nod to the usher, take a drink of water, take the stage. I told everyone I was not the director, but that I was in the movie, for one second, and it was my best work. Did six minutes of pre-show palaver – at one point I saw my Dad grinning, and it just made my night; he's never seen me speak – and I introduced the movie, sat down. Dark. Roll it.

I know this movie, so there's an early moment that kicks you hard in the diaphragm if you know what's coming. But this is Fargo! Stifle! As the movie rolled on I had that uncomfortable feeling you get when you watch a movie with your folks and there's, y'know, sex stuff and bad language. There's not a nude moment in the movie, and the way it implies and suggests without showing is quite remarkable; think 70s film vocabulary used to communicate 50s concepts – and I couldn’t help think of my Mom, who would sometimes cluck about a TV show being too “raw.” But: the people who’d come to see the film were here because of the review in the paper, which was forthright, and you could feel the room enjoying the movie. Laughs in all the right spots.
Dead silence at the end. Me, I’m trying not to blubber – if the emotional gong the movie hits at the end isn’t enough, there’s the slow dolly down the row of little girls, all of whom are my daughter’s friends, and the shot ends with my child and the little girl who plays the – well, you’ll have to see the scene. Dead silence through the credits. Strong grateful applause at the end.

No one got up when the lights went up.

I introduced the director, Mr. Patrick Coyle, and he came down for a Q & A. No one got up. Fifteen minutes of sharp, keen questions; at one point Patrick noted how pleased he was with this audience; I cut in: it’s Fargo. What did you expect?

Got the chance to introduce my Dad to Patrick. My Dad said he thought it was a really fine movie, and I know him well enough: he was absolutely sincere. Said he’d teared up at the end. I’ve never heard him say that about any movie. Not even “Victory at Seat.” Doris loved it. Loved Jeremy Sisto. They were as verklempt as a couple of Greatest Generation folk can get. How good is this movie? My Dad was so caught up in the end he didn’t notice his son or granddaughter. That good.

In the lobby afterwards the post-show klatch convened, and that’s where I met Kris Rudrud, who was the kidnapped wife in “Fargo.” Been a looong time; same high school, same coach: the inestimable beloved Rhoda H., the teacher eulogized in this space last year. I learned that the Bleat about Rhoda was read at the funeral. Friends, that was one of those bear-down / keep-it-together moments, because I had no idea. To this day her oratorical instructions echo in my head, in the withering cutting tone that made us all stand up straight and avoid the fig-leaf or the reverse-fig-leaf or many rhetorical fallacies she scourged from our mental processes.


“Why do you take that old highway ten?” my practical father asked the next morning.

Maybe I like proving Thomas Wolfe wrong a few times every year?

—

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*A remarkable movie written ...*
54 RESPONSES TO *monday, oct. 26: hwy 10 again*

Chas C-Q says:
October 26, 2009 at 8:30 pm

@Pat

There is a Wurlitzer at the Tennessee Theatre in Knoxville, TN. (URL in name.)

bgates says:
October 27, 2009 at 12:03 am

*And don't forget “The Fighting CBs: How citizens band saved the west coast from Japanese invasion.”*

I’ll bet several places on Highway Ten have “A Bridge to Fargo”.

nodakboy says:
October 27, 2009 at 9:37 pm

FWIW: that steeple pointing the way for the denizens of the neon-lit Empire bar is First Lutheran, where Ms. Rudrud can be seen worshipping on Sundays. Escaping the Great Woodchipper. Thanks for the great blog and another interesting Fargo post. Hey, good name for a, waddyacallit, one of them, uh, NEWSpapers. That’s it.

Trogdor says:
October 28, 2009 at 12:15 pm

I don’t know what it means, but when I clicked on the Amazon link, it said, people that bought this DVD also bought *Drag Me Into Hell!* hmmm...
can take care of it!

3: Black & White World
4: Sears 1934
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
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WHY A STORK?
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! […]

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Thanks for dropping by! Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
I think this might be the first year I've ever really enjoyed the classic monster movies. I remember seeing “Bride of Frankenstein” in college, in my dorm room, probably on a lonely weekend – back when you had to wait for these things to roll around on broadcast TV. (Didn't see “Casablanca” until I was 25, which is a very dangerous age for exposure; send in a mopey vegan teetotalling emo kid into “Casablanca” at the right time, and he'll come out ready to get drunk, smoke cigarettes, and run guns.) When I first saw “Bride” I was struck by its stylized look, and the pathos of the scenes with the blind man. I thought it was a great movie, and I'm not alone; it's on all the lists, and still drips with critical slobber. Now? It goes down a notch in my opinion every time I see it.

Never got into the monsters as a kid. The other night on Twitter I noted I was watching “Nosferatu,” which shows vampires the way they ought to be: stinky ugly leeches, not sensitive tragic boys from the goth version of the Abercrombie and Fitch catalog. Nosferatu reminds me of a very lanky Woody Allen, but that's another story. I hate vampires, in general – “After Dark” was a scary, harrowing movie, but that's all I'll see. Impressionable young girls seem keen on them, perhaps because they like the bad-boy aspect.
and secretly believe they can improve them until they want to stay home at night and drink hamster smoothies. But there is nothing romantic about vampires, unless you're really turned on by alcoholic bill-collections who sleep in a box of dirt.

You know, the classic vampire tales - Nosferatu, Dracula – have the count luring a real estate agent to his home to suck his blood. So it's a revenge fantasy, then.

OH JUST KIDDING. I love my realtors(TM). Onward –

The Wolfman: did nothing. He didn't have any powers. Basically a dog in pants.

The Mummy: please. A geriatric reanimated boy-king wearing an Ace bandage, shuffling around so slowly he couldn't catch up with Orson Welles if the great director had his pants around his ankles? No.

The Invisible Man: now this fellow I liked. Had style and panache and a certain brio to his madness, thanks to Claude Raines. Also, the dream of invisibility is enticing, until you start to wonder if your tissues are invisible, or perhaps your tissues defeat light in some ingenious way. No, it has to be invisible tissues. Which means your food would be visible, as well as the after-products. This was one of the problems revealed in a very fine book, "Memoirs of an Invisible Man," made into a crappy Chevy Chase movie.

Frankenstein: see above. I knew almost nothing beyond "Bride" when I watched "Young Frankenstein," and hence missed so many references; when you know all the source material, it's even better. (But we'll get to that tomorrow.) What bothered me about Frankenstein? Well, his indestructibility. The guy's made out of stitched together meat; he ought to fall apart like a minced bologna the first time someone punches him, but he has superhuman strength. He can't be killed – just wire him up and send in the juice, and presto, the Monster Walks Again. Also, I was bothered that I had to refer to him as Frankenstein's Monster, instead of Frankenstein. C'mon. Even the horror comics of my day called him Frankenstein. It's like having to say “Count Dracula” instead of “Dracula,” because the purists would point out there was a Baron Dracula who lived a quiet life as a cheese inspector.

The unvarying wardrobe was a matter of some speculation, too – but it's interesting to consider that Frank wears a sport coat through most of his career, which makes the undead heap of homicidal urges whose very existence is an affront to God better dressed than most people at the mall.

On to the Bride. First, the seal of approval from the government – or, rather, the rote NRA sign to vouchsafe the studio's compliance with the wishes of the state:
Next, the second Universal logo, with the tiny plane around the cloudless orb:

The titles. One word says it all, except he's not exactly in Cher or Madonna territory:
UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head HERE for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultras links is HERE!
Again with the ? as the Monster’s bride. I forget this every time: it begins with three literary types sitting around talking about the raw force of Nature, and Frankenstein. It’s like the Frankenstein / Dracula / Wolfman match ups. 

Byron!

That wimp, Shelley:
The Johnny B. Goode of proto-feminist lit, Mary B. Shelley!

The movie – released in ’35, years after the original – begins where the last one left off. Quite quickly we learn what's different. Whale apparently didn't want to redo the first one, so he decided to add some elements and turn everything up to 11. So we get Comic Relief:
Oh, she was a corker, that one, inserted into many films for birdy screechy overreaction. Then there's Dr. Pretorius, all arch smiles and untrimmed eyebrows. Again, he overplays, but it's good ham.

Here's where the film stumbles: his magic box of mini-people.
The first time I saw the film this scene clanged like a box of cymbals tossed into a monkey cage. The FX are quite accomplished, but it’s all trickery, and it’s ridiculous: Pretorius managed to grow small complete intelligent homunculi, eh? Grow them? Chia style? It doesn’t work at all, and derails the implausible but internally-consistent science of the movie.

The blind-old-man section still works, although it’s impossible not to curse Mel Brooks and Gene Hackman somewhat. Friend! Good!

Smoke! Good!
Religious symbolism, as Frankenstein denies the gift of the risen Christ, good! From an artistic stand-point, anyway. Supposedly there was a scene of Frankenstein trying to get Jesus off the cross, just to help a brother out, I suppose. Can’t imagine why they cut that.

Girlfriend! Good!

Depends on the angle, really:
Elsa plays the Bride with the quick darting brainless movement of a pterodactyl, and it would be funny if it wasn't so damned creepy.

As a whole, I'm not sure it's better. Technically, it's a better film. When it's good, it's awesome: The reanimation of the Bride is brilliantly shot and edited – the gap between '35 and '31 is almost as great as the space between the '31 film and, say, 1927. The music is better, but that's not difficult; there's no music in the original. Waxman's theme for Frankenstein has a motif that's like Mahler on a psycho jag, and the insistent timpani heartbeat of the Bride's creation is marvellous. Karloff handles the role with more detail than before, and even though he speaks he maintains the character's essential muteness. There the same aching pathos in his outstretched hands, the same torment and want. His scenes with his blind friend show you why this character is different from the other Universal monsters: he is not only capable of the best of human emotions as well as the worst, he aspires to the former. He'd be okay if people didn't keep coming at him with FIRE, RRRR, FIRE BAD for things he can't remember doing; he'd be happy if little girls floated; he'd be fine if pretty girls didn't scream at the sight of his face, and men try to shoot him just for being. But by the time he makes his way around to the castle and Drs. Pretorius and Frankenstein, he's soured on it all. LOVE DEAD. HATE ALIVE. He would never be so human again.

Or . . . would he? That'll be the next one in the series: Son of Frankenstein.

Oh: forgot the OHA, or Obligatory Hunchbacked Assistant.
Later today: Comic sins. See you around.

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93 RESPONSES TO Tuesday, Oct. 27: Five Days of Frankenstein, pt. 2

Seattle Dave says:
October 27, 2009 at 12:34 pm

“It’s pronounced ‘Eyegor.’”
“Oh, they told me it was ‘Ee-gore.’”
“Well they were wrong, weren’t they?”

“Werewolf?”
“There.”
“What?”
“There wolf.”
“Why are you talking like that?”
“I thought you wanted to.”

Lars Walker says:
October 27, 2009 at 12:35 pm

@bgbear (roger h)
I’m told that Olivier’s problem in movies was that he’d been too well directed in “pulling back” his technique, for the more intimate craft which is movie acting, with its close-ups, etc. Apparently he pulled back too much, and left us with little hint of the fireworks he could work when he was on a stage.
**Gibbering Madness** says:
October 27, 2009 at 12:46 pm

*Rob :*
It would be cool if someone did a movie actually based on the book.

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0109836/

?

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
October 27, 2009 at 12:47 pm

@Lars Walker
I always suspected that about Olivier, pity never be able to see him live doing Hamlet. Just seems odd that someone like Ronald Coleman did not seem to have the same problem.

Movies do require a Cary Grant (now that is a Hamlet I liked to see, however, it would need an upbeat ending, I do not recall Grant ever dieing on film).

**hpoulter** says:
October 27, 2009 at 12:54 pm

*Chris :*So, is there a Star Trek connection? There has to be a Star Trek connection.

Weeel, I found one, but you would have to accept “Star Trek: Enterprise” as Star Trek. The chief engineer is a big Frankenstein fan, and keeps little monster statues in his office, according to the memory-alpha site. I never got into “Enterprise”, though.

**Bob** says:
October 27, 2009 at 1:04 pm

I wouldn’t call the plane in the Universal logo “tiny.” Its wingspan is wider than Africa.

**HunkybobTX** says:
October 27, 2009 at 1:11 pm

“Put…Ze Candle….BECK!!!

**Borderman** says:
October 27, 2009 at 1:13 pm

*SarahW :*
I’m obsessed with making a Nosferatu pop out of a coffin in my yard, but I can’t quite figure out how to do it without air compressors.

Screen-door hydraulic closer released by fishing line. Slaps right up there to the delight or terror of all who see it.
HunkybobTX says:
October 27, 2009 at 1:17 pm

“When monsters are loose, Boards must be tight!”

Bigcountry says:
October 27, 2009 at 1:28 pm

RE: Monster's Wardrobe

Jerry Seinfeld noted that even though the jacket didn't fit, at least it showed that the monster was TRYING.

Mark E. Hurling says:
October 27, 2009 at 1:51 pm

“He's going to be very popular.” RIP, Marty Feldman.

Bigcountry says:
October 27, 2009 at 2:19 pm

The 1910 silent version of “Frankenstein” is available on You-Toob. An interesting take on the story. The laboratory is more like a kitchen, and Victor F. is sort of Emeril Lagasse as a mad scientist. (Here's some abby normal brain BAM!)

In the end, the “monster” is actually a physical manifestation of the darker nature of Frankenstein's own psyche. Thus presaging “Forbidden Planet” (The monsters of the Id!).

It is also interesting how the director used a large mirror as a means to relate the story, and as a metaphor for human nature.

RB says:
October 27, 2009 at 3:06 pm

“'I'm dashed!’ he said. "If this don't beat cock-fighting! Most remark-able!—And there I can see a rabbit clean through you, 'arf a mile away! Not a bit of you visible—except—"

He scrutinised the apparently empty space keenly. “You 'aven't been eatin' bread and cheese?” he asked, holding the invisible arm.

“You're quite right, and it' not quite assimilated into the system.”

“Ah!” said Mr. Marvel. “Sort of ghostly, though.”

“Of course, all this isn't half so wonderful as you think.”

--from “The Invisible Man”, by Herbert George Wells

tom says:
October 27, 2009 at 3:16 pm

Realtor is capitalized.

Will says:
October 27, 2009 at 3:22 pm

Matt:
I had to buckle myself down when Teri Garr says, “Wood yoo liyke a r-roll in zee hay?" WOAH!

No kidding. I hadn't watched that film in a long, long time, and had forgotten that scene. I felt like the big bad wolf seeing Red Riding Hood in one of the old Tex Avery cartoons!

Mike Zeidler says:
October 27, 2009 at 3:25 pm

tom:
Realtor is capitalized.

Only if they're a member of the National Association of Realtors. Given he's from the 1800's (1890 in Dracula, 1838 in Nosferatu), also because they're fictional, I don't believe either (Jonathon Harker or Thomas Hutter) was a member.

jeischen says:
October 27, 2009 at 3:32 pm

I think that was Gene Wilder you were referencing, not Hackman. But I'm sure you knew that. I remember making all the Universal monster models as a kid. It was necessary to take some of your hair from a haircut to glue on Wolfman for added visual effect. However, I was a toehead and the effect was more Michael Landon's “Teen Werewolf” than Larry Talbot.

Ken Begg says:
October 27, 2009 at 3:49 pm

“After Dark” was a scary, harrowing movie, but that's all I'll see.

If I may, I believe you mean “Near Dark.”

Will says:
October 27, 2009 at 3:51 pm

jeischen:
I think that was Gene Wilder you were referencing, not Hackman.

Hackman was the blind man in Young Frankenstein.

Captain Ned says:
October 27, 2009 at 4:04 pm

But I was going to make espresso!!

Baby M says:
October 27, 2009 at 4:13 pm

“Love is the only thing that can save this poor creature, and I am going to convince him that he is loved even at the cost of my own life. No matter what you hear in there, no matter how cruelly I beg
you, no matter how terribly I may scream, do not open this door or you will undo everything I have worked for. Do you understand? Do not open this door."

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 27, 2009 at 4:23 pm

An invisible man would have to stay naked and free of dirt as well.

bgbear (roger h) says:
October 27, 2009 at 4:24 pm

**Will:**

**jeischen:**
I think that was Gene Wilder you were referencing, not Hackman.

Hackman was the blind man in Young Frankensteen.

I always say Gene Hackman disappears into a role, many people did not recognize him.

ArganikMark says:
October 27, 2009 at 4:31 pm

That “tiny” Universal plane would span about 2200 miles wingtip to wingtip in relation to the Earth’s diameter.

hpoulter says:
October 27, 2009 at 4:49 pm

bgbear (roger h) : An invisible man would have to stay naked and free of dirt as well.

And he would be blind.

hpoulter:

And he would be blind.

well there goes the visit to the ladies’ locker room

PhiskPhan says:
October 27, 2009 at 5:04 pm

“Realtor” is capitalized but not doctor, minister, etc? Puleeze.
Warren says:

October 27, 2009 at 5:46 pm

“[Frank's sportcoat] makes the undead heap of homicidal urges whose very existence is an affront to God better dressed than most people at the mall.”

Notably more articulate, as well.

FullMetalPatriot says:

October 27, 2009 at 6:12 pm

I've enjoyed your reviews of these classic horror flicks, thanks for posting them. Your combination of expressive vocabulary with casual vernacular always makes for entertaining — and educational — reading.

grs says:

October 27, 2009 at 7:03 pm

Wow. In the second BOF photo, Elsa looks like a cross between Sigourney Weaver and the alien in Alien. Or is it just me?

tom says:

October 27, 2009 at 8:14 pm

The reason “Realtor” is capitalized, is that it's a trademarked proper name denoting persons belonging to the Association of Realtors. A non-“Realtor” realtor would be a “real estate agent”, or some other such generic term. (Apparently the word was coined before it was trademarked though, so for some short span it was itself a generic term; I couldn't find the word used anywhere before it was trademarked though, so I doubt it was ever widely used until its current trademarked version).

The Realtor attorneys should get busy, lest they go the way of aspirin and escalators.

juanito - John Davey says:

October 27, 2009 at 11:12 pm

grs:

Wow. In the second BOF photo, Elsa looks like a cross between Sigourney Weaver and the alien in Alien. Or is it just me?

Smokey IS the Bandit

Wait – we're mixing too many flicks here.

Ross says:

October 28, 2009 at 2:58 am

[ Always hard to get an appointment with The Invisible Man's secretary, “I'm sorry you can't see him right now.” ]

Good Lord. We shoulda seen that one coming up the avenue from a mile away. So cheap, yet so funny.

Man, the commenters are recommending a lot of my own favorites
tonight...

**Lulu** says:
October 28, 2009 at 7:29 am

*GardenStater:*
Young Frankenstein is still one of my all-time favorite movies (*The In-Laws* is another, but that's off-topic).

“The In-Laws”…what a funny, funny movie. “How long has The Price is Right been on?” “Oh, since about 1911.” (30 years after that line was written, IT'S STILL ON.)

“Serpentine, Shelly…serpentine!”

**Lulu** says:
October 28, 2009 at 7:31 am

Forgot another gem: “Are you interested in joining [the CIA]? The benefits are terrific. The trick is not to get killed. That's really the key to the benefit program.”

**Jim A** says:
October 28, 2009 at 8:11 am

The original The In-Laws is pretty much perfect. Falk's cockamamie cockiness and Arkin's slow-burn exasperation are a magic combination. I know they remade it a couple of years back but I have no idea why, or why anyone with access to the original (hello NetFlix) would ever bother with an update.

**Jim A** says:
October 28, 2009 at 8:38 am

@hpoulter I tried to acknowledge in my post that Alan Moore's take on the Invisible Man, Mr. Hyde, and co. in “The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen” isn't likely to be everyone's cup of tea. Clearly it isn't yours.

But if comics are one of your preferred means of “rotting your brain,” please don't spurn all of Moore's stuff on the basis of the League (or of Watchmen, which famously equates costumed heroics with psychosis).

Moore's “Tom Strong” series, and a run of stories he did on an otherwise wretched Superman-ripoff comic called “Supreme” are very affectionate homages to Doc Savage-style “science heroes” (Moore's term) and Silver Age superheroes, respectively. Another fun title of his is “Top 10″, an “NYPD Blue”-like chronicle of a police precinct in a city where everyone has superpowers.

If nothing else, check out “What Ever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?” the “last Superman story” Moore wrote back in the 80s.

All of this stuff is smart, entertaining fun that proves Moore can buy into and extend the superhero mythos, as well as deconstruct it.

**Headless Unicorn Guy** says:
October 28, 2009 at 12:09 pm
Never got into the monsters as a kid. The other night on Twitter I noted I was watching “Nosferatu,” which shows vampires the way they ought to be: stinky ugly leeches, not sensitive tragic boys from the goth version of the Abercrombie and Fitch catalog.

Who *SPARKLE*. Don't forget the *SPARKLE*.

Trogdor says:
October 28, 2009 at 12:17 pm

I’ll forever think of Karloff when I hear 96 tears.

Trogdor says:
October 28, 2009 at 12:19 pm

@grs
ok, I’ll say it. Elsa is kinda Hawt.

Ryan W. Mead says:
October 28, 2009 at 4:52 pm

It looks rather strange to see the NRA seal juxtaposed with the MPAA certificate number. It's almost as if they're saying “Not only does the Hays office approve this movie, but so does AMERICA! Buy war bonds!” (Okay, so there wasn’t a war yet, but you know what I mean.)

xrayguy says:
October 28, 2009 at 8:56 pm

Well, now that everyone has chewed and chewed on this... “Bride” is one of my favorite movies, period. No qualification of genre, just one of the favs (Howard Hawks “The Thing, from another planet” wins with me, various reasons). “Bride” had so much going on, when I watched “Frankenstein” I was kind of left with a “that's it?” feeling. “Bride” has so much, Morpheus camping around, the blind man scene, Morpheus and the monster in the crypt and finally, at the end, Elsa, snappin' her head around it's a wonder the fresh stitches didn’t fail.

Oddly, that frumpy old lady that married Charles Laughton looks rather tasty in her early days. “Honey, the kids are gone tonight. Put on the bedsheet and the wig and lets play ‘Mad Scientist and the Homunculetta’”.

Kev says:
October 29, 2009 at 8:47 am

The Realtor attorneys should get busy, lest they go the way of aspirin and escalators.

Don’t forget Thermos bottles and Dumpsters.
Still not finding what you're looking for? Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

2: Comic Covers
3: Black & White World
4: Sears 1934
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
Screedblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

May 2013
April 2013
March 2013
February 2013
January 2013
December 2012
November 2012
October 2012
September 2012
August 2012

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Sitting in the kitchen / family area; mom & child are watching “It's the Charlie Brown Show Boomers Make Their Kids Watch, Charlie Brown.” Linus berates CB for believing in Santa Clause; CB says it's a matter of denominational difference.

“Is Linus Jewish?” Natalie asks. Made my day.

Earlier today she came home from school with her notebook open; she was writing a story about a dog who runs away to a forest called Jasperwood.

“When the Nazis start?” she asks. “Start invading people I mean.”

“It was 1939,” I said. “Then the early 40s.”

“Okay.” She stopped and wrote down “1940s” in her story. Then she explained it was a story about a dog that belonged to a Jewish family, and the dog was in the woods when the Nazis came. The Nazis found him but made him “a war dog,” and changed his name. To a number. Later he escaped. She read the first paragraph. It was pretty dang good.

They’re now in the World War One Flying Ace sequence, which loses young
kids every time. It had some resonance in its day, thanks to the “Snoopy and the Red Baron” song and its exceptional sing-along chorus. TEN TWENTY THIRTY FORTY FIFTY OR MORE! THE BLOODY RED BARON! WAS ROLLIN’ UP A SCORE! Great moments in kid's songs.

Good day; last day of sun for a while, perhaps. Work was a pleasure, as usual these days – did a little documentary explanation of Instant Runoff Voting, utterly devoid of useful information, but it did give me the chance to set up a fictional three-way race between Carrot Top, The Lizard People, and Newton's Third Law. It'll be up soon.

Now, installment three of Five Days of Frankenstein. (NOTE: as I filed this one, the video server, blip.tv, wasn't responding. Perhaps it'll be fixed by this morn.) Today:

I love this movie. Love it. Not as over-the-top or rich as “Bride,” but it has a visual style I just love. The architecture was all designed in Nightmare Mode – this lightened version of a night-shrouded scene shows how mad everything is. One unending hallucination in the land of big clomping square-headed monsters:
First we meet the local officials, and I had to laugh at this:

It's Count Pikelfahrt from a 100 Mysteries entry. As usual for a Frankenstein movie, it's raining when Herr Doctor arrives in town. Look at this – the way the rain is caught by the light, the way the figure is caught by the headlights:
Composition is perfect in every single scene, but when the movie enters Frankenstein's house the architecture goes absolutely mad:
One hell of an entryway, eh? Well, it has nothing on the hallways:
Or the dining room. It features dual walk-in fireplaces:
The obligatory animation sequence isn't as dramatic as the others; no one's hoisted through a hole in the roof, interrogated by lightning. But we do have lens flares worthy of the latest Star Trek movie:

Electricity, the Animating Spirit! Six years away from the atom bomb, and the movie still echoes the author's 18th century-derived fascination with the elemental power of electricity.

The movie gives us a few things we haven't had before. Oh, we've had a hunchback assistant, but now we have Lugosi as Igor, and he brings a filthy mad joy to the role. At one point he's brought down to the village for questioning, and I love this short excerpt. Be careful, Igor!
As for the fellow who plays the latest iteration of the Mad Doctor: no more of Colin Clive's alcoholic hysteria. Now we have Sherlock:

Basil Rathbone masticates the plaster as usual, and he's fine – but for my money, the best part of the movie goes to Universal stalwart Lionel Atwell, playing the town's chief of police. If you've seen “Young Frankenstein,” this may come as a bit of a surprise: (Flash video)
If “Son of Frankenstein” is missing anything, it's the nuanced version of the Monster. He's a lean, green, killing machine – except for the scene where he discovers Igor's been shot, and cries out in despair. He starts to form the word “friend,” but it dies on his lips – it's possibly the only moment I've ever seen in a movie that calls back a single word from its predecessor and implies it without stating it.

One more detail: there's the usual kid-in-peril, but this time it's the doctor's kid. He has a wonderfully genuine kid's voice. He grew up to be a Marine; while he was in the Corps, he was the youngest DI in the history of the Marines. Never told anyone what he did as a kid, apparently, because he didn't want to be nicknamed “Bambi.” That's right: he was the voice of Disney's deer.

It's not my favorite movie about Frankenstein. But it's my favorite "Frankenstein" movie.

55 RESPONSES TO wednesday, oct. 28 – now including 5 days of frankenstein!

Ross says:
October 29, 2009 at 12:28 am

On the subject of “war dogs”, that was another area (as with basic issue small-arms) where, after WWII ended, German soldiers often shook their heads in bemusement & wondered how they managed to lose: German dog handlers thought their American counterparts treated working dogs too much like pets or mascots (much as a farmer/rancher might shake their head over some suburbanite fussing over a herding dog), leading to uneven performance in combat.
As for Schultz/Peanuts, I was about the only kid in my circle in the '70s who didn't go for them. Being little military history nerds, my brother & I had mixed feelings about the Walter Mitty-like Red Baron fantasies, thinking it dopey (compared to real history or films like “The Blue Max” & “Wings”) but loving the detail of the encounters w/French farm girls, a la popular fiction & memoirs after WWI; it also didn't help that my maternal grandmother always insisted that we were bastard descendants of the Richthofens (& could recite the names back to his grandfather's generation--odd that, since most of her ancestors were from Saxony & Hesse, whereas my dad's were the Krauts from Silesia, where Manfred was born & raised). At one point, I seem to recall a Christmas gift of what I think was a Snoopy & The Red Baron board game, that came with an oversized Snoopy in flying cap on the doghouse--probably from an older relative who didn't catch the air of disinterest from us about the topic.

In closing, I'm disappointed in my fellow Bleatniks for not beating me to this: tying it all back full circle to Frankenstein Week, the holidays begin when one hears Karloff's wonderful voice begin the narration to “How the Grinch Stole Christmas”. So there.

And the more the Grinch thought of the Who-Christmas-Sing
The more the Grinch thought, “I must stop this whole thing!
“Why for fifty-three years I've put up with it now!
I MUST stop Christmas from coming!
...But HOW?”

Emil says:
October 29, 2009 at 7:06 am

Belatedly, Santa “Clause”?

Gene Dillenburg says:
October 29, 2009 at 8:47 am

DerKase: Brunvald says that's an urban legend.

The WWI Flying Ace bits do seem tacked on, like out-takes from another show. But the watercolor backgrounds are marvelous. (The whole WWI Flying Ace was the moment the strip revved up the engine and started barreling towards the shark tank. Snoopy stopped being a supporting character and, along with the contemptible Woodstock, began taking over the strip.)

The best moment of any Peanuts special comes near the end of Great Pumpkin. Bossy, loudmouth Lucy wakes at 4 a.m. to discover her annoying, stupid little brother has never come home. She puts on her coat, retrieves him from the pumpkin patch, and put him to bed, taking off his shoes and tucking him in. No words are spoken. None are needed.

Shelley says:
October 29, 2009 at 3:50 pm

Oh crud. Ask Natalie to design her own web page and put her stories up. Yeah, I know. You said earlier something to the effect of she doesn't want her stories publicly aired. Still, the story outline made me sit up. I would love to hear it. It would have made the best movie in the tradition of Old Yeller and Where the Red Fern Grows.
Lulu says:
October 30, 2009 at 6:29 am

@Gene Dillenburg
I really love that scene, too. Stuff like that is why the original Peanuts – while it could definitely be dark – had real heart. Unlike Peanuts post-oh, mid-'70s or so.
Thursday, Oct. 29

Thursday already? Well, YES. That was a stupid question. Or not: I’ve found that days are smearing together as never before. They’re busier. And I get less done.

But Thursday is still the hell-day on which all duties bear down, and Friday still has its standard release, unchanged through the years. It all comes down to the moment when the piano lesson is over. At that point it’s like a great axe is taken to the rope of duty, and off I go. I only hope I get something done this Friday night; last Friday I did something stupid like watch a movie without doing six other things, and consequently we’ve no updates left but Sears 1934 and 100 Mysteries. No, strike that; I redesigned the main page and the Institute of Official Cheer, but that doesn’t count.

Wife still down with cold; kid got off bus dragging and peaked. I’ve seen more flu and colds this year than ever before, it seems, and I wonder if this has anything to do with the oddly muted Halloween Spirit about in the land. Not that I mind – the month-long build-up has annoyed me for some time. Somewhere around Sept. 21st it becomes obligatory for variety stores to put out bags that show Victorian houses in silhouette against a moon, this being the universal sign for Halloween. As I probably note every year, it's interesting how a particular style of architecture became associated with ghosts and abandonment once it fell permanently out of style. Every subsequent style of domestic architecture is still with us; even the rare sleek 30s houses are echoed in today's ascetic modern boxes. But hang some
gewgaw woodwork from the eaves, and it's SPOOK CENTRAL.

Perhaps it's just me – why yes, that could be a possibility; it may be that my personal observations are not representative of the nation or culture as a whole, unlikely as that seems, I mean, where's the precedent for that – because my child is less interested in Halloween now. She's between the tot-time when it's fun to dress up and get candy and the tween-time you head out with your peers. Two years ago she went as a Pokemon character. This year? The Grim Reaper. They grow up so fast.

At least I recall the halcyon days when we would go to the playground, and I could stand nearby in reasonable proximity. If this story is true - and I am suspicious of almost everything that comes out of the English media, including the actual bust size of the Page 3 girls – then I should number myself among the elect for living here, now. It seems so preposterous, such a risible collage of nanny-state cliches: parents must keep a distance, but the children will be observed by state-sanctioned “play rangers.”

Mayor Dorothy Thornhill argued the council was merely enforcing government policy at the play areas.

‘Sadly, in today's climate, you can't have adults walking around unchecked in a children's playground and the adventure playground is not a meeting place for adults,' she said.

The amount of neutron-star-dense idiocy in that quote is so substantial it's remarkable the interviewer wasn't trapped at its event horizon. At the very least, it suggests Ms. Mayor-type Person has not spent any time at a children's playground, where adults – aka parents – often meet and exchange social pleasantries while their wee bairns cavort around the brother-primate bars. In fact, social relationships of a minor but satisfying nature often arise from these situations, and adults may see the act of meeting other parents as part of the playground experience. Mind you, this is coming from a society that already puts cameras in so many location the Torchwood crew could probably call up footage of your digestive system worrying over a bolus of curry.

Perhaps it might be left up to parents to monitor the situation, keep an eye out for Ken Shabby and Uncle Ernie and the other lone atoms who might, perhaps, keep a loose orbit around the playground? No; can't have that; they haven't been accredited by the state.

Oh, and remember: a particularly pungent abrogation of individual rights cannot be objected to if one's critics have, at some point inferred support for a greater, if theoretical, infringement on personal rights. Particularly if the critics believe they understand the motivations you are too blind to see. 😞

Back to Frank: installment #4.
Opening lines I have written and distracted:

Now begins the long flogging, the rote exploitation, the extraction of money from the gullible and bored

There's no point beating a dead horse, but that ought to go double for a man, but

Perhaps the first three movies exhausted the collective imagination

You can see where I'm going with this. The fourth Frankenstein movie is B grade all the way, although audiences may have been buoyed by the early appearance of Lugosi as Ygor. He finds the monster wasn't killed by the last reel of the previous film – oh, imagine that – and helps him escape. They head off to the Conveniently Located Village, which is full of Villagers who have made the mistake of going outside in the daylight without torches, something that always results in the appearance of the Monster and some head-clouting and/or strangling. But this time the film tries to revive our sympathy for the Monster, as he helps a little girl. Her ball is stuck on the roof, and he goes to get it. Only throws two villagers off the roof in the process.

The scene where the Monster decides to help the little girl shows what potential the movie had – if it had just kept up this style.
As for the rest of it, well . . . no. Hey, Igor, can I keep this waiter? He followed me home and seems fond of me.
For my next act, I will drink a glass of water while my puppet speaks:

Brain transplants are involved, and the cerebellum of Ygor ends up in the Monster’s head. This makes the Monster extra nasty, and he decides to kill everyone by poison gas, watching from a sealed room with evident amusement:
That's not Karloff; he knew better than to do this one. That's Lon Chaney Jr., who was also known as the Wolfman. If you're wondering whether the Monster dies in this one – why, of course! Like every great monster, he dies in every single one of his appearances. Last time he fell in a sulfur pit; this time he goes blind and can't find his way out of the house. But don't worry – if there's anything that's impervious to the effects of fire, it's old reused skin that's been reanimated a few times. He'll be back.

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**Pass it along, if you wish**

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**65 RESPONSES TO *thursday, oct. 29***

**Uncle Joe** says:
October 29, 2009 at 11:59 am

“Congratulations Mr. Aqualung, your application to become a Play Ranger has been accepted.”

**juanito - John Davey** says:
October 29, 2009 at 12:07 pm

*Uncle Joe*:
“Congratulations Mr. Aqualung, your application to become a Play Ranger has been accepted.”

Sitting on a park bench...

**Writeaway** says:
October 29, 2009 at 12:14 pm
Uncle Joe: “Congratulations Mr. Aqualung, your application to become a Play Ranger has been accepted.”

and that meks me think of:
Aqualung my friend –
don't start away uneasy
you poor old sod, you see, it's only me.

Dick Hassing says:
October 29, 2009 at 12:28 pm

How about Reaper Rangers to supervise graveyards?
Wouldn't want the yard residents to organize unauthorized bolus leagues and wear those bolus shirts and yell “beer frame”.

bgbear says:
October 29, 2009 at 12:37 pm

I dare bring up Joel Robinson's invention: Pin Bolus

Mr_Lilacs says:
October 29, 2009 at 12:49 pm

In keeping with the week's theme: Bolus of Frankenstein.

Worried about the indignities visited upon single adult men with urine-colored eyes at a children's carnival, the local gendarmerie establishes a corps of Play Rangers to supervise situations where children gather – a Texas lawman, a hockey player, an LOTR fanboy, a rock guitarist (who only works at night) and a basset hound. The Play Rangers are beloved by everyone except for a young scientist who is new to town. Acting on their suspicions, the Play Rangers raid the scientist's lair. One hits a switch that he shouldn't have hit, to release the bolus of biogel into the inert form of Frankenstein's monster. Frankie gets out and scares the bejeebers out of the fellows who had hung out near the playground. The kids love him, though. Of course the Play Rangers have to get in their word. Frankie is sent to a rehab facility and quickly rises to a leadership position in Congress.

Steven says:
October 29, 2009 at 1:51 pm

Lon Chaney, Jr? I saw Lon Chaney Jr. walking with the queen, doing the werewolves of London.

Rubo says:
October 29, 2009 at 2:15 pm

That plot looks as good as anything from Hollywood lately. @Mr_Lilacs

Richard says:
October 29, 2009 at 3:30 pm

Oh, and remember: a particularly pungent abrogation of individual rights cannot be objected to if one's critics have, at some point inferred support for a greater, if theoretical, infringement on
personal rights. Particularly if the critics believe they understand the motivations you are too blind to see.
I do not know what this sentence means.

Also, thou shalt not speak ill of the Page 3 girls.

Also, Torchwood lost their cool toys when the Hub was blown up in “Children of Earth.”

EricW says:
October 29, 2009 at 6:18 pm

Earlier today, Mayor Thornhill decided to clarify that no, she hasn't lost her mind:

Having read all that, it WOULD be interesting to see what “context” helps that quote from the Daily Mail to make any kind of sense.

boblipton says:
October 29, 2009 at 6:27 pm

Interesting. Mayor Thornhill is so afraid of insanity that if she thought she were losing her mind she would shoot herself. Surely this propensity for self-harm needs to be considered.

Emily says:
October 29, 2009 at 7:10 pm

When we were little, we lived in a big old mansion that my parents got for low rent in return for some upkeep.

One Halloween they agreed to host the church spook alley for the youth.

Ask if they were ever able to get a babysitter again.

cnyguy says:
October 29, 2009 at 7:34 pm

I wonder if it was Charles Addams’ great old New Yorker magazine cartoons that gave birth to the association of Victorian houses with spookiness, and, by extension, Halloween. Those cartoons (which inspired “The Addams Family” TV series and movies) often featured a cobwebby old Victorian house. I've always liked those “creepy” old Victorian houses; not sure what that says about me.

And the spirit of Halloween seems to be alive and well here in upstate New York; I don't remember seeing so many houses so thoroughly decorated for Halloween as there are this year in the Syracuse area.

Pam-EL says:
October 29, 2009 at 7:54 pm

“The amount of neutron-star-dense idiocy in that quote is so substantial it's remarkable the interviewer wasn't trapped at its event horizon.”

Oooooooh. I always love your writing, but that sentence is super extra tasty.
suedenim says:
November 2, 2009 at 9:27 am

A curious thing about this movie is that, for some reason, *it* became the basis of the definitive pop-culture Frankenstein Monster interpretation, with the Big Guy clumsily lurching around, arms outstretched. And most of these traits are dictated by the particular plot of this movie – the monster’s blind!
There is a Diner today. Can't let Halloween go by without a Diner. I haven't done any for a while for two simple reasons: life got busy, and –

Well, first the Busy part. I'm now firmly seated in the new schedule, and I am starting to exhale. As long as I can nap, it's all good. The big difference in life is the new parking spot, I think; not having to feed the meter, to husband quarters, to watch the clock – oh, world of difference. I'd like to say I start each day by listening to the BBC World Service as I make my way downtown, nodding sagely to the latest report from Surinam – things have been grim, but the new government has called for a spirit of national unity, although opposition leaders raise doubts, but one thing is certain: this is the last time you will hear about Surinam for a year, unless our stringer is kidnapped – but it's the one time in the day I listen to music. Loud music. Dare I say crude music. On the way home it may well be a Brahms adagio, but if you want to start your day with enthusiasm, 80s hair metal works. If you enable the “guilty pleasure” mental filter that allows you to simultaneously enjoy it as the elemental ravings of the id and a pre-fab howl crafted by conglomerates to safely channel aggression into the desired consumer behavior.

Anyway, why would I listen to the news on the way to work? The first thing I do when I get to my desk is hear what the news will be.

Tomorrow will be a good show. Animal testing, leprosy, and then I dress up in
a Halloween costume. It's a Gladiator costume. Minimus Lilecus.

Wife is hella sick, child was home from school today. When I got home I could
tell this was so, since everything was as I’d left it this morn – the lunchbox,
the backpack, the cello, all the things that should have been packed up and
hauled off. I don’t know if it’s the Oinker Grippe, but if so, it’s mild; wife just
has congestion that suggests she is leaching fluids from another dimension
through a nasally-based wormhole. I’m fine, because I wash my hands
93496034 times a day and wear condoms on my fingers and have set up
magnetic fields on my hands and face that use natural repulsive forces to
keep me from inadvertently touching my noggin with my germy digits. We
have foaming hand-soap units by all the elevators now, and I hit them every
time I walk past. I could strip paint with my hands, they’re so dry.

So! Friday! Hoo and/or rah. The Diner is here. It was quick and cheap, but I
just wanted to do it. More to come, now that the routine is settling down, and
I don’t have that drawn-and-quartered feel so much anymore.

Now, the final installment: FIVE DAYS OF FRANKENSTEIN!

If you want to be a stickler for details, technically, this isn’t the fifth
Frankenstein movie. And by “technically” I mean absolutely, factually, the
fifth. It’s the sixth. But #5 was Frankenstein vs. Wolfman, and for this
sequence I chose to do the first 5 classic Universals that just had Frankenstein
in the title.

Which is a weasely way of saying I messed up, but I thought the vs. cop-out
came later. Ah well. This one has Boris Karloff, but he doesn’t play the
Monster; he’s a Mad Scientist who’s escaped from jail with his assistant, who
naturally has a hunchback. It was the law in those days. (If you weren’t Mad,
but merely Peeved or perhaps an Irritable Scientist, you could get someone
who stood erect but tended to slouch.) The Dr. and his Hunch come across a
traveling show that just happens to have this item in its catalog of horrors:

THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

NOVEMBER 2013

S M T W T F S
1 2
3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10 11 12 13 14 15 16
17 18 19 20 21 22 23
24 25 26 27 28 29 30

* Jul

THE DISTANT PAST

July 2013
June 2013
May 2013
April 2013
March 2013
February 2013
January 2013
December 2012
November 2012
October 2012
September 2012
August 2012
July 2012
June 2012
May 2012
April 2012
November 2011
October 2011
September 2011
Naturally, it's the real thing; could there be any doubt? The owner of the bones is swiftly killed for his prize, and – well, maybe swiftly isn't word for it.
Talk about telegraphing your strangulating.

The Dr. and Hunch take on the guise of the traveling showmen, with Hunch acting all miserable about his costume:

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head HERE for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is HERE!
It's you! NO IT'S NOT YOU'RE JUST HUMORING ME MASTER

It's only a matter of time before they bring Dracula back to life. Having been asleep for a while, Dracula did not know they cancelled Firefly and does not take the news well:

It's John Carradine, and he has the exact expression of a guy who was in the next door room over in college, and had a king-hell acid freakout:
Doesn't take long to get Drac off the stage, though; he's hunted and exposed to the sun, and it's crackle crackle scream for him. On to the next batch of monsters, then! This is a Frankenstein movie, after all. Dr. and Hunch find an ice cave -

and like all ice caves in the Carpathian mountains, it contains the entombed bodies of Frankenstein AND the Wolfman. It's BOGO day in Monsterland. They're unthawed, and the mad Dr. sets about doing . . . something or other. Your basic terrorizing / experimenting / tempting God routine. I'll be honest: this isn't the scariest Frankenstein ever. There's a touch of Herman Munster in him:
Meanwhile, the Wolfman goes on a killing spree, annnnnd . . . . cue the villagers!
Universal must have had these guys on retainer. The Hunch gets peeved at the Dr for not giving him a non-hunch body – yeah, like that was going to happen; ever read the union rules? – and the Monster watches their fight in alarm:

I hate when you guys fight!

Eventually he throws the Hunch out the window and takes the doctor to the swamps, where his lack of knowledge about the terrain leads him straight into a bog. Glub, glub, aw crap, glub glub.
You'd think the villagers would haul the Monster out of the bog, shoot him, saw him into pieces, burn them and mix the ashes with concrete, but no. Well, that's the last we'll see of him, as we said five times before!

I'm leaving out a subplot about a gypsy girl who falls in love with the Wolfman, and the anguish this causes Hunch. But the Hunch is great – in fact everyone's pretty good, except for Lon Cheney, who expresses sorrow and despair by looking slightly less wooden than previously. Even though it throws all the lads into the mix, and seems confused about having a coherent plot, it's fun, and has more crackle and skill than “Ghost Of.”

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**Later today:** Sears 1934. And now: the Diner.

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**60 RESPONSES TO *friday! october 30***

dcmatthews says:

October 30, 2009 at 9:31 pm

I enjoyed hearing “The Lurch” again – one of my favorite novelty songs.

Did you know there's actually video of Ted Cassidy (in full Lurch costume and makeup) doing The Lurch dance?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYkQ2qlANhc

It's a segment of a '60s teen-dance show called “Shivaree” (similar to “Shindig” and “Hullabaloo”, but not as popular).
hpoulter says:
October 31, 2009 at 5:47 am

**bgbear (roger h) :@juanito – John Davey (unless you are joking) it is too late for “McHale's Navy”, OMG and WTF**

Too late? They already made it(with Tom Arnold) or is that what you meant?

I resisted any temptation to watch it. Actually, I think the original cast made at least one movie back in their day, but I am too lazy to imdb it.

bgbear says:
October 31, 2009 at 9:49 am

@hpoulter

I guess that is what I meant, too late to make a proper tribute, it has been done. Of course they took another shot at the Hulk.

I would make it with McHale as a relative straight man, a Kennedy clone stuck with a crew of Hollywood types, actors, singers, dancer and comedians and go with that and make it a pseudo musical.

Emily says:
October 31, 2009 at 4:13 pm

If you can't have a discworld Igor, it just isn't the same.

Kitty says:
November 1, 2009 at 9:15 am

I'm glad the Diner has returned. I really missed it.

It's a Steyn Globe, After All » Cold Fury says:
November 1, 2009 at 10:50 am

[…] “House of Frankenstein” movie stills—the perfect compliment to our Halloween hangovers! And by “our […]

hpoulter says:
November 1, 2009 at 1:05 pm

**Emily :If you can’t have a discworld Igor, it just isn’t the same.**

Or at least an Igorina.

John says:
November 1, 2009 at 7:12 pm

Surinam Saruman!

Kensington says:
November 1, 2009 at 11:30 pm
Although, I waited until 10:30 Pacific and iTunes failed to pick it up, but I now note that it's the "Diner09? and no longer 'Diner08? – iTunes: now reconfigured!
Diner!

Please, how did you do this? I can't get the new Diner to show up on the iTunes feed, and the RSS feed URL doesn't make any distinction between 08 or 09.

Ross says:
November 3, 2009 at 4:23 am

ASCAP fees? Did Le Petomaine have to pay them?

In Milwaukee, we had the late, lamented(& plastered) Jack DuBlon(creator of local puppet icon Albert the Alleycat) as Dr Cadaverino on “Nightmare Theater” from 1964-1977(followed by Tolouse Noneck, who was more into becoming the next Dr Demento than the movies). DuBlon's show was a riot: they knew they were on too late(& live) for anyone who enforced the rules to see & acted accordingly. In addition to his name calling of the audience, his headless sidekick, Igor, & his guests, a typical show would have intentionally lame skits, technical glitches, outright amateur mistakes by the crew & loudly dropped tools/scenery as the station hands set up in the background for the next broadcast day. Very funny, especially since I had an uncle working as the station's still photographer, so we'd get all the office stories that fueled the inside jokes. This all predated Count Floyd(man, did that seem familiar the first time I saw it) and the “skewer the cheap parent company for this crappy, no-budget show” attitude came before Letterman's influence on late-night network shows.
WHY A STORK?
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! […]

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