The dog is old. Or: he has a bladder inflammation. No, that’s not right; even if he has one, he’s still old. Point is, he’s had some overnight soakings the last few nights, and I’d call them an accident except that I can’t see him waking up, sensing warmth, and thinking “ooops.” The vet wants a sample before she puts him on anti-inadvertent-peeing drugs. I’m sure he’s just old, and I’m tempted to use the opportunity for some cheap analysis for the humans in the house. But then they’d wonder why the dog tested positive for Stoli, I guess. So: tonight I put four towels on the bed under the sheet, over a plastic bag, then took him outside, cup in hand. When he Assumed the Position I was there, right there, capturing the precious tell-tale ichor.

Just flash yourself back 60 years and imagine a farmer crouching in the dark to get a sample to take to the horse doctor to see if the 14-year old dog peed the bed because he might have a condition.

Because I feel bad about the attention the Bleat’s been given the last fortnight – having a life and a job, da noive – I will put up the Out of Context Ad Challenge before I leave for the Fair today. This means I’ll be unable to approve unregistered comments, but for heaven’s sake, why not register? It’s painless and you get to chose your own picture, if you like. I think. I don’t know. It’s all slipping through my fingers, this web thing.

Hah! Just kidding. Wait until you see the next batch of improvements. You’ll
be able to automatically post your comments to Facebook via foursquare and embed a movie in the tweet.

Actually, no. I dread learning that such things are possible. It’s always a pleasure to come across something new for which I have no evident possible need, seems like a time suck, and requires me to log in when I get to a restaurant so I can see if anyone else I might know who also likes “Silent E” by Tom Lehrer and associates him with Mahler because he wrote a song about Mahler’s wife. (It really does compress things to think that Mahler’s wife wrote a book about which Lehrer poked fun. That’s like two degrees of separation to Gus Himself, somehow.) The only new New Thing I’ve adopted is posterous, which I’m using for a more-or-less daily photoblog. IPhone shots only.

The daily Fair videos continue; if you missed yesterday, it’s here, complete with hastily-crafted hoe-down music. Today’s will be about Kid’s Day, with some POV shots of the Giant Slide and the Tilt-A-Whirl. I’ll tweet a link, as they say, when it’s up – even though I’ll be deep in Fair Duty, doing . . . I have no idea. No idea whatsoever.

Ad Challenge up around 9:30! See you then.

PS - This comment stuck out, from Peter:

> Alas, as my therapist would said, our time is up.

> One almost feels that the sadness of your beloved ‘Gnat’ transforming into a Natalie has sucked the juice out of your daily postings. The humor is there as always, but it is of the ‘film noire’ variety, dark, but very, very, dated. It’s terribly sad and cynical. And, I suspect, you’re not either.

> Bon chance my friend.

Thanks, Peter, but . . . . eh? What? You’re leaving? If I’ve had a juiceless period it’s because I’m busy. I certainly don’t feel dark, dated, sad and cynical. Also, to be frank, I don’t write about (G) as much because she has plainly forbad me to write about certain things, and I have to respect that. There’s no sadness in her growing up – well, of course, the inevitable background bittersweet ruminations, but every phase has its own pleasures, and we’re certainly closer than ever. I actually had to help her through an online flame war the other day, and we had a looong conversation about the internets and imaginary friends. It would be a breach of trust to discuss the particulars. Drat the luck.

In any case: I still love this site, and it’s my work, my hobby, my playground, my model train set. I’ll never give it up. As I said once, I know I will disappoint everyone eventually about something, but let me add another rule: Everything you like will go away for a while. Until it comes back.
Pass it along, if you wish

76 RESPONSES TO *wednesday, sept. 02*

**Trogdor says:**  
September 2, 2009 at 12:19 pm

Now that I get down to the bottom of the commentary, I feel like someone that just walked into a room full of people who just finished discussing 9/11 or some tragedy and I didn’t hear it.

So I’ll change the subject! I think I will go to the Colorado State Fair this weekend. ONLY because I read the BLEAT. The one fantastical thing they have there is the “Dairy Barn”, you can get the best vanilla shake for about $2. Even if they raise the price to $4 it’s worth it. I don’t believe I’ll chance the Zipper though, unless my Kamikaze 14 year old insists. I was shocked last year when he wanted to ride the Xcelerator – and we did! That’s one of those huge arches that raise you up on wires and drop you from 120′ or so. And you have to pull the rip cord yourself…now that’s adrenaline!

**EmGee says:**  
September 2, 2009 at 12:19 pm

Thanks for the Dollar Store tip Dr Spyn, I had no idea you could get dogs there. 😊

**bgbear (roger h) :**  
So if I know how to think like the cool people:  
- if James comments on an encounter with an ineffective or indifferent sales clerk on his blog he “stunningly callous and mean-spirited”  
- but to refer to entire groups of people “as bitter Americans clinging to guns and religion” is a bright new hopeful view for our country.  
Apparently the cure for this callousness is to get drunk and drive you and your passenger into the Mississippi River. Your survival and passenger’s demise will set you onto a path of service and charity toward your fellow man person.

Whoa, if the vitriol in your post is anything to go by, I think you are already “thinking like the cool people” you speak of.

**Trogdor says:**  
September 2, 2009 at 12:20 pm

Now that I get down to the bottom of the commentary, I feel like someone that just walked into a room full of people who just finished discussing 9/11 or some tragedy and I didn’t hear it.

So I’ll change the subject! I think I will go to the Colorado State Fair this weekend. ONLY because I read the BLEAT. The one fantastical thing they have there is the “Dairy Barn”, you can get the best vanilla shake for about $2. Even if they raise the price to $4 it’s worth it. I don’t believe I’ll chance the Zipper though, unless my Kamikaze 14 year old insists. I was shocked last year when he wanted to ride the Xcelerator – and we did! That’s one of those huge arches that raise you up on wires and drop you from 120′ or so. And
you have to pull the rip cord yourself…now that's adrenaline!

**Troddor says:**
September 2, 2009 at 12:21 pm

sorry

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
September 2, 2009 at 12:40 pm

@EmGee

??

Do I need soul searching. Am I projecting?

That is me all right, nothing but, bitterness for anyone who does not think like me and no better way to express that than to point out what I consider hypocrisy thus exposing myself as a vitriolic hypocrite by pointing it out.

Wow, complicated, I better not try to tackle irony, I'll really get my self into trouble there. Sarcasm, I better not even think about it.

**margaret says:**
September 2, 2009 at 12:42 pm

James, thank you for the Bleat and all the rest. I've been reading you a long time; the overall, consistent heart of your scribblings is about deep gratitude and love: for your life, your family, your community, your heritage.

Just the fact that you're there every morning, expressing yourself freely, come what may, seems to say all's right with the world. Your column is like the canary in the mines—when they shut down Lileks, it's all over.

**juanito - John Davey says:**
September 2, 2009 at 12:42 pm

@bgbear (roger h)

So you're the Bad Boy all the ladies rave about!

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
September 2, 2009 at 12:59 pm

heh.

Com'on, see my avatar, happy front-end alignment bear, not irritable. I love all kinds of people and will fix your car regardless of political affiliation, race, creed, religion, whatever.

Except the Irish 😞

**crholt says:**
September 2, 2009 at 1:03 pm

As for me, I'm enjoying all of James' stuff, as I patiently wait for Joe Ohio to come around again 😊
Uncle Joe says:
September 2, 2009 at 1:10 pm

I've been a Bleatnik since Jasper was a young pup pulling at the leash to meet up with his buds at the park near the old house and I haven't noticed any general change in tone. Things are different day to day, but so is life.

James, you probably saw Weingarten's piece last fall in the WaPo Sunday mag, but for others who've had "furry babies who poop in the weeds", here's a good read.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2008/10/03/ST2008100301787.html?sid=ST2008100301787

Wisconsinite says:
September 2, 2009 at 1:25 pm

James and Mark Steyn are the best writers on the net. Both are very funny, clever, observant or whatever not smartasses, cynical or mean spirited. I read James every day because it is a pleasure to read him every day and I feel like I missed something if he is gone or I am too busy. I believe the two who complained have problems of thier own and are projecting.

Trogdor says:
September 2, 2009 at 2:26 pm

@Wisconsinite
Couldn't agree more, and in general, the Bleathouse gang of commenters are equally entertaining. Especially that irritable bgbear.

Kevin says:
September 2, 2009 at 2:33 pm

I echo everything here (except for the negative guys, that is): I've been reading every day since about 2003, and for me it's my daily lunch-time treat. When one of my brothers sends me something particularly brilliant, part of me likes it, and part of me resents their stealing the thunder, just a bit.
I frequently snip phrases or sentences or paragraphs and send them to friends and co-workers, generally as examples of our host's casual and effortless brilliance. I send Jasper-stories to a dog-lover that I work with.
As for the periodic appearance of the Black Dog, I've got a bit of that myself, so I don't at all begrudge him either some time off or a bit of flatness.
I have enjoyed watching Natalie grow up, I have loved his appreciation of his dog, I have respected the relative circumspectness and silence about his wife, and I am just a huge, huge, gushing fan!! (Besides which, I am also a motorcyclist, so I love the fact of his dad riding around the Plains at 80 yrs. old!)

jeischen says:
September 2, 2009 at 3:28 pm

Our female Scottish Terrier is also getting old and we've recently been finding "spots" on our master bathroom rug (such a smart dog!!). My wife thinks she has a bladder infection. I think she's either becoming incontinent due to her age or she has doggie diabetes
from being overweight and has to pee a lot. She's not the kind of dog that sits by the back door and barks to be let out. We have to remember to let her out several times during the day and before we go to sleep. If we forget, she can't hold it and finds a suitable place to relieve herself.

“As I said once, I know I will disappoint everyone eventually about something, but let me add another rule: Everything you like will go away for a while. Until it comes back.” I hope that includes Joe Ohio and the Price is Right!

Joseph says:
September 2, 2009 at 5:05 pm

We all would be wise to remember that Mr. Lileks is a human person with a life and a mind. He provides and has provided hours of entertainment to us at his own expense—financially, mentally and physically. All of us change, grow, develop...are products of a fluid world. We cannot expect that our favored personalities would not evolve as well. All that said, I find James as relevant and amusing now as when I first read him years ago. I will always be a fan, and, frankly, forever grateful for the many laughs as well as the thoughtful moments.

As for Jasper, I hope this is just a temporary thing. While neither possible nor practical, I've always been of a mind that our beloved pets should remain at their best forever. I know, I know. My own canine friend and I will wish good things for Jasper and his human companions tonight.

carlen says:
September 2, 2009 at 5:14 pm

Hi James – Both of our big dogs are on the anti-peeing meds (the kind we get is called Proin) and it works great! They are both female – don’t know if that makes a differences except that I remember the vet talking about older females losing bladder control being a pretty frequent thing when they sleep. But generally sounds like the same thing...nothing fun about wagging tails spraying pee all over the room. Our only issue is that one of the dogs (who has always reminded me of Jasper) refuses to eat the “chewable, beef flavored” tablet...at 13 years old she still always checks out the food dish to make sure we aren’t trying to poison her...so she gets the pills wrapped in a hot dog and still sometimes manages to “lose” it. We, of course don’t realize this until several hours later. Oh well, there’s nothing that can’t be cleaned or replaced! Good luck! PS – we love the Bleat!

Karen says:
September 2, 2009 at 6:52 pm

I am a big fan of your work(s) and they always give me a chuckle when reading the blog or one of your books. I am sad that there has been no diner to date but I understand that work comes first as does course vacation time. ☹

Lileks says:
September 2, 2009 at 10:20 pm

We're on the same stuff now. Prion FTW! Unless “W” stands for “wetness.”
HT says:
September 3, 2009 at 12:10 am

As I mentioned before, Prion has been associated with an elevated risk of stroke in humans (remember Dexatrim? as in: banned? the same active ingredient). And there is an increasing accumulation of data that shows there may be a risk to dogs as well. A safer alternative is DES, (or diethylstilbestrol in its generic form).

Ross says:
September 3, 2009 at 2:25 am

We are the chorus and we agree, we agree.
Brek-ek-ek-ek, co-ax, coax.

At the risk of being that one last dribble of jimmies that gives every subsequent reader of this string diabetes, I am a longtime Bleatnik who would miss this place terribly, should Our Host finally get fed up and wander off on us. Many thanks. Hope all will be well with noble Jasper.

(Figured I'd best get the positive stuff in now, before football season starts. Could get _very_ ugly, what with that QB who promised us he'd retire a Packer now next door, so to speak.)

Chip Halstead says:
September 3, 2009 at 7:42 am

Dearest James: Do not fret over Peter's email! You know & I know that readers come & go; worrying over Peter's commerce appears upsurdly silly. But I still think you pour so much heart into the Bleat that you nonetheless do so worry.

Incidentally, Peter's farewell may be about him far more than you, the Bleat or its subuject matter. He's admittedly seeing a psychiatrist, one who never gives him more than a "50 minute" hour, even though Peter apparently wants, seeks and maybe needs more. (Heh, trust me, I know, I'm not insulting Peter, I see a shrink myself.)

And as they say, a reader never closes a door, without another opening a window. The same day you responded to Peter is the day I opened the Bleat again after a long hiatus, one having much more to do with me than you, the Bleat or its subject matter. I love the Bleat, it was and will be again a regular feature of my day. And its topics are always fascinating (with the sole exception of the computer geek stuff, where I'm truly lost, my own ignorance being my faulty internal compass, astrolathe, map & GPS rolled into one).

Here's how fascinating: I caught a movie in midstream on TCM last night. It's the one you'd mentioned months ago: Laird Cregar stars, alas in his last film, as a composer & concert pianist. And I recognized it from your long past Bleat entry. It's all gothic romance & abnormal Freudian psychology. But you're right, Cregar did absorb (or perhaps radiate) all the energy in every scene in which he appeared, overwhelming even Trevor Howard.

Trust your readership, whether loyal or casual. I say, every reader you have will go away for a while . . . until he comes back.

I'm back, Baby! Your reader, Chip
Terry Fitz says:
September 3, 2009 at 7:58 am

Daily customer since Arts & Letters Daily linked to a screed somewhere in-between 9/11 and the opening of the Iraq war. The Bleat isn’t like a trip to McDonald’s, where the quarter-pounder is going to taste the same day after day. It’s more like the kind of meal that’s pulled together from whatever is in the fridge and in the cabinet today. Even on days when it’s based on the life-equivalent of skinless, boneless chicken breast, there is always the savor of the home-made about it. And in the enjoyment of it, you know you’ve been given a gift. May it continue for many a long year.

Kim says:
September 3, 2009 at 10:14 am

Oh geeeze louise, I love this site. I blog because of this site. I look forward to weekdays because of this site. It’s THE first thing I check every morning with coffee in hand.

If there isn’t a Bleat post, or it’s vacation time or whatever, I just hit the bazillion other areas of the site – I always find something I missed, or see something new.

I’m trying to remember when I started reading – Gnat was little; a toddler, so it has to have been about six or seven years. The fun part was going back and reading everything that had come before.

Best Christmas present I ever gave: three Lileks’ books and a box of retro candy in a gift basket! :)

Did I mention I love this site?

HelloBall says:
September 3, 2009 at 2:00 pm

In addition to the happy coincidence that James is my namesake, and possibly because I should have been a writer of some sort instead of what I turned out to be, I have come to think of him as the alternate personality I never had (as far as I know). (or do I mean “we”?)

James is perhaps the voice of — well, if not a generation, then certainly of Ordinary America. Out of guileless modesty, he would probably recoil from what I mean as a sincere compliment, but I hope he knows how much better his readers’ lives are with him in them.

raf says:
September 3, 2009 at 3:15 pm

Even though Natalie has forbidden certain subjects, I hope you are blogging to yourself all the stuff you can’t publish. When she is (much) older, she will be moved to tears of joy to read the story of you watching her grow up.

Sheryl D says:
September 6, 2009 at 2:30 pm

Our Scottie, Mac, developed bladder incontinence problems and it turned out to be related to diabetes. Once we got his blood sugars under control with twice-daily insulin shots, the incontinence has
almost stopped. I would suggest you ask the vet to check Jasper for diabetes.
And so we claw our way to Friday and the end of this bleatless week. Oh, today’s a wee bin of beans – Newsbreak in the morning, another trip to the Fair for another shoot, another Fair column, and then a piano lesson for Natalie, then the bonds of labor are sundered and I float away to the epic nap that should power a Friday night the likes of which I’ve rarely seen! Sites will be redesigned! Links fixed! Modules installed! Dull as it sounds, there is nothing like the simple pleasure of working on something that isn’t due right away, or even tomorrow.

Back later tonight with 100 Mysteries. It’s the one thing I can’t avoid doing every week. A grim slog to the inevitable conclusion – and I’m not even up to #50 yet. I should live so long.

Anyway. Friday topic: childhood pets. What do you remember, after all the years?
My first dog as a kid was Brownie—a springer spaniel, she was hit by a car when she ran after a deer. I don’t remember much more of her because I was so young. Then we had Ginger—a brittany spaniel, who as she got older gained a few pounds and the neighbor lady aptly called her “a pig on stilts”. She was a good dog. Then we had Margot—a german shorthaired pointer, we had many great times together—too many to list. I now have gone through two dogs of my own, Abby—a weimaraner who was such a loving dog to all of us and Daisy—a german shorthaired pointer who loved to go out on the fishing boat with us. Sigh…I miss them all.

steveH says:
September 4, 2009 at 11:50 pm

They were all named George. Except for the budgie, which name nobody remembers.

The rest, serially: A number of syrphid flies (they look like honeybees, so “H bees”), a red slider, garter snake, spadefoot toad, gopher snake, another slider, alligator lizard, (vegetarian) desert iguana. All named George. Later a cockatiel named Admiral Byrd, who had a fondness for ramen noodles and scrambled eggs. That last was faintly disturbing.

We didn’t do that to our kids: rabbits named Renoir and Van Gogh, and a guinea pig named Piggy. My wife is allergic to dogs/cats/horses, so that was it for us.

steveH says:
September 4, 2009 at 11:52 pm

And no, our kids were not rabbits. They had pet rabbits, etc.

Just in case that was ambiguous.
HOST WITH THE MOST
UNTOLD RICHESAwait 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!

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?

Use the form below to search the site:

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?
Labor Day this year didn’t have the end-of-summer BBQ at the Giant Swede’s house; sick kid. In a way it seemed apt; it didn’t feel like the end of summer at all. The kids are already in school, the weather has decided to be civil and even generous, and the nights are full of crickets and clement breezes. I’d be happier about the four-day week coming up if I hadn’t been handed a new schedule tonight, and apparently I am expected to inject myself with benzedrine every six hours lest I fall into that unproductive state called “sleep.” But I love my job, and I am happy to have one, so, hi-ho and all that.

Can’t say I did much. The weekend was notable for sloth, over all. Saturday I returned to the car wash place to settle a problem: after the long trip back from South Dakota, the grill and windshield was dense with dead bugs, and a bird had also left a long trail of white crap on my car window. I took the car through the Mr. Car Wash Experience, following all the instructions including “relax and enjoy the ride,” which must annoy those who find car washes claustrophobic, as well as those who wonder why no one’s built a car wash...
that bucks and drops like a roller coaster. *I don't want to relax!* *I want to be thrilled!* When I got out of my car later in the day I noted that the bugs remained, as well as the bird crap.

Well. Garcon? A fresh order of dudgeon, if you please. *This shall not stand.*

I went back, asked to speak to a manager, pointed out the lousy job, all under the guise of telling him something he needed to know about his operation, but really just to vent. (Nicely.)

He was overly apologetic in the manner of the Python dirty-cutlery scene, and made a point of scrubbing the front with the special Bug Removal Brush, which I'd never seen before even though I'd come in bearing a crusty impasto of pulverized insects. No matter: personal attention! I relaxed and enjoyed the ride. He inspected the car fore and aft when it was done, and gave me the thumbs up. I returned the gesture with the enthusiasm one feels after a bond of duty and purpose had been formed, and drove away, content with capitalism. When I got out of the car later in the day I saw a white streak of bird crap.

So I went back a few days later, ran it through the car wash again. The bird crap remained. Apparently some kestrel had issued a flood of half-digested Wite-Out of my car. I called for the manager, explained the situation. He was not as horrified as manager one. He wiped it off with his finger. I wanted to say “see, I pay you guys so I don’t have to wipe off bird crap with my finger.” but I just noted that if they couldn't catch this after three tries, it made me wonder what else they were missing.

“Is there anything else they missed?” he asked.

“Well, no.”

Problem solved, complete with final but somehow-unsatisfying resolution, I drove off on other errands. All of which were completed without effort or conflict or the maddening imperfections of other human beings, so I've nothing to report.

**Monday I went to see “District 9,”** since it seemed like the sort of movie you should see in the theaters. As opposed, I suppose, to a 3D Viewmaster. It started out with great promise, and a real sense of dread and foreboding – which might have had something to do with the interviews with people discussing the main character in the past tense, interspersed with footage of him heading off on his mission – as well as a novel idea, economically depicted. Then it got . . . gooey. The minute the fellow started turning into an alien, I began to lose interest, because I knew all sorts of slime and viscera and screaming the sound of fingernails falling off was en route. One of those movies where you long for the early moments when the affected character was just throwing up.

Then it turned into Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Prawn, and then Mech vs. the Merc in an endless series of action sequences that made the film end
four times. (Or five; lost track.) I will watch “District 10” if it’s made, but it’ll be a rental. I can see why many people were impressed, because it comes with all the ready-made Things To Oppose like Apartheid and private defense contractors who have no souls, but it scuttles away from the promises of its premise the minute it get into “Fly” territory, and after that the main character is the computer that generates the FX. Slam, Bam, Thank you RAM. Cute kid, though.

Don’t get me wrong: I thought much of it was impressive, but it became bruising after a while. The camera tricks are interesting in the beginning, but the director discards the documentary style when he needs to have Capt. Exposition and his son, L’il Hideous, discuss key plot points. It’s the sort of movie I should have liked, and was leaning into, and was surprised not to have enjoyed any more than I did.

Today’s installment of Tales of Tomorrow moments: not as ripe as yesterday’s (see below) but is reveals the perils of the open mike.

**Still here?** Okay, the pay thing. To clear up some misconceptions:

The Bleat will always be free.

The Bleat will not be less because I’m charging for stuff elsewhere.

I’m going to be doing more, not shifting content. One site will have a weekly feature that would have ended up on the Screedblog, except that I didn’t do that because I didn’t have the time to do more stuff for free. So that takes away nothing from here. The other site – well, think of it as a weekly magazine article. You wouldn’t begrudge me writing an article once a week for a magazine, would you? I also write periodically for the New York Post and other outlets. I could put that stuff up here for free, but that would make me an idiot. (I have bills.)

From the comments, some advice:

> Recently, I have noticed that you have begin reducing the content of the “personal journal”, trying to siphon off your readership to the Strib blog directly.
With all due respect, that's not exactly so. Now and then I take something of local interest I might have put here, and put it there. I'm not trying to siphon off anything, I'm trying to populate two separate forums, one of which has to do with my job. I don't see the harm. I ran buzz.mn for two years with the same idea, and I don't think anyone was cheesed that I didn't put Lance Lawson on this site. (Lance returns this week, by the way. At the Strib blog.)

Now you are announcing that you will be taking the additional step of removing further content to other sites, because you “want to be paid for what you do”.

That almost sounds like an accusation. 😊 Look, if I can peel off a small amount of content and monetize it, allow me the attempt.

Let me spell it all out: I have a new position at the paper in the video department. It requires daily production, new hours, wearing a suit, etc. I also have to blog on the Strib site, preferably daily, and write two columns a week for the newspaper. This is my job. I am happy to have a job in the newspaper industry, and keen on keeping it. If anything will affect the Bleat, it's that, for the short term. But I am also intent on keeping this site a thriving concern, and see no indication that it's lapsing into a second-class backwater. For heaven's sake: this weekend I did three episodes of the Tales of Tomorrow feature, redid the Comics page, finished work cleaning up the Black and White site, laid out the next installment of the Comics Ads, did the Matchbook, Comic Sins and First Day Covers site, and a dozen other small things you'll see in the next few weeks.

The reason the Rushmore story is going over to the pay site is rather pedestrian – the first piece I'd planned duplicated the subject matter of two stories they planned to run right away. Rushmore was the only other thing I had in the pipeline. The story got derailed anyway, because I was pitched into Fair duty. I'm not trying to use this site as a come-on for another pay site. And the Diner will be back. Oh, almost forgot: the Matchbook. And: I wrote one of the pay pieces tonight. Note any slack in Bleatage?

So: we're all good?

98 RESPONSES TO tuesday, sept. 08

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 8, 2009 at 10:34 am

Oh, and my last comment is an endorsement for Al F to keep criticizing Lileks as long he accept our critique of the critique
(which he does) and tries to keep it reality based (the Garrison Keillor comment still makes no sense to me).

If Lileks only encountered fan and sycophants he might get like Michael Jackson or think that he can talk Iranian mullahs into being our friends.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 8, 2009 at 10:40 am

@Al Federber

And I assume you are old enough to have encountered real elitist in your life and know that James hardly comes off as one.

Mr_Lilacs says:
September 8, 2009 at 10:49 am

What's the beef? Those who want free ice cream can continue, if not in every flavor. Those who want every flavor still can indulge. Or is allowing individuals to have such a range of options now a sign of hostility to hopeychanginess?

Jeff says:
September 8, 2009 at 10:58 am

I want to see more movies on 3D Viewmaster. Loved that platform, still have a few dozen and a viewer with a serrated metal blade where the finger-friendly cap once let you advance the disk.

It probably won’t replace Blu-Ray.

Al Federber says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:04 am

@bgbear (roger h)
You are right. James is still only an aspiring elitist. He's well on his way, though.

While I'm here: a couple of Lileks thoughts that have been percolating / festering in my head for some time:

1) Who better than James to replace Andy Rooney when he finally kicks? James can bitch about anything!

2) James reminds us occasionally that he loved his AMC Pacer automobile because it wasn't a square box, like all the other new cars of that era. James now drives (and claims to love) an Element, the boxiest box on four wheels. What's up with that?

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:08 am

Al Federber:
@bgbear (roger h)
You are right. James is still only an aspiring elitist. He's well on his way, though.

Oh, aren’t we all, it goes with the AARP demographic.
Rubo (michael r) says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:12 am

Don't mind the small minds keep doing what you are doing, I will pay to find out what happens to “Joe Ohio”. Where do I sign up?

juanito - John Davey says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:24 am

bgbear (roger h):

Al Federber:
@bgbear (roger h)
You are right. James is still only an aspiring elitist. He's well on his way, though.

Oh, aren't we all, it goes with the AARP demographic.

And by the way, Get Off The Lawn!

Irritable Bear says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:42 am

The prospect of a pay site by James is one of the few things that does NOT irritate Irritable Bear. Perhaps it will even reveal the true source of Irritable Bear's irritation... though Irritable Bear suspects that will not be the case, and the mystery will remain. Either way, Irritable Bear's Charmin budget will take a hit soon to pay the piper.

Margaret says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:44 am

rivlax: The last time the pay model got killed, it was because most people were still providing free content (see my spare cycles comment above). I predict that fewer people will this time and certainly not high quality sites. WSJ and FT both have working models as does the Economist. Some are subscription models, some are based on volume usage. The only trick is picking the right model for your product. But I am convinced it's already happening.

Trogdor says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:51 am

All change is not good, just as all movement is not forward. – Ellen /something or other/ I read too many free sites anyway, I barely have time to keep up. But yes, screeblog was my intro to James and it's always awesome.

Alex says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:56 am

James,
You don't owe us anything. I'd miss it terribly if you went to paying work only, but that really is your first responsibility.
fizzbin says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:57 am

IB: all the nutzi nazi ziontists in my head agree that the main cause of Irritable Bear Syndrome is copious quaffing of lingonberry juice. All Old Norse know that lingonberry spelled backwards is “laxitives”.

juanito - John Davey says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:58 am

I just hope that one of the pay sites will provide the dish on the nameless fellow who Chancellor Palpatined James a while back on a business venture (Palpatine was the Sith all along!).

Oh, and recipes for hot dish. Fall is coming, after all.

fizzbin:
IB: all the nutzi nazi ziontists in my head agree that the main cause of Irritable Bear Syndrome is copious quaffing of lingonberry juice. All Old Norse know that lingonberry spelled backwards is “laxitives”.

Not spelled backwards – read backwards in a mirror. Everyone knows that.

fizzbin says:
September 8, 2009 at 12:12 pm

jJD: oh, poopala! That's what I get for taking the word of an Old Norse. The mirror thing is problematic for me because I am Count Nottheutube, Lampbuyer.

hollypr says:
September 8, 2009 at 12:20 pm

I miss the old Sears catalog feature …

fizzbin says:
September 8, 2009 at 12:33 pm

Is it just me or is the rooster smoking a joint?

hpoulter says:
September 8, 2009 at 1:23 pm

@juanito – John Davey

As I recall my Regretable Foods, it's something like this:
Nuclear 2-alarm hotdish “el diablo”:

1 pound 70% lean ground beef
2 cans cream-o-mushroom soup plus one can of water
1/2 cups Uncle Ben's rice
1/2 cup grated extra-mild cheddar cheez
2 pimiento-stuffed olives, sliced, for garnish
4 grains black pepper (count ‘em!)

Preheat oven to 350° (what else?)
Saute the hamburger in its own grease until grey. Don't drain the pan, but pour right into a 10-inch casserole dish. Stir in C-O-M soup, rice, pepper (careful). Sprinkle cheez on top and festoon with olive slices. Bake for 30 minutes to 2 hours. Eat. Fall into stupor.

RLR says:
September 8, 2009 at 1:30 pm

re: Matchbook:
http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/adaccess.R0481/

aodhan says:
September 8, 2009 at 1:41 pm

If the Diner returns regularly, all other changes will be forgiven. : )

Mr_Lilacs says:
September 8, 2009 at 2:07 pm

re: viewmaster.

Am I the only one here who finds Alton Brown of Food Network to be more than a bit reminiscent of our gracious and most puissant Bleatster? (Connection: Mr. Brown uses a viewmaster as a prop.)

juanito - John Davey says:
September 8, 2009 at 2:09 pm

Mr_Lilacs :
re: viewmaster.

Am I the only one here who finds Alton Brown of Food Network to be more than a bit reminiscent of our gracious and most puissant Bleatster? (Connection: Mr. Brown uses a viewmaster as a prop.)

Agreed.

Emily says:
September 8, 2009 at 2:30 pm

I hope your job is always changing and exciting and new. That's what the new technological world is all about. (And it keeps us ADDer's happy.)

TeeOc says:
September 8, 2009 at 2:50 pm

Ahh, tales of tomorrow numbers 1 & 2! Those golden days of early TV! The good o’ days when the advertising was woven directly into the program, featuring the sponsors products as an almost subliminal presence in the storyline of the actual program...er sorry, that was Top Chef on Bravo the other night....

There is a VERY Strong deja vu vibe between James and Alton, but Alton's food subject matter is yummier than the Lilek's Regrettable Foods roster...and I don't see Jasper's Frosty Paws in Alton's Fridge.
Trogdor says:
September 8, 2009 at 3:28 pm

oh, yeah, Alton Brown, totally agree. Good observation. I've only watched his show two or three times, but everytime, I say to myself, “self, you should watch this more often...”

Irritable Bear says:
September 8, 2009 at 3:50 pm

Even Irritable Bear knows that the Norwegian word for laxatives is avføringsmiddel, and lingonberries are lingonbær.

fizzbin says:
September 8, 2009 at 3:57 pm

Is it true that lingonbaers cause bear klingons?

GardenStater says:
September 8, 2009 at 4:09 pm

@fizzbin: “Is it just me or is the rooster smoking a joint?”

It's not just you--although I assumed it was a cigarette.

Or should that be “cigaret”?

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
September 8, 2009 at 5:22 pm

Has the Top Secret Project been revealed yet? Was it the font change, or the State Fair?

KevinF says:
September 8, 2009 at 5:25 pm

To repeat a question for the 3rd time that I don't believe was answered yet. WTH is he talking about with a pay site? Where is it? And do they take Mastercard and Visa?

Jeez, drive up to Amarillo a couple days for a 4-pound steak and all hell breaks loose.

Mr_Lilacs says:
September 8, 2009 at 6:23 pm

Wouldn't the Top Secret Project involve the new and improved wardrobe? Good thing they had so many meetings. Neither buckskin nor pajamas would be so fitting for James Jim Jimmy Lileks. Loud Hawaiian shirts could be humorous, though.

Dick Hassing says:
September 8, 2009 at 7:11 pm

I've been on vacation and might have missed something along the way, so I have a question. Does James have a pay site already or is that something he's planning for the future?
HelloGirls says:
September 8, 2009 at 7:23 pm

James,

Non illigitimus carborundom or cardboard undone or something...

Anyway, thanks as always for the site. You know, I just don't say that enough.

Chris

MikeH says:
September 8, 2009 at 8:57 pm

I may or may not delve into the pay site, depends on my mood at the time and if I get another bank account in the near future (unless James will accept cash in the mail) I'm not trying to be Mr. Cheapass and thinks that it's great our host of his page is doing lots of stuff he wants to do. But I'm the slowpoke kind who will enjoy the free portions of his site. I am happy that the Bleat will always be the Bleat. I think I know what it is, I have no problems buying his books (which I have bought a few) But I guess for me it's paying for something that's not physically tangible. I can't put it away on my shelf to read later and have it be passed down to another generation.

Anyway whatever my ramblings are about, James your wicked funny as we say here In Maine. Keep going on what makes you happy and what you do best. Everybody loves you who is important. The others that don't are freaks!!

jamcool says:
September 8, 2009 at 9:56 pm

A tip on cleaning bug-caked windshields...use Bon Ami cleanser on a wet sponge. Wet the windshield first, and a circular motion with the Bon Ami-sprinkled sponge. Note-only use Bon Ami, not any other cleanser.

cgm says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:16 pm

Woohoo! Fresh DIner. I've been missing that.

Oh, and good luck with doing more writing for profit... really. Post links.

Nancy says:
September 8, 2009 at 11:29 pm

Wow... I came late to this party and I just don't have the energy to trace all the comments back to their source. I take it the Strib is going to charge for content. If so--easy come easy go--since I have not been able to view their video content on my mac and (I am sure the problem is something really stupid I am missing) so until I figure it out I am not likely to pay money, but never say never. That being said, I totally support James receiving remuneration for his intellectual property. I will follow this of course and get the facts but a writer writes. And if it be worthy (and it is) he should be paid.
**Fuzzy Chef** says:  
September 9, 2009 at 2:31 am

Lileks,

I don't see any problem with you charging for some, or in fact all, content. I wondered when you'd get around to making money off this. If it keeps you writing gobs and gobs of funny stuff every week? Worth it.

**Ross** says:  
September 9, 2009 at 2:39 am

Mr_Lilacs/juanitoJD:  
What a relief! I thought it was just me for whom the two sort of seemed part of the same stripe.  
As for the changes, if taking admission at the gate for some things allows Our Host to keep at it, I'm with Emile Lizardo: “Big Butte--more pow'rrr to heem.”  
I'm with Mike H on the subject; while I don't rule anything out, I do prefer to buy tangible objects. As George Steiner used to urge, if you find a writer you like, read everything of theirs, and more than once.  
Oh, and I prefer the term “Bleatniks”, alreet? [ snap! snap! ]

**Tom Beiter** says:  
September 9, 2009 at 7:24 am

Nancy said, “I take it the Strib is going to charge for content.”

No Nancy, James is. Wait for the gasp...

**Nancy** says:  
September 9, 2009 at 10:35 am

I can deal.

**Natalie** says:  
September 9, 2009 at 12:24 pm

As I last saw when I was at StarTribune.com, I thought I read that it was 58 degrees. In the south, we don't call that civil. It's getting mid-60's here in NC and we're calling it “chilly”.

When it gets in the 50's, I'll dig out my winter coat. ;op

**Laine** says:  
September 9, 2009 at 3:12 pm

Mr. Lileks,

I have been visiting the bleat for more than five years, and like thousands of others, recognize that you are an astute observer of the human condition, and a remarkably good writer. What you have offered for free over the last many years (decades?) is quite valuable, and if you can see a need and can figure out a way to monetize more of your writing, you are justified. I will keep reading the free stuff, and whatever I can afford of the monetized product.
Okay, on reading through the comments I see that I’m not the only one who feels like I missed something when it comes to the “pay for” content. I was going to try going back and checking earlier Bleats, but sadly haven’t the time. I get busy and miss things. It always seems to be important things... geeze.

However, as a friend and I were just discussing yesterday, we may have to make a trip to the Minnesota State Fair so we can stalk James and tell him how much we adore his genius. It's the one place we might be able to find him, wandering the grounds collecting gems to write about.

Sooo, whenever the pay for site arrives, I shall be very happy to haul out the credit card and hand over a bit of lucre to read more. There can never be too much Lileks.

I'm VERY happy to hear that the Diner will be back. 😊

“By the way, are we 'Bleatsters'? Because I always considered myself more of a 'Bleatling'.

Bleatniks, I think.

Anyway, James, I’ve been reading you since 2002, and you were very nice to me on my own blog back in the day, and super nice when I was in Iraq after that. Not only do I support your capitalistic urges, I may even send a few glittery pennies your way when the time comes.

Thanks!

I wouldn't mind paying for some of your content, I find it thoroughly entertaining. I particularly would be happy to subscribe to a regular diner – I really love that thing. It's been way too long, but I am awed by your output, so it's not like I can complain that my free entertainment is too sporadic!
Jasper dog ran up the front steps tonight. He ran. I’d kick myself for not giving him these drugs earlier, but I’ll pull something, and then I’d have to fight him for the drugs.

Actually, I do blame myself. I just thought he was getting slow from age. Dogs don’t wince. When he wants to get up on the bed he puts his paws on top and patiently awaits the hoist – this is the way it is. Little help, chief. Well, it
doesn’t always have to be the way it is.

You spend your early days with your first dog wishing they could speak, even though you know it would be things like PERIMETER CONDITION NOMINAL interrupting a nice high-frequency dial tone. Then you wish they could tell you what’s wrong. Years on don’t want them to talk, for entirely selfish reasons. You don’t want your old friend padding in the room, dropping down with a sigh, and saying Look, I gotta go. If it’s okay with you.

But, as I’ve said, he’s a new dog. He went in the creek tonight, to cool off. Came home wet and happy. I should check to see if there are strange cocoons in the creek guarded by Tawnee Welch. Not likely, but possible.

So: today I read my work mail by shaving – because the work day now officially begins after you’ve opened your eyes – and discover I’ll be reporting from a high school on President Obama’s speech. I start calling high schools to get permission; got the principal’s voice mail. Hello, it’s August 24, and I am out of the office. I will return on August 27th. She didn’t say which year, so it could be accurate. Tried a few others, and came to suspect the same person answered the phones at schools all over town – the same calm, immovable, half-bored voice. It reminds you that bureaucracies are like the ramparts of a town; you cannot batter your way through. You have to fling plague-ridden bodies over the wall. This insight does not have as much practical application as you might think.

Eventually we found a school – another reporter for the print side had lined one up – and merrily merrily sped off to be Video People. Such fun to have a hobby become a job, eh? It was a straightforward shoot, and then it was back to the office to bang out the script, arrange it with all the proper acronyms, record the voice-overs, and bang, it was done. When I picked up my daughter from the bus I was still pumped, or “stoked” as we said in the 70s, but these things run smack into the iron bubble in which kids live, and ping off like beans tossed at a battleship because GUESS WHAT TODAY WE CALLED EACH OTHER TURNIPS ALL DAY.

They listened to the speech as well, but everyone was kinda half-listening because they were also doing math and it was cutting into the lunch hour. We did her homework, which consisted of some math and coming up with things that were likely, and things that were unlikely.

Kid has no idea who Raquel Welch is. What do they teach them in school?

I really shouldn’t care about these things, because they don’t do anyone any good; they don’t add to our store of knowledge or make you wiser. But over the last few days I have become inordinately fascinated by the Kreisler Kids.

You know them by now, of course – the happy perky duo that sings the
deathless Kreisler Ditty from inside a giant watch while a disembodied chorus *do-do-dos* in the background. Can't get the song out of my head, nor the cheerful faces of the uber-50s couple. Who were they? What happened to them? She probably had a happy life; seems too sunny and Doris-Day to have anything bad befall her. He may have ended up in a trailer court in Florida as an old man; perhaps he went on to a successful career in sales, because he certainly has the pitchman's gleam. He looks like Ditko's version of the Sandman's college-educated brother. Maybe they're both still alive.

You may wonder: did they do that song every week? Seems so, at least as far as I can tell. You may ask: that was taped, right? I mean, they can't have done it live every week.

Oh yes they could have. In fact they did. At least they had a few versions. I know this for two reasons: the closing wink is different, and once – well, they change a line in the lyrics, and it may have screwed them up. As you'll see. The sound and image are in perfect sync for this entire episode, except for . . . this. Here the shameful secret of the Kreisler Kids is unmasked. They're lip-syncing!

This is the proof. If you can't tell or DON'T BELIEVE ME – after all these years, you don't believe me – the fuller-sized version is here.
Glad Jasper is feeling better!

**vanderleun** says:
September 9, 2009 at 1:10 am

I am really, really, really pleased to hear about Jasper. It makes me feel so good that I’m going to stop reading the web right here.

**Steve Ripley** says:
September 9, 2009 at 2:07 am

So happy for Jasper! He must have felt like a pup trapped in an old dog's body. (Kind of like how I feel like a 30 year old trapped in a 56 year old body! I mean, how on earth did this happen?!!)

**Mr_Fastbucks** says:
September 9, 2009 at 2:09 am

The Welch's, mother and daughter, could make any male's blood pressure rise.

**Ross** says:
September 9, 2009 at 3:18 am

“... bureaucracies are like the ramparts of a town; you cannot batter your way through. You have to fling plague-ridden bodies over the wall. This insight does not have as much practical application as you might think.”

Yeah, but wouldn't it be fun?

Also glad to hear of the noble Jasper's rejuvenation.
As for Ms Welch (the elder), remarkable woman, that: saw her not long ago embracing her roots in a movie called “Tortilla Soup” (starring Hector Elizondo), playing a woman who considered marrying the main character (Elizondo, playing a widowed chef) a certainty, only to see him propose to her daughter. As I watched, I realized
1) “Oh, that's Raquel Welch”; 2) “She's still a formidable-built woman”; and 3) “Her acting has gotten better—she's managed to negate those looks and make the viewer root for the daughter.”
Quite an achievement.

**GardenStater** says:
September 9, 2009 at 3:58 am

“...today I read my work mail by shaving...”

Huh? Usually I can figure out James' typos, but this one's got me stymied. Any help out there?

**Baby M** says:
September 9, 2009 at 5:10 am

“...today I read my work mail by shaving...”

The iPhone has an electric razor app? Dang!
Locomotive Breath says:
September 9, 2009 at 5:33 am
Raquel Welch is unlikely.

Mxymaster says:
September 9, 2009 at 7:08 am
This Kreisler thing is becoming an obsession. Have a care, sir! Stronger men than we have found themselves in the gutter, muttering under their breath, “On my hand! On your hand…!”

teach5 says:
September 9, 2009 at 7:24 am
So glad to hear about the new and improved Jasper. Better living through chemistry is a beautiful thing, especially where pain is concerned. Heard about your status as “surprise guest” on the winter cruise with Hewitt tonight. Don’t start looking for 50′s video clips of Mayan ruins—they’re not in English!

Dr. Bobbs says:
September 9, 2009 at 7:33 am
Why do the Kreisler “Kids” appear to be 30 years old?

Matt says:
September 9, 2009 at 8:00 am
Tawnee Welch rejuvenated Jasper?!?!? Lileks, I didn’t think you ran such a web site. Um... where do I pay..???

juanito - John Davey says:
September 9, 2009 at 8:15 am
Huzzah for Jasper!
Tawnee Welch is old now too. It just never pauses, that time thing, does it?
You can check to see if they make a Kreisler OCD pill. Check with your local Compounding Pharmacist.

Joe Broderick says:
September 9, 2009 at 8:32 am
“Kid has no idea who Raquel Welch is. What do they teach them in school?”
Being an old geezer, I had never heard of Tawnee (Tahnee according to Google) Welch until I read the Bleat this morning.

RebeccaH says:
September 9, 2009 at 8:36 am
I’m so glad Jasper’s doing better. Wouldn’t he be surprised if he knew Human Strangers from everywhere were wishing him well on
that tappity-tap box you're always playing with?

Preptile says:
September 9, 2009 at 8:47 am

I am relieved beyond words about Jasper. 
Was expecting further decline after that wall walking into,bit. 
Steel yourself now for his departure James, and explain it all to Gnat too. 
He still hangs w me in all my very best dreams, and always will.

I dread the doggie death bleat that looms in our future here. 
It stalks us all. None moreso than your family. 
Prepare for the worst, as it approaches. Then try to remember the best afterwards. 
A huge drunk might erase the eventual pain. 
Hundreds will join you in a final toast to him who is toast, when it happens. 
I will be one of them.

BTW, OT, That photo of you at the fair spoke volumes about dorkidom. 
What an outfit. One presumes on ‘off’ days you are allowed to dress yourself. 
This is a duty that your superiors should never have relinquished. 
The proof is in that photo.

Scott P says:
September 9, 2009 at 8:52 am

Hurrah for Jasper!

James - any plan to put a “Home” button, or an image map of the banner so we can get back to the main page? I’m stuck here! Which isn’t so bad, really.

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

Scott P:
Hurrah for Jasper!
James - any plan to put a “Home” button, or an image map of the banner so we can get back to the main page? I’m stuck here! Which isn’t so bad, really.

Mouse over the fellow’s sideburn in the title image. Tis the portal to the Bleat Main Page.

GardenStater says:
September 9, 2009 at 9:30 am

@juanito: “…Tawnee Welch is old now too…..”

Sir, Tahnee Welch was born on December 26, 1961, a little over a year after my inauguration into the world.

And I, sir, am not OLD. Just middle-aged and paunchy. Meanwhile, Tahnee looks mighty fine, as does the lovely and talented Raquel. (rrowrrr... ...)
Kim says:
September 9, 2009 at 9:31 am

Yea, Jasper!!!! : )
This is great news!!!!!!!!!

juanito - John Davey says:
September 9, 2009 at 9:41 am

@GardenStater

Well, you both proceed me, as I had my debut turn in 1967. And I, sir, am OLD. Perhaps not emotionally (hello 12!) but certainly I'm ready to consider some bionic replacements.

stephen5 says:
September 9, 2009 at 9:42 am

God What a Bod.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWvgv9rzObs&NR=1

John Robinson says:
September 9, 2009 at 9:53 am

Back in '67 I was fifteen, and one Saturday afternoon went with two buddies to the Rialto theater to see Fantastic Voyage. My pals, dweebs both, kept nudging each other and saying stuff like, “hey, maybe they'll take that miniature sub and go inside the guy's butt! heh-heh-heh!” Me, I'm sitting there thinking two things: “that wet suit looks way too small for Raquel to fit in it...oh, God she did!”, and “today, I am a man...”

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:00 am

So if Tahnee was born in 1961 (like me and not old), that means Raquel's sex goddess career came after giving birth. Impressive.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:12 am

this is only a test.

Thank you,

bg "less irritated" bear

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:14 am

OK, I triggered the spam filter some how. Now I am getting irritated, move over brother bear.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:18 am

(okay, if this gets duplicate posting, it is not my fault /han solo. I am
guessing that the filter word rhymes with “care toss” which I am replacing with “fur”)

I recently went through the same guilt trip with a 5 year old ferret. Normal life span is 7 to 8 years so, I assumed he was getting old when he slowed down and I let that go on for a few months. Then he started losing fur, a sign of an adrenal disease.

One implant later by a certified ferret specialists and he had all his fur back and runs around like a kit.

OK, slightly political rant. Will it be odd if someday I will be able to get better health care for my ferrets than for myself?

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:20 am

this is only a test.

“losing hair”

Thank you,

bg “getting irritated” bear

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:21 am

bgbear (roger h):
this is only a test.
“losing hair”
Thank you,
bg “getting irritated” bear

hmm

“implant”

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:23 am

(Please indulge me. I want to know what is up. JL if you have to moderate, ok to delete near duplicate posts.)

part 1:

I recently went through the same guilt trip with a 5 year old ferret. Normal life span is 7 to 8 years so, I assumed he was getting old when he slowed down and I let that go on for a few months. Then he started losing hair, a sign of an adrenal disease.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:26 am

part 2 (re-written, what was the word?):

One implant later by a top notch ferret vet and 5 y.o. old Dexter had all his fur back and runs around like a yearling.
bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:26 am

part 3:

OK, slightly political rant. Will it be odd if someday I will be able to get better health care for my ferrets than for myself?

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:32 am

OK, I found the word.

for future reference you innocent non-spammers, it is what you are if you are not a general practitioner.

and the password is. . .

Mr_Lilacs says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:37 am

Tahnee Welch is two years and one day older than me, but I was born old.

My dog has recently entered his fourteenth year. He's getting really old, even with the best vet care we can get him.

Trogdor says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:53 am

I'm older than Tahnee, and I too never heard of her before. Was she in the horrid Opie movie Cocoon? I'm the same age as GardenStater in fact. Not old, not paunchy, but yes, some bionic replacements would be fine. Have a pinched nerve in my elbow that just doesn't want to heal, but that's because I can't stop playing my sports. Oh yeah, I caught a line drive foul ball at the Rockies game Monday, on of my finest moments. Just lucky I was paying attention and had my mitt on, or I'd be getting fit for new teeth...

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 11:09 am

@Trogdor
I feel paunchy as well but, I feel re-markedly healthy when I am around folks my age who have knee replacements, bad arches, bad hips etc. I have never spent more than a hour in a hospital.

On the other hand I have a long time friend my age who is out mountain biking with 20 and 30 somethings and not only keeping up but kicking butt. She kind of makes me feel old. I got to get out of this office job aracı

DryOwlTacos says:
September 9, 2009 at 11:10 am

Good news about Jasper. Long may he monitor your perimeter condition!

(Preptile: Aren't you just a ray of sunshine today?)
Steve G. says:
September 9, 2009 at 11:10 am

“When he wants to get up on the bed he puts his paws on top and patiently awaits the hoist...”

Wait a minute, we've got a 5-year-old dog who acts that way, and the vet just did X-rays and prescribed doggie glucosamine. Are you referring to the urinary-related drugs that helped out, or some other ones?

Scott P says:
September 9, 2009 at 11:16 am

@juanito – John Davey

Ah. Saw the map to the “About” page, but didn't go high enough. I get the cursor, but the title tag doesn't pop up like it does on the lower link, but it's functional.

fizzbin says:
September 9, 2009 at 11:55 am

Aaaah, Raquel! Ms. Hot Buttered Buns, herself. After seeing her in that movie, reality was never quite the same for me.

The secret of the Kreisler Duo was... DRUGS and plenty of them 😊

GardenStater says:
September 9, 2009 at 12:23 pm

@bgbear, Trogdor, etc: Agreed about the replacement parts AND the downside of a desk job. Two years ago, I was between “real” jobs and got work as a stable-hand. I lost about 30 pounds and was in the best shape of my middle-aged life. Then I got a desk job, and guess what happened? Yup.

Good point, too, about Raquel's sex-goddess stage post-partum. A round of applause for the amazing Ms. Welch!!!

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 9, 2009 at 12:36 pm

@GardenStater

yes, it is embarrassing to get tendinitis for over doing it on the mouse and keyboard.

JamesS says:
September 9, 2009 at 1:13 pm

Our household currently has three shelties: a rescue (age 13), a former pup (age 3) and his mom, whom we took in when here breeding days were done (age 8). My wife does not understand why I want no more dogs after them, but she's not the one who had to take our first dog — and the one I truly loved — to the vet when she suffered from dementia and incontinence. Another sheltie died at age 7 from a mysterious ailment our then-vet never was able to diagnose, but was probably cancer. The poor guy suffered what was probably extreme pain from whatever it was, and died overnight on the family room floor. What a nightmare!

I love dogs, but I just can't take that part any more.
Steve G. says:
September 9, 2009 at 6:33 pm

@Steve G.

I should add that a couple of years ago, before her back legs seemingly bothered her, she could jump onto the bed no problem.

Tom in Clareville says:
September 9, 2009 at 10:21 pm

Phooey. I can't access this during the day, so when I finally get home to watch the Millie Vanillie of the 50's, it's been taken down. So sad.

Claire says:
September 9, 2009 at 11:31 pm

What kind of wonder drug did Jasper-doggie get? Was it prednisone? My Pearl perked up then got so ravenously hungry she ate the toilet paper off the rolls and the cherry tomatoes off the tomato plants! So glad he's feeling better.

Marjorie J. Birch says:
September 10, 2009 at 8:08 am

Something there is that disturbs me about the singing pair in the watchband…

oh my God…

It's Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes!

Susan in Elk Grove CA says:
September 10, 2009 at 6:59 pm

Yes, do tell what the wonder drug is that is perking Jasper up so. Our ~9-year-old Akita/Shepherd limps and jerks like an old man after he gets up from one of his many naps, with an occasional yelp added for effect. It's pathetic, but I can't imagine he's circling the drain just yet. 😊
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?
While my daughter was in karate I decided to partake of the fortnightly burrito indulgence. Since I didn't feel like paying for a burrito the size of a newborn human, I went with the taco. The burritos always fall apart the minute you pick them up, anyway; they have the cohesion of an Italian government, which is a testament to the quantity of items contained within. I was not surprised to see that the taco had the dimensions of the Sunday New York Times. With lettuce. I took a bite, and the force of one chomp was sufficient to destroy the structural integrity of the entire taco.

Not only did it fall apart, but the residual shards of taco shell evaporated the moment you pressed them into secondary duty, such as scooping up escaped meat. I realize this made the shell very authentic, because Real Tacos don't have the reinforced starch-factor of your Taco Bell shells, but it made me realize I would now view the restaurant's offerings in two groups: the seven-dollar pile of vaguely Mexican wreckage I would eat with a spork, or the five-dollar pile.
Then I wandered back to the karate school to observe the last few minutes of HI-YA and kicking and bowing. Read a book. A nice bit of relaxation in a day that was wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling. Everything screeched to a halt as usual at three, when the bus came – the duties of the day peel away, replaced by piano and math homework. This new regimen is insane, really, and it's only going to get worse. I am turning into a TV reporter. It's just the damndest thing. I find myself standing in a suburban front lawn holding a white-balance card, composing my remarks in my head, wondering if my fly's all the way up, thinking: how the hell did THIS happen?

One thing is sure: time for a massive wardrobe upgrade. After all these years, I'm finally in uniform. Saturday: pants and ties and the thing I hate to spend money on, shoes. It seems apt that the most overpriced things in the world – eyeglasses and shoes – exist at the opposite polar ends of your body. Like it's a plot to make you feel better about spending more than slightly necessary on a belt.

Hey, new Apple products! So now there's an iPod nano with a video camera. But I I don't want a camera in my iPod. I don't want a video camera in my iPod. I also don't want my camera camera to play music. I don't want my smaller video camera to make phone calls. (I do want my phone to have a video camera, though.) I don't want my really good videocamera to display tweets or a shopping list. What I do want is something that does everything. A few years ago, I though we – were – there! with an iPhone that had an iPod baked right in, and a camera! But I still took my good camera along, because it took much better pictures, and I didn't use my iPhone for music much because a) I don't listen to that much music when I'm out and about, and b) I was convinced it would drain my battery in 42 minutes. (Factory specs says 43 minutes, but that's under ideal conditions when you have the volume turned to 1 and you're playing 4'33" by John Cage.)

I was pleased to see the new iPhone get a video camera, because that meant I would no longer need my Flip, which my daughter took over anyway. But then Kodak comes out with a Flip-sized HD camera that looks good – why, I could ditch my good HD camera! No, of course not; it has lousy indoor lighting capabilities and responds poorly to “movement,” but at least I could shoot stuff and integrate it into the family movies without looking like I'd switched to YouTube mode. But the online reviews said it has a microphone that emits a high whine all the time, and as far as I can tell the company's position on the matter is: “Kodak is aware of these concerns at this time, but prefers to stick its fingers in its ears and hum loudly until you go away.” So I'm still using the old HD camera.
Did another video for the paper today – I do believe I’ll be saying that every day until I collapse, or Friday. This one was about the 09/09/09 date; my producer found a psychic in Edina. She wanted to be called “a true psychic,” but I couldn’t say that, since it meant, well, that she WAS, at least by the standards of the paper. Sorry. No such thing. Not certified by a dispassionate accrediting body. I spent the entire interview balanced on a large purple inflatable ball, for reasons that seem less clear as time goes on, but it was fun. I have a hard time, however, believing numbers mean anything more than individual letters. OMG, your lucky letter is Q, and if you meet someone whose lucky number is a diphthong you will fall in love and have four – er, IV – children!

Here's the video.

And now to write a column. No updates on the Tales of Tomorrow series – for all I know, they ironed out the bugs nicely, and everything else ran smoothly. Stay tuned.
aggieann says:
September 11, 2009 at 3:35 pm

Don’t fork over money to the eyeglass mafia! Get your measurements (including PD, pupillary distance) and get ten pairs at 39dollarglasses.com or goggles4u.com for the price you’d pay for a single pair at LensCrafters, et al.

Chris says:
September 11, 2009 at 11:21 pm

So James, care to share what your “good HD” camera is?

Vader says:
September 14, 2009 at 12:43 pm

Speaking as someone who comes from an area that knows its tacos: No authentic taco shatters when bit, like a Fritos chip. An authentic taco has been softened by being fried in pork lard then ladled with juicy meat, and all but the outermost rim gives a little when bitten. Kind of like al dente pasta, but firmer.

Vader says:
September 14, 2009 at 12:43 pm

Incidentally, what possible use would James have for ten pairs of glasses?

← Older Comments

Looking for something?

Use the form below to search the site:

Search

Still not finding what you're looking for?
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!
A weekend of unsurpassed gorgeosity. We always lie to ourselves and say that the first half of September is summer, technically, but this year it’s so. It’s true. Hot, a kiss of humidity, and almost a wet sloppy half-drunk one, too. Yes, Clear Liquor Season was reinstated, contrary to all precedents. The switch to an evening bourbon is one of those things a man does with deliberation; it’s a statement, a verdict, a declaration that the romp over the Elysian Fields of summer have ended, and a fellow must take up more serious pursuits. But summer in the middle of September is like love in your old age; makes a fool of you, and you don’t care.

I spent late Sunday afternoon at the mall, outfitting myself for TV. Bought a few new shirts at Penney’s. Not the highest quality. Civil War mules got feed from sacks of better fabric. But they’ll read well on video, and I’d already committed to buying some socks. It’s the psychology of shopping: if you have some things in hand you know you’ll buy, you’re more likely to pick up some other things. That’s why the 3-packs of socks that were normally $18 – and by “normally” I mean “never” – were marked down to $12. You’ve already saved six bucks! You’re on a roll! Luck, be a Penney’s mark-down tonight!

Bought some all-purpose black slacks at Eddie Bauer, which was having a “Semi-annual Pants Event.” Sounds like the lament of an old married man. (To repeat a tweet.) Bought new useful shoes at Macy’s, and since they were reasonably priced I bought them in brown as well. My old brown shoes succumbed to road salt, sole fissures and heel erosion a while ago. I’d be
content to live in Chuck Taylors most of the day, but they don’t go with the new uniform.

I was lucky to find my size, since Macy’s regards persons of my size with evident disdain, and wishes we would go shop at Munchkinland or wherever we sorts usually get tagged. The buyers are all besotted by the brawny brutes who want an XL or an XXL, and hence overbuy, and at the end of every season the XXLs hang from the clearance racks unsold, like faded flowers sent by rejected suitors. It’s a really wise move in the internet economy: build big expensive stores with lots of space and refuse to carry smaller sizes, so the customer is trained never to expect he’ll find anything.

Ties? Yes. Again, the job requires sedate ties; anything with a pattern can explode in a moire on camera, and you look like you’re wearing an optical illusion around your neck. I saw a few hapless fellows dragged along by spouses, who were picking out shirts and ties, and considered the horror of being married to someone who had Strong Ideas about how she wanted her man to look, and who also had no taste. Blue shirts with white collars with pale blue ties erupting in writhing paisley, a hideous fractal based on feverish paramecium.

“I like this,” said one woman. The guy nodded.

I checked Banana Republic, and was surprised to see that they have based this season’s look around black and light charcoal. It was the other way around last year. Visited the Apple store, which as always was completely packed, and considered the new Nano. Didn’t. Considered an old classic iPod, which is really want I want, because it will hold everything. I don’t want to pick and choose. Dump and scroll, that’s my game.

The weekend ended as it began – at the deli counter of the local grocery store, talking to the same clerk, the one who calls me “Mr. Journalist Dude.” In between:

We bought a piano on Saturday. They were having a sale. Buy 78 keys and they toss in ten for free. Went to this place:
It's a music school; can't you tell? The interior is odd – a staircase alongside what appears to be seating, facing a very small performance area. A Disclavier stood in the upstairs lobby, playing a lovely Debussy piece, if that's not redundant. There's a bigger hall upstairs, and it was filled with pianos.
Some were pre-used; others were new, but discounted. My wife wanted a baby grand, but they cost as much as a car and would occupy most of the available free space in the living room. People would have to enter the house through a window. I wanted something I could hook up to the computers. Compromise: a nice non-bank-account-enshattering stand-up, which will be dragged up the stairs Monday. I was surprised we made it downtown as easily as we did; Twins game, Obama speech, Gopher game across the river by the U. The streets were full of people, the weather was perfect – it was about as grand a day as you can imagine.

**Today:** strib blog around 10, matchbook a bit later, and more about the big enormously controversial paysite initiative. Stay tuned. It's very late and I should be in bed, but Sundays always stretch until one. If only Monday didn't start so damned early. What's that? It's Monday already?

Well, my point is made.
39 RESPONSES TO *Monday, Sept. 14*

**Kensington** says:
September 14, 2009 at 1:52 am

You know, I love Hugh Hewitt and frequently enjoy his podcasts, but it's never been appointment listening. Even as all of his Salem peers moved to subscription podcasts, I didn't think he would. Who would really want to pay to hear David Dreier interviews, I wondered. Not me.

But darn it, James, now that I know you're writing columns for the Hughniverse, I think I'm going to have to take the plunge.

**Joan H.** says:
September 14, 2009 at 2:48 am

Congrats on the piano purchase. I bought ours on a whim a dozen years ago. It's delightful now to hear all three kids plonking away, especially since none of them actually plonk. Already there are indications that they will be much better at it than I ever was, or will be. What a delight.

**GardenStater** says:
September 14, 2009 at 5:17 am

My wife bought a piano back in the pre-marriage days, for $25. It's a 1915 upright, made by Mathushek, who were supposedly one of the best. It had been painted flat black, and the old lady who sold it was moving and didn't want to take it with her. Wife refinished it, and got it tuned, and it's been with us ever since.

She made both our sons take piano lessons, but that didn't last long. But the older one (15) has a beautiful singing voice, and the younger (13) plays trombone. So at least the musical tradition carries on. Enjoy it, James!

**MikeH** says:
September 14, 2009 at 5:29 am

Clothes shopping, oh yay!! Fortunetly my spouse lets me pick what I like to get. She makes suggestions at times but ultimatly I have final say. Trade off? I have to tag along with her while she shops for her stuff with lots of questions like "what do you think of this?" Lots of nodding and thumbs up. Honestly I don't care since she has great taste in clothes and she is just plain ol beautiful!!

As a kid my folks bought a piano for the family, mom had me and my brother take piano lessons. I personally had lessons for about two years. I learned how to play Mary had a little Lamb with one finger and that's all I retained from those two years of lessons. I had no interest in playing as a kid, still no interest today and would only give our kids any kind of music lessons if they show any interest in music. I'm not saying that pushing music lessons is wrong, kids may not realize at the time that they are musically inclined, but it just doesn't seem be in implanted in my family DNA.
Mike says:
September 14, 2009 at 6:19 am

“(To repeat a tweet.)”
So – that would be a Tweetpeat, right?
Sorry. Going back to bed now.

NavySeabee says:
September 14, 2009 at 6:20 am

2. Stairs? Check.
3. First ‘Laurel and Hardy’ flick in 58 years? Stand by.

Michael Rittenhouse says:
September 14, 2009 at 6:35 am

“I saw a few hapless fellows dragged along by spouses, who were picking out shirts and ties, and considered the horror of being married to someone who had Strong Ideas about how she wanted her man to look, and who also had no taste.”

Well, yes. But there is a lot of wisdom to letting the women in your life choose your clothing. They see what you’re wearing every time they look at you, and if they’re offended, you may never know why.

I had a boss whom I invited to choose my neckties. Haven’t worked for her in 15 years, but she still wants me to. (Shameless but relevant link whoring: http://rittenhouse.mee.nu/847785)

Bob_R says:
September 14, 2009 at 6:43 am

Come on James. Tell us what kind of piano. You gave us details on the strat. Serious gear heads want to know.

swschrad says:
September 14, 2009 at 7:12 am

want a piano that can be hooked up to computers, eh?
anything works. find a good playing machine that will look good at your house, and sign the papers.
there is something called a “microphone.” get one for the hookup thing, part of the piano experience is the resonance of the soundboard.
in fact, get three, if it’s a grand style piano. and a joke mixer. ideally a band or kick drum for the bass strings, a ribbon for the middle, and a condenser for the high notes. pick up the bass from the soundboard by the strings, the mid about center and raised to taste, and depending on taste, mike the high notes either from the hammers or just the other side of the soundboard from the hammers.
otherwise, you’re just repeating samples of something else you don’t know about. or you could turn the keystrokes into MIDI trumpets.
rbj says:
September 14, 2009 at 7:26 am

I hate clothes shopping. Problem is I've no wife to do it for me. And my blue pants & brown pants both have holes in them due to the wallet, so I need new ones.

Quite irritating and unbearable.

MDG14450 says:
September 14, 2009 at 7:40 am

That music school looks like the setting for an Argento movie

grayhackle says:
September 14, 2009 at 7:44 am

My late, beloved uncle once bought a suit on his own. I happened to be in the store when he brought it back.

I never forgot his comment to the clerk: “We don't like me in blue”.

rivlax says:
September 14, 2009 at 7:47 am

That music school looks just like the practice edifice our local firefighter use to hone their fire-fighting and building-scaling skills.

Alan Taylor says:
September 14, 2009 at 8:17 am

“Pre-used” pianos eh? Sounds like pianos before they were used – that is, “new”. Why, gosh darn it, aren’t they just “used” pianos? The store already uses the naughty “used” word, what is gained with the “pre” prefix?

From a word tyrant.

Nancy says:
September 14, 2009 at 8:19 am

“I checked Banana Republic, and was surprised to see that they have based this season's look around black and light charcoal It was the other way around last year.” At least on the women’s side of the store they throw in an odd loden or taupe for spice

Margaret says:
September 14, 2009 at 8:49 am

I knew clear liquor season wasn’t over yet! I even bought a bottle of gin a few weeks ago to be sure not to run out and cracked it open this weekend.

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

I forecast a “UPS left our Piano at the Eagan Warehouse” adventure!

But that is a fantastic investment. As long as you have the room.
Clear liquor season? OK< just no everclear.

**gmann63** says:
September 14, 2009 at 9:12 am

I'm of the belief that is is ALWAYS bourbon season.

**Lars Walker** says:
September 14, 2009 at 9:22 am

My folks bought a piano long, long ago, and got my brother and me lessons. I studied for 6 years, and never really figured out what it was all about. Later I worked for 3 years, systematically, at learning the guitar. Reached a level of incompetency and stayed there. I finally had to admit to myself that I just have no music in my fingers.

**jane lettuce** says:
September 14, 2009 at 9:34 am

I spent late Sunday afternoon at the mall, outfitting myself for TV. Bought a few new shirts at Penney's. Not the highest quality. Civil War mules got feed from sacks of better fabric. But they'll read well on video, and I'd already committed to buying some socks. It's the psychology of shopping: if you have some things in hand you know you'll buy, you're more likely to pick up some other things. That's why the 3-packs of socks that were normally $18 – and by “normally” I mean “never” – were marked down to $12. You've already saved six bucks! You're on a roll! Luck, be a Penney's mark-down tonight!

This paragraph is perfect. I love The Bleat.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
September 14, 2009 at 9:48 am

We already have a piano so, we have never been in the market. By pre-use I assume JL means those ads you always hear for piano liquidation by some school, university, or musical theater.

I assumed that there was a business that runs around the state or country dragging pianos from school-to-school trading on the goodwill of the schools name to make a sale. Or do they lease the pianos to the schools with an understanding that they would eventually hold a sale to the public?

**Irritable Bear** says:
September 14, 2009 at 10:14 am

Irritable Bear does not wear Eddie Bauer. Irritable Bear eats Eddie Bauer.

**DaveinAZ** says:
September 14, 2009 at 10:15 am

IRRITABLE BEAR STOLE MY AVATAR!

**teach5** says:
September 14, 2009 at 10:17 am
I, too, smell a piano delivery story in the air. Again I ask, what was your daughter using to practice for her lessons? Electric keyboard? Can't wait to hear the new compositions!

**bgbear (roger h) says:**

September 14, 2009 at 10:24 am

Socks. I never can get dress socks or any socks with a heel (9crew)to fit right. They seem to be made for size 9 and up and I wear a size 8 shoe (which I believe is quite common). Either the heel is misplaced or the toe bunches.

I prefer tube sock without a heel. For awhile I found some gray tube boot socks that worked as semi-dress. I believe they were made by Wells Lamont but, they stopped making them. I was surprised that nearly everyone stopped making and selling tube socks.

I found a company on line called “skater socks” and they sell white, gray, and black tube socks, mostly cotton. The black and gray can be used for dress and you can get them with or without stripes at the top (skaters want the stripes).

Not as cheap as the monster bags o’ socks I used get at K-mart but, I am happy.

**wiredog says:**

September 14, 2009 at 10:24 am

Any drive-in theaters left in MN? I ask because of this one I saw in Ocean City MD:

http://www.flickr.com/photos/kitcase/3916750984/

**Paul in BarneyFrankistan says:**

September 14, 2009 at 10:54 am

When a friend of mine (the pianist for most of the Ken Burns documentaries) needed to move the piano she had inherited, she hired a company with the Best Business Name Ever: Deathwish Piano Movers. Their trucks look like they’ve been transported from a 1920’s newsreel and, as you’d guess from the name, they tend to have an interesting sense of humor about the work. After they removed a second floor window to provide a path for the piano, she got to watch as it swayed back and forth from the crane, while the crew chief provided commentary.

**rbj says:**

September 14, 2009 at 11:14 am

_**gmann63**_

I'm of the belief that is is ALWAYS bourbon season.

Absolutely. Except Sunday nights when Mad Men viewing requires Scotch. If only that show was on an hour earlier.

**swschrad says:**

September 14, 2009 at 12:04 pm

two drive-ins in the metro area. one is on 94 near the wisconsin border. the other is on 61 down about cottage grove. the cottage
grove one was rumored to be going condo a few years ago, but the market tanked, and last we went by there, last fall, was still showing end-o-first-run movies.

**NFAH** says:
September 14, 2009 at 1:27 pm

“Semi-annual Pants Event” has a very different meaning in Britain.

**hpoulter** says:
September 14, 2009 at 1:38 pm

So, it's the two times a year you change your undies?

Sounds more like France. 😊

**Writeaway** says:
September 14, 2009 at 4:44 pm

**rbj** :

*gmänn63*: I'm of the belief that is is ALWAYS bourbon season.

Absolutely. Except Sunday nights when Mad Men viewing requires Scotch. If only that show was on an hour earlier.

So if it was on an hour earlier, it would be bourbon time? I had no idea liquor etiquette could be so exacting.

**johnmark7** says:
September 14, 2009 at 5:08 pm

“pale blue ties erupting in writhing paisley, a hideous fractal based on feverish paramecium”

I always wondered how to describe paisley to someone. This did it. Clever.

What kind of piano?

Penney's? Treat yourself, man. You got the dough. Go to Nordstrom's or at least Macy's. Support quality work.

We got an Ibach for daughter on sale at half price at a going out of business sale. $7000 (16 years ago). Not the Asian made ones which aren't as good. The German ones are or were outstanding. Quality matters.

Oh BTW, baby grands suck. An upright has the same string length and soundboard size for the most part. A baby grand always disappoints because you expect it to sound like a grand, and it never does, while a fine upright sounds as good as a baby grand without the cost.

**KevinF** says:
September 14, 2009 at 5:19 pm

I'm certain there's a Homer Simpson quote about shopping for a
piano in the “piano district” – in a most amusing way that I can’t recall well enough to describe … but shockingly Google draws a blank. Unless I’m confusing pianos with something else.

**D Palmer** says:
September 14, 2009 at 6:07 pm

James, don’t feel too bad about Macy’s snubbing you size wise. As a man on the other end of the spectrum (6-4, tall but not NBA center size) macy’s snubs me too. Macy’s, Target, Penney’s, Sears, slowly but surely all my usual sources for reasonably priced off the shelf tall clothing have abandoned me. Even in the huge State Street Chicago Macy’s store there are only a handful of tall items available.

I don’t mind shopping via catalog, but now and then you need a shirt or sweater today. I see lots of men my size on the street, it seems like there are enough of us to form a decent size market, but apparently most retailers would rather stick to the average.

**Mary Margaret Thomas** says:
September 14, 2009 at 7:46 pm

James,

After my daughter’s 1890 upright became untunable (It would take $12,000 to get in playing condition) with age, I bought her an almost new one. I searched for a generous daddy who bought his lil darlin’ a brand new piano only ti have her give it up a few months later. I got it for a steal! Maybe I am sexist, but there’s nothing sweeter than listening to a pretty little girl play beethoven or Debussey on an otherwise quiet evening.

**Jose** says:
September 14, 2009 at 8:13 pm

It’s not “pre-used”; let’s take the cue from the automobile dealers, it’s “Certified Pre-Owned”. As in we certify that a previous owner beat the bejeebers out of this equipment…

And oh, yes, shopping for clothes that show up well on video, that’s (not) such a thrill… as mentioned, the stuff that “reads” well onscreen is often surprisingly bad.

@Jose

I prefer the phrase “experienced”:

**gottacook** says:
September 15, 2009 at 12:31 am

“The Piano Book: Buying & Owning a New or Used Piano” by Larry Fine explains exactly how uprights differ from grands. There’s a lot more to it than soundboard size and string length; the action of a grand depends on gravity (rather than springs) and offers a lot more control. Nonetheless I agree that baby grands will tend to disappoint – which is why I spent $7K (including piano technician services) on a 1929 Mason and Hamlin 6’1” with ivories, found locally on Craigslist. Many new Asian baby grands (shorter than about 5’7”)
will cost this much or more.

The Simpsons also featured, very briefly, a harpsichord dealership in the episode where a hurricane hits Springfield (title unknown).
Who is this woman, and why is she smiling?

We'll get to that.

Now we have a piano. My wife is playing it as I write, giving the day a rather archaic feel – old summer nights always seemed to have the sound of a piano...
trickling from a window or two on the block, before everyone shut up the house for air conditioning. It wasn’t pro-style playing, with rippling arpeggios fluttering on the evening breeze like synchronized butterflies, but halting, clunky, painstaking playing, the sort of thing that makes you think of a kid squinting at the sheet music with her tongue protruding from the corner of her mouth.

I don’t know if anyone actually does that, but it’s the universal symbol for Earnest Effort.

Can’t say I miss summer, because it’s still here. I do miss the old sounds of summer. The piano, bikes with playing cards in the spokes, a car drifting by with an AM radio playing a song with an actual melody. While I am a great fan of incessantly repetitive synth music with a groove like the Marianis Trench, the angry dull blunt boasts of standard rap bores the hell out of me. Today I was filling up the Element; a car came whipping around the island at hellish speed, and the fellow filled up while his radio played at a volume that would liquify your timpanium and loosen your bowels. A boor, of course; a man with no manners. One of the numberless army of narcissists who cannot possibly consider the opinions of anyone else. It’s not that he didn’t care; he just had no mental framework in place to process the possibility that other people mattered.

What I find amusing is how some believe that the death of civility is a new development. It started with Joe Wilson and was compounded by Serena Williams. Civility has been chained to a rock getting its liver picked out by buzzards since the golden children of the Greatest Generation were encouraged to let their freak flag fly, to use a horrid phrase. I read a few blogs that pick apart “Mad Men” – now the show for people to sniff they’ve never seen, and therefore must be overrated – and everyone seems to note the same tremulous undertones of this season, the sense that everything is going to fly apart in a way that’s joyous for some, interesting for others, and unnerving for the old guard who manage to keep up appearances long after their world has been superceded.

And by Their World, I mean this:
The show doesn’t have many drop-jaw moments, nearly everything that’s important or meaningful is communicated without words. (Unless it’s advertising, which is important and meaningful, both as the substance of the character’s lives and the role it plays in society. That said, the show evolved quickly beyond being an ad-shop drama; if it was just another TV show, it would be full of arch, brittle, devious plots about particular campaigns and the nervy jostle of office politics. It has that, but they’re all subordinate to character and period study.) Roger in blackface was one of those drop-jaw moments. You know how he’ll spend the later sixties: curled up in the cocoon of money, drinking himself to death, ending up in a hospital room in 1973 watching Johnny Carson in an opiate stupor.

I’ve always thought it’s imperative to stay engaged with your times until your time, singular, is up. Otherwise your sense of the world calcifies, and your worst impressions become your default opinion. The glories of the imagined past become a means of self-admiration, because you were not only lucky enough to be there but smart enough to get it. Kids today, they don’t. Perhaps growing up in the 70s kept me from idealizing my own past; the culture was all gimcrack glitz and second-hand hippie shite before the jams were well and truly kicked out by the anti-sloth movements of the late seventies and early 80s. They were musical and political; the former was all over the road and the latter emotional and naive, but I think they were the first attempts to wrest control of the social narrative from the early boomers, and as such were derided with the smooth weary conceits you’d expect from the generation that remade the world and expected the rest of us to line up and lay laurel wreaths at their sandaled feet.

Then the rise of internet culture saved the late boomers and Gen Xers from cultural obsolescence, because it was no longer necessarily to participate in
any of the usual events to be up to the moment. On the internet anyone can be about 26 years old.

Anyway. Mad Men is about the sixties, and while everyone’s watching the signs of the old overculture dissolving underneath everyone’s feet, I sense all the things that came after the great rift. The worst thing about the sixties wasn’t the sixties. It was the seventies.

It is to much to suppose that a wary code of mutually recognized and dimly comprehended male aggression kept things civil? That it was also predicated on horribly, terribly, oh-so-wretchedly sexist notions about behaving in front of women made men behave? It probably took ten years after the end of Hats to breed a certain respect out of men; it took another ten years of dealing with The Confusion of the Door (if I open it, I’m a chauvinist pig; if I don’t, I’m a selfish manchild who lacks social graces. What does she want? What does she expect? Help me Hugh Hefner!) to give men the sense that societal norms were just BS, and the most valuable aspect of a person’s character was Authenticity, the sense that he was true to himself. It’s a telling fact of “Mad Men” that the only man who seems true to himself is the man whose life is predicated on the most colossal lie imaginable, and seems equally authentic when he’s committing an act that will force him to lie, or telling the truth in his role as a liar. In the end this may be the show’s message: lies have their uses. The truth hurts. Odd, coming from a show about advertising.

As for the woman up top? Joanie, the va-va-voom secretary, of course, pressed by her fiancee to work the squeezebox for a small dinner party.
If you don’t watch Mad Men, and you think it’s some Austin-Powers view of the sixties full of madcap over-the-top cultural schtick – they’re smoking, indoors! They’re drinking, at noon! No. There are various messages passed along in her performance, but a lesser show would have reached straight for camp value. It’s almost impossible to think of any other show allowing a big curvaceous redhead to pick up a squeeze box and sing a French tune without milking all the camp and / or swank possible out of the moment, but this was just what it was: people played the accordion in those days. I had one as a kid; my uncle had one. It may seem impossible to some, but people played the accordion without making sure everyone knew it was being done ironically, or was intended to be understood with a certain amount of irony. God knows I love irony, but it’s the condom the culture puts on when it doesn’t want to enjoy something completely for reasons it will regret in the morning.

Today: I think it’s comics, no? Yes! But it’s two comic-sins covers, to make up for previous slackage. Strib blog if all goes well; depends on the video duties. Here’s yesterday’s video – shot more for later days, this was the only thing we could get up today. I think this is the first bit with my co-reporter / co-anchor Aimee, who’s been with the Strib video team from the start. I tend to overact; she can be witheringly dry. It’s fun.

The secret to not ending up cramped and small and old and bitter: find something new. Make it fun. Roll with it. And when the guy who’s blaring the stupid music goes into the gas station to pay, let the air out of one of his tires.

97 RESPONSES TO tuesday, sept. 15

hpoulter says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:00 am

And then there’s the hand that cradles the rock, to quote Walt Kelly.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:04 am

On civility, we all know we are the most important person in the world, the key is not acting like it.

On history, desegregation and related civil rights was the result of the actions of many types of people, black, white, hippies, mad men, house wives, Christians, Jews, students, working folks. No one group deserves all the credit just like no one group deserves all the blame.

It is about the character of individuals, not traits of groups.

Racism is the lowest, most crudely primitive form of collectivism. -Ayn Rand
RebeccaH says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:11 am

*The worst thing about the sixties wasn’t the sixties. It was the seventies.*

As one who came of age in the sixties, I can verify that you are right.

hpoulter says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:12 am

*Nancy* @Al Federber *Dang Al, why do you bother to read this blog since you seem to disdain the core values of its author? You are of course not required to agree with him on everything, but your comments come across as (in James’ own words) “... cramped and small and old and bitter...”. When *

Easy Nancy, you’re feeding him. Folks like Al visit blogs like this because it is their duty to correct and instruct the great unwashed gun-clinging, Fox-news-befuddled masses.

What I wonder is if the poor fellow has any sense of humor at all.

raf says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:14 am

@Mike_W
Perhaps, back in the days of vaudeville when blackface was common, it was one of those condoms James waxed eloquent about. People couldn’t actually “admit” that they enjoyed “negro music” for social acceptability reasons, but turning it into a farce allowed them to enjoy it without admitting that was what they enjoyed.

raf says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:18 am

@grayhackle
“Something in the boor’s tiny brain tells him that he is really and truly the most important person in the universe.”

Whereas I know better, because that person is me.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:20 am

@raf
it is all a big act, everyone is a bunch of phonies /holdencaulfield

Drew says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:21 am

rbj, the entire series seems to be about loss. Mad Men shows us how it once was and doesn’t try to convince us that it was absolutely terrible back in the early 60s. It just . . . is.

But I sense that the entire point of the series that when we kicked the chocks out from beneath the Old Culture of the 50s, we may have gained some wonderful sort of enlightenment, but we lost something ineffable. There is a sadness present in the series as we
see the old falling aside to make way for the new. Perhaps that's how it always is.

But what is also felt is that the changes that we associate with that much-abused term “the sixties” did not happen overnight. And even the children of the 60s did not hold to some monolithic mindset.

Clinton was hailed as the first Boomer president. “Hooray!” shouted the flower children! “One of us! One of us!” But I submit he was no more one of them than, say, George W.. The 60s were half over before “the 60s” began.

Now, if you want to see a President who epitomizes what we think of when we say “the 60s,” look no further than the Current Occupant, who actually came of age in the 70s.

And Mad Men is about those members of the previous generations watching as the world they knew — the rot, yes, but also things that were good — falls away as another generation rises.

It's probably something that happens to every generation. I was born in 65, but consider the 80s my formative years. In recent years I've found myself longing for 1982 again. (Yeah, no internet, but I would almost consider that a blessing.)

jeischen says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:22 am

I always liked the term “let your freak flag fly” for the alliteration, if nothing else. Watched Anthony Bourdain's show last night on his gastronomical tour of San Francisco. Showed plenty of shots of “hippies” (all now wearing the de rigeur rasta dreadlocks) laying on the sidewalks of the Tenderloin. It was pretty sad, really, as if they were waiting for someone to find the portal to the way-back time machine for one last Grateful Dead session.

When I find myself cursing the young whippersnappers pumping out the rumbling beats, I have to stop and remind myself of when I was cranking Van Halen's “Running With the Devil” through my crappy Kraco speakers. I would have killed to have had a quality stereo system at that age.

raf says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:30 am

@RebeccaH

“As one who came of age in the sixties,” I have always maintained that most of the sixties actually occurred in the seventies. I date the start of the modern conception of the sixties to the '68 Chicago Dem convention. Earlier, it was mostly folk music.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:32 am

raf:
@grayhackle

“Something in the boor's tiny brain tells him that he is really and truly the most important person in the universe.”
 Whereas I know better, because that person is me.

What an Ego, be humble, I am sure there is someone more in important than me, however, I have not met them yet.
(does my wife read this blog? It is not that she is not more important but, including her in analysis throws off the statistical sample)

Spud says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:34 am

Hmm, the bleat was starting to get a little screedy, but that's OK by me😊.

Besides the “kitschyness”, the Who song “Squeezebox” helped kill the accordion. Nobody can play one with a straight face now, unless you're portraying a geek playing one for laughs (ala Urkel). I'm guessing other countries still value the accordion, especially those who are not inundated by electronic entertainment vessels.

The accordion could make a comeback someday, especially if more people get unplugged and seek ways to be entertained that does not involve electricity. And if hot redheads play them more often …

Terry Fitz says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:35 am

areader, al & others… There is no question that racism and sexism had (has) to be confronted. These things are wrong in themselves and bad for society. Having come to that realization, young people in the 60's in particular were faced with the question of what to do about it. As a former young person and the father of two teens, I can say without fear of error that young people as a group are not wired to be content with evolutionary change. Only revolutionary change makes sense to them. Although I decry the decline in civility that people here are reasonably associating with the cultural revolution of the 60s and 70s, on the whole there is less injustice associated with lack of civility than with racism and sexism, and so I'm willing to concede that if (big if) it was necessary to lose a measure of civility in order to bring society to a place where racism and sexism are considered wrong by most people, then it was a good trade. The question for me is whether we need to accept a world without civility today, and I don't believe that we do. Good manners and social grace are entirely consistent with a refusal to accept racism and sexism. Please understand that nostalgia for what we lost does not necessarily imply a disregard for what we have now. Nor does a wish that people (yes, including Joe Wilson) would develop and adhere to a sense of decorum imply a racist or sexist attitude.

raf says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:37 am

@bgbear (roger h)
My conclusion comes from extensive sampling and statistical analysis. A sample size of 30 is usually good enough for statistically valid conclusions; I have gathered literally millions of observations. Everywhere I go, the universe is always extending infinitely in every direction. Ergo, I am the center of the universe. I understand that you might entertain similar thoughts, but you are just mistaken; MY observation is that you are off somewhere, over there.

raf says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:44 am

@bgbear (roger h)
In assessing absolute importance, all wives are statistical outliers.
bgbear (roger h) says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:48 am

@raf

good point, my conclusion is based on the idea that if I accepted your greatness and then died, you would no longer be important to me.

The truly “great one” will transcend my death. I hear there are things called “religions” which think this person exists (“God” “Allah” “Yahweh” “Flying Spaghetti Monster”). I am skeptical but, open to the possibility thus proving my ribbed condom of humility.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 15, 2009 at 11:50 am

raf:
@bgbear (roger h)

In assessing absolute importance, all wives are statistical outliers.

“outliers” that was the word I was trying to remember, thanks😊

areader says:
September 15, 2009 at 12:03 pm

Terry, you civil reasoned response is appreciated. However, my underlying point is that the mythic era of civility was not lost in the sixties because it never existed.

If you disagree, please let me know when the era started. I think that if you contend the dirty hippy types are responsible, you need to look at those seemingly civilized people in their dark trousers and pressed white shirts who were frothing at the mouth over the prospect of black people going to the same high school or college as whites. If there was an era of civility and some group of people are responsible for ending it, surely it was them.

juanito - John Davey says:
September 15, 2009 at 12:11 pm

browniejr:

So far no one has mentioned one of the best contemporary examples of “Super Sexed-Up Tart” vs. “Delicate Wilting Flower”- albeit it was on TV, and therefore censored to fit certain norms: On the old “Andy Griffith Show,” Andy and Barney once went out with “The Fun Girls” (the tarts), and Helen Krump and Thelma Lou (the flowers) were outraged. We knew Helen was a school teacher, and presumably Thelma was a fine, upstanding woman (I don’t think she had a job?), so we knew their backstories. Even so, Thelma would also cover Barney’s head with red lipstick kisses, so she was no wilting flower, when the lights were out! We could treat “The Fun Girls” like a stereotype, and assume all sorts of things about them, since they were treated in a cartoonish kind of way/ only appeared in a couple of episodes.

Mad Men, and the way that Joanie has developed from jiggling secretary to fiance with a talent for the accordion, is an example of the way modern TV is done. The characters start out as a
stereotype, and with time and character development, other sides of their personalities are shown. I wouldn’t doubt that Joanie has a cousin named Thelma Lou...

‘Fun Girls’? ‘No wilting flower when the lights were out’?

As Woody once said on Cheers

Woody “Back home, we used to have a saying about girls like that”

“Really? What was that Woody?”

Woody “Let’s date ’em!”

**Darrell** says:
September 15, 2009 at 12:14 pm

The baby got thrown out with the bathwater, plain and simple. Y’all need to lighten up, and go watch Firefly instead, and enjoy Christina Hendrix! Meow! 😽

**juanito - John Davey** says:
September 15, 2009 at 12:19 pm

The accordion has lost it's point of reference for me (Myron Floren). That perspective was destroyed in 2002 when my then 1 year old discovered The Wiggles featuring a keyboardist / accordion player. They do, however put on a good live show, and their cover of Hoop De Do is quite nice (“I’ll take an old accordion, stretched about a mile. I always smile, because it's got style!”). Still, I would have enjoyed hearing Myron Floren's interpretation of “Black Hole Sun”.

**Drew** says:
September 15, 2009 at 12:32 pm

j-JD, I assume you've heard Paul Anka's lounge rendition of Black Hole Sun?

**raf** says:
September 15, 2009 at 12:58 pm

@areader

I don’t think of “civility” as being the same as “good-heartedness.” The fact that people were “frothing at the mouth” inside while maintaining public rules of decorum does not mean they were really “uncivil,” it actually pretty much defines civility. Hypocritical? Only if you think people thought manners meant something more than appropriate public behavior. I personally knew a lot of nasty folks who nevertheless knew they had to behave in public if they wanted to be taken seriously.

**juanito - John Davey** says:
September 15, 2009 at 1:00 pm

* * *

**Drew**:

j-JD, I assume you've heard Paul Anka's lounge rendition of
Black Hole Sun?

Yes, of course. Better still, Steve and Eydie's version of Black Hole Sun. I like Anka's cover of “Smells Like Teen Spirit”.

Nancy says:
September 15, 2009 at 1:02 pm

@hpoulter
Of course you are right. Got a little defensive of our most excellent host–but he can take care of himself.^^

rbj says:
September 15, 2009 at 1:09 pm

Oh, and as for the accordion, while Polka may be out of fashion there is some very good Zydeco music out there.

kahall says:
September 15, 2009 at 1:15 pm

My dad played they accordion. I always thought it was funny when he would get it out. I need to ask him why he started. I did not know it was a thing to do back then.

boblipton says:
September 15, 2009 at 1:15 pm

bgbear (roger h):
@raf
good point, my conclusion is based on the idea that if I accepted your greatness and then died, you would no longer be important to me.
The truly “great one” will transcend my death.

Jackie Gleason?

Bob

boblipton says:
September 15, 2009 at 1:20 pm

RebeccaH:
The worst thing about the sixties wasn’t the sixties. It was the seventies.
As one who came of age in the sixties, I can verify that you are right.

No one came of age in the ’60s. No one. It was an era of unending adolescence.

Bob

Mary Margaret says:
September 15, 2009 at 1:58 pm
Eras fade away instead of dying outright. I was born in 1962. My parents were social in the way extroverts were back then: Jazz cocktail parties, ladies luncheons, dinner parties, winter formals, etc… My father would accept hunting invitations, and, in his turn, sponsor deep sea fishing excursions. Always lot of alcohol and cigarettes. Yet, there were parts of my childhood that harkened back to an earlier time. We shopped at the corner grocery where chicken ran free and the owner and workers all belonged to the same Yugoslavian family. We had huge Sunday dinners after Mass. All the office workers downtown, be they secretaries or executives, took two hour lunchbreaks (an hour to eat and an hour to nap). My father always took a walk around the neighborhood before dinner and occasionally beggars knocked on our door asking for a handout (my mother always handed them a sandwich and a mason jar of milk). Sometimes the worlds overlapped such as the surrealist memories my husband and I have of being dropped off at the movie theatre while a race riot was going on outside. Or my brother's college friends who would come to my father's house, eat my mother's meal and criticize their politics.

Terry Fitz says:
September 15, 2009 at 2:12 pm

areader, this will be my last today. My thanks to you and all for your kind indulgence. To be clear, I don't necessarily believe there was an Era of Civility that was supplanted by an Era of Incivility in the year 19xx. Less do I believe that the Hippies, per se, caused that to happen. As someone else pointed out, these things can't be marked by a date on a calendar. That said, I think most people would agree that our society has become progressively more crass, vulgar, profane, self-centered and loud since the mid-60's. Frankly, I blame Hollywood movies and TV and Madison Avenue far more than I blame the Hippies.

Take comedy as an example. Comedians have always had to play around the edges of the permissible. In smoky nightclubs they might cross the line now and again. But that was effective only because the line existed. Today, much of comedy is oddly humorless, and has the effect of a gross-out contest between angry, clueless teenagers. The movie Borat, for example. Now that we've seen a baggie of excrement at the dining room table... where to now? There is no line. The whole thing is a big snore, and uninteresting to most people past 17.

Am I advocating a new era of repression? Of course not. Of self restraint? You betcha. In particular, we need to grow up about how we discuss politics, religion, race, gender, and all the things that divide us.

When we stop watching Cathouse we may rediscover how sexy a kiss can be. When we stop paying to watch movies in the hope of a new and greater shock we may come to prefer being stirred to being shaken (h/t Sean Connery). When we acquire the veneer of manners we may develop the essence of true respect for all people. And when we speak to those we disagree with instead of seeking to score cheap points with those who already agree with us, we may learn something.

I'd be surprised if you couldn't agree on much of this, and I thank you for making the essential point that not everything was as it should be in days gone by. I don't think any reasonable person could disagree.
Mike Mistele says:
September 15, 2009 at 2:13 pm

**Darrell**:
*The baby got thrown out with the bathwater, plain and simple.  Y'all need to lighten up, and go watch Firefly instead, and enjoy Christina Hendrix! Meow!*

Hear, hear! Yo-Saf-Bridge is hawt! 😄

Tim says:
September 15, 2009 at 3:30 pm

weird… that top screen grab of Joanie (first pic) looks almost like a Star Trek scene. She could’ve been one of Mudd's Women…

Anyway, I am very much addicted to Mad Men! Best show since The West Wing, which I also watched with much enjoyment.

The only thing I can add to this blog is when I watch that show I get a jarring sense of how different American Society is now from then. We’ve done away with the Grown Up. Watch any contemporary show that features families like Everyone Loves Raymond or Home Improvement and you notice right away the parents are always portrayed as constantly seeking connection and understanding with their children -to the point they start dressing and behaving like them. On Mad Men the characters seen with a family -Don Draper and his wife- live completely outside the world of their children. When the kids have a problem they say “go watch television”

Nathan Shumate » Blog Archive » Quote of the day 2. says:
September 15, 2009 at 4:51 pm

[...] – James Lileks [...] 

Andre says:
September 15, 2009 at 5:29 pm

And here I thought “Mad Men” was just “Bewitched” without the witchcraft.

Crid [CridComment @ gmail] says:
September 15, 2009 at 5:39 pm

What MM blogs you readin’, James?

Lileks says:
September 15, 2009 at 7:23 pm

House Next Door is my favorite.

teach5 says:
September 15, 2009 at 7:39 pm

I've posted two comments and none have appeared. What's up with that?
shesnailie says:
September 15, 2009 at 7:39 pm

“everyone is out for himself. too many people believe that the best way to achieve something is to completely ignore your fellow man. or better still, be rude to him, shoulder him aside, insult him, and maybe he will go away and leave the way clear for you.” – john lennon 1969

teach5 says:
September 15, 2009 at 7:44 pm

Will try this again...When Joan's husband brought out that accordion, I was sure she would play 'Lady of Spain', which was a talent show hit of the day. Her performance was perfect, and the effect on her audience showed that.
My question re MadMen is why Don and Betty live in that stodgy old house. After his trip to CA, Don was fascinated with all things new and shiny. Why don't they live in 'modern' concrete and glass number in a chic suburb?

jamcool says:
September 16, 2009 at 2:17 pm

I am waiting for the first great MM parody (a la Simpsons or South Park)...we already have a canine version from a episode of the “Dog Whisperer”-naughty canines at a dog-friendly ad agency-complete with falling dog silhouettes.

Tim says:
September 16, 2009 at 3:37 pm

 teach5 :
...My question re MadMen is why Don and Betty live in that stodgy old house. After his trip to CA, Don was fascinated with all things new and shiny. Why don’t they live in ‘modern’ concrete and glass number in a chic suburb?

I think the answer Teach5 is that in spite of appearances, Don too is cost conscious about everything outside of his wardrobe. Consider he was driving the old Dodge... a model from 1959 (it's 1962) that runs fine but looks stodgy. It took a drunken fling with that TV comedian's wife and ensuing car crash for him to take the ‘plunge’ and sink for a Cadillac Fleetwood. It was a sad touch to see he used it to get on the good side with his wife Elizabeth in a very phony and classist way... anyway, my take is that his character, growing up in the depression, kicked around by an abusive father, he learned to scrap and scrape and hold on to everything that wasn't broken. Their kitchen works fine, it just doesn't match the 1960s. However everything at Sterling and Cooper is International style, and of the latest trend to impress the clients, just as a company like Google or Apple would have the latest in furniture and styling that told you they were looking at tomorrow.

I
Tim says:
September 16, 2009 at 3:40 pm

looking at the first pic at the top I thought James put in a frame grab from a TOS Star Trek (Mudd's Women?)…

“…is that you, Captain?”

Tom Beiter says:
September 17, 2009 at 6:59 am

My father played the accordion. He would get it out from time to time at family gatherings — Thanksgiving, Christmas — or just some evening when we kids would ask him. We would jump around dancing to German polkas — Too Fat Polka, Beer Barrel Polka, Pennsylvania Polka. We never thought it was funny. And if someone would have laughed, my dad would have kicked their a$$.

By the way, I thought the scene with Joan and the accordion was possibly the best scene of that episode.

The Delivery, Episode 3 is Live (AKA: Searching for Kleenex) says:
September 18, 2009 at 1:22 pm

[...] My post explaining the origin of ACORN and introducing the Cloward-Piven Strategy. Andrew Breitbart's Big Government site. James Lilek's article on Mad Men and the decline of civility. [...]
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?
Can’t call it summer; too early for Indigenous People’s Summer; too warm for early autumn. Whatever you wish, it’s perfect. The trees are still green, although a few trees are already fully involved in auto-immolation, and one or two have dumped their leaves altogether, as if they regard the slow shift of hues as some damn-fool prancey-dance, a luxury indulged by show-off dandy-trees with too much time on their limbs. The lawns are green, and the sprinklers still hiss. Now and then, a lawnmower; from noon to dusk, the drill-song of the cicadas. Crickets after dark.

The dark still keeps its distance. The 5 PM light has heft and strength. All the fall traditions are clicking back into place – the bus has been making its daily pick-up and return for a fortnight, of course, but tonight choir practice resumed. As with every year, there’s a change. Previously we went early to get pizza. Bad pizza. Bad puffy pizza. The puffier the crust, the worse the pizza. Even the grimmest flattest pizza is preferable to these doughy pillows smeared with sauce. But now we arrive early, and Natalie has Handbell practice right afterwards. Pizza comes at the end of the event, when my wife picks her up. I am released from the trials of Tuesday night pizza.

Glorious.

I’m looking forward to autumn this year, possibly because I think it will be warm. A perfect autumn with light jackets and bright days and piles of leaves and apples, and all the other cliches. A Disney autumn, or an autumn made...
of Warner Brothers cartoon backgrounds. I put out a little book today called “Now It’s Fall.” Charming little 1940s children’s book. It’s well-reviewed on Amazon, although one person complains because it mentions Halloween.

If you also do not participate in Halloween, you will not like this book. You could glue those pages together or rip them out, but then it ruins the flow of the poem about fall. So I just chose to return it.

Sigh. I can understand why people don’t want to participate in Halloween – don’t agree, but I understand the objections – but you can’t pretend it doesn’t exist.

I bought it in a New York bookstore many years ago, when Natalie was just a toddler. It comes out for a few weeks, then goes back in the drawer. “I remember that,” she says when I bring it out, smiling over the distant memory of childhood like an old man recalling the amusing diversions of Youth.

“Distant” is now the time when she was interested in My Little Ponys and such. Very glad it’s passed, since the number of small useless plastic pieces in the house has declined by 80%. My wife, who is as ruthless and unsentimental about tiny objects of questionable emotional importance as I am indulgent, purged the basement closet the other day, and discovered what a mass grave of Polly Pockets in a bin.

Oh, don’t throw them all, I said. Keep one or two to remember the Polly Pocket phase.

I did not win this discussion. I never win these discussions. I just wait a day, and liberate one item from the great mass of extruded petrochemical playthings, and tuck it somewhere. Given the immense stuff-reduction program I’m on, it seems counterproductive. I set aside a great many books for the thrift store today, to give you an idea of the magnitude of this effort. (The piano required moving a table, which required moving a bookcase, which required distributing the bookcase’s contents.) Five grocery bags full of books – sorry, boys, but that’s the way it has to be. There’s a certain sort of despair you feel when you look at a 500-page book about a particular subject, and you know that you read it, and you’ll be damned if you remember anything about it. There’s an enormous bio of Mao – a Maobio – and aside from the general hideous cruelty of the bastard and his miserable regime, the main thing I remember is the ruinous impact of the drive to increase steel production, how everyone had to give up their woks and build poisonous smelters in the backyard. It’s 900 pages thick.

Out go the tiny-type art history books from college, because while I know the difference between Mannerism and Rococo I am reasonably sure I will never have to concern myself between the interstitial period between the two styles. Out go the phone books with Stephen King’s name on the spine; out go tidy little non-fiction accounts of narrow moments in history that narrowly
affected another narrow aspect of Western Civ. Sometimes it seems as if these books aren’t trees you plant so you can enjoy the shade decades on – they’re bouquets you wear on your mental lapel for a week or two, enjoying the fragrant aroma until the book is filed and the perfume fades.

And that’s another thing: out go the old colognes. I use the stuff very sparingly, but I’ve been dealing with two fragrances I can’t bear to toss because the containers are so cool, and the fragrances so distinctive. They’re so distinctive I cannot tell whether I like them or not. They have a top note of pepper and musty fireworks. Both came from the Bath & Body Shop; both were quickly discontinued, which makes me suspect they’re either really awful or cause genetic mutations. Back to the fall classic: a dash of Bay Rum slapped on the cheeks after a shave. I need only a straw boater and a celluloid collar; wear that stuff, and people wonder if you’re also wearing spats.

As a workday, it had its ups and its deep, black, miserable trenches. I decided to do a video on Dan Brown’s new book, “A Man Runs Around Town Figuring Out Carvings That Have Been There All Along,” and inquired with the local big chain bookstore if I could shoot in their store. It had to go up the chain of the chain, and while they finally said yeeesss, I was forbidden from accosting customers. Apparently people are so terrified of a request for an interview they lose bladder control, and unable to stammer out the word “No,” are captured on tape with a spreading stain in their groinial department. I couldn’t talk to staff, either. I ended up doing a lame parody on the whole “Lost Symbol” idea, which I will post tomorrow at the Strib blog. Or here.

Later today, and by “later” I mean around 10 AM if I don’t forget: Out of Context Ad Challenge. Mpls update later in the late afternoon.

Note: yes, I see that the Twitter thang at the top of the page seems broken most of the time. Click on the “140 characters or less” headline and you’ll go straight to my Twitter page. See you there.

PASS IT ALONG, IF YOU WISH

45 RESPONSES TO wednesday, sept. 16

juanito - John Davey says:
September 16, 2009 at 12:14 am

Ok – I’m stupid tired at the moment, but I’m pretty sure that Wednesday is the 16th. And this ties in nicely to the lament of the fate of the My Little Ponies / Pollys. Tuesday the 15th was my youngest’s 5th birthday. And a cyclical as things are, the 8 year old sees the forgotten “Latest Thing” (My Little Ponies and Polly Pockets being something of a current facsination for the 5 year old) and she proclaims vivid memories of the long lost halcyon days of Mattel things forgotten.


or the best;


At least the Polly accessories are soft rubber. The My Little Pony gear is all sharp plastic, plotting to infiltrate a darkened walkway in the dead of night, biding it's time to assault bare feet. The bastards.

Mr Tall says:
September 16, 2009 at 12:39 am

“Sometimes it seems as if these books aren't trees you plant so you can enjoy the shade decades on — they're bouquets you wear on your mental lapel for a week or two, enjoying the fragrant aroma until the book is filed and the perfume fades.”

Wow.

I've gone over to the Hughniverse and signed up; when we're getting stuff like the quotations above for free, you deserve a little cash for your additional work posted elsewhere.

juanito - John Davey says:
September 16, 2009 at 1:02 am

I signed up for the Hughniverse as well. Told Duane that if they had given even a hint of what was included they would draw more subscribers. I took a chance that James was involved. Glad that I guessed correctly. In all honesty, even though I enjoy the Hewitt program, I would not have subscribed if there were no Lileks content. That is what I paid for. Everything else is just gravy.

So when will it be promoted here? Any formal announcement planned?

Ross says:
September 16, 2009 at 3:52 am

That's nice an' all for those who are into Twitter, but can we please have the “Your Host Elsewhere” links back? We finally got the new blog link instead of buzz.mn(which, believe me, shaves significant time off going via the Strib's home page) and now it's gone. Thanks in advance.

granular says:
September 16, 2009 at 5:18 am

So I'm assuming that before they were hauled off in shopping bags, all those books were carefully scanned from cover to cover, for eternal preservation in the ever-expanding Lileks Digital Vaults, right?

FYI, the Shorpy link needs to be reinstated too.

Deb_in_Madison says:
September 16, 2009 at 6:43 am

James,
You would do very well to gather all the Louis Lenski books that you can for Natalie to read. Most of her books are perfect for advanced
elementary readers and up. I know that you would even enjoy them. Lois Lenski is one of my favorite authors and illustrators. My fondest memories of school are finding her books and reading every one of them out of the school library. There are still a few in print today. Thank you for giving her work the attention it deserves.

Off to ebay to start that Louis Lenski collection I’ve been putting off.....

hpoulter says:
September 16, 2009 at 6:56 am

juanito – John Davey: I signed up for the Hughniverse as well. Told Duane that if they had given even a hint of what was included they would draw more subscribers. I took a chance that James was involved. Glad that I guessed correctly. In all honesty, even though I enjoy the Hewitt program, I would not have subscribed if there were no Lileks content. That is what I paid for. Everything else is just gravy. So when will it be promoted here? Any formal announcement planned?

Er – how much “gravy” is there? What do you get? I swear, they don’t give a hint. Just sign up for a recurring credit card charge and you will get access to something. Not a great business model. Even pr0n sites give you free samples (so I hear).

teach5 says:
September 16, 2009 at 7:24 am

“Indigenous People's Summer”-hilarious! This will be added to the collection of Bleatisms in my vocabulary. I concur with yesterday’s comment that you need to compile a book of exactly these types of essays on popular culture. Think of it as a Gobbler for everyday life. Whaddya say?

teach5 says:
September 16, 2009 at 7:30 am

BTW, how do I find your sites that had the Sears catalog stuff as well as the Gobbler pics? Since this was removed from the menus at the right, is it going to be on the subscription site?

Lulu says:
September 16, 2009 at 7:31 am

Good ol' Dan Brown. Wonder if this book (like his others) will begin with a man introduced to us by an occupational modifier (“Renowned curator Jacques Saunière”; “Physicist Leonardo Vetra”; “Geologist Charles Brophy”) being hotly pursued by the bad guys (he'll wind up dead by chapter two)? Wonder if it'll include interesting word choices such as “a voice spoke,” and “the silhouette...stared”?

I can't take credit for the above observations, since I've never read an entire Dan Brown book. Took The DaVinci Code out of the library and never made it past the first page. The above is courtesy of Mark Liberman of The Language Log
who brilliantly explicates exactly what it was about Brown's writing that put me off.

I wonder if you were given the brush-off because the bookstore feared no customer would want to be seen purchasing a Dan Brown Book?

EG says:
September 16, 2009 at 7:40 am

The Halloween complaint reminds me of my in-laws. A few examples:

1. They're missionaries in an underdeveloped country. They gave us a gift (for our wedding anniversary!) of a book of photos of the Indigenous People. And my mother-in-law took wrapping paper – shiny, PRISMATIC wrapping paper – and covered all the breasts.

2. We gave them the game Cranium. She went through all the cards and wrote in churchy alternatives. Instead of acting out Madonna, you have the option to act out The Virgin Mary.

3. Every Easter they wish us a happy Resurrection Sunday.

4. And, on Halloween when the boys were kids they gave out tracts to the neighborhood kids. Scripture.

FYI, we trick-or-treat. And we've managed to do so without our kids becoming Satan worshippers. So far.

GardenStater says:
September 16, 2009 at 8:18 am

“...I've been dealing with two fragrances I can't bear to toss because the containers are so cool.”

I'm completely with you, James, even to the choice of Bay Rum. It's what my dad has used for decades, and I like the smell myself (the good stuff, that is–some brands of Bay Rum smell like nail polish remover).

But I ran out of it a while back, and ordered a new bottle of my favorite brand (Dominica). I was horrified to see that they had changed the packaging—the label's still similar, but the bottle shape was completely changed and (horror of horrors!) the new bottle has a plastic screw top, instead of the cork that the old bottle used.

Thank heavens I had saved the bottle from the previous batch, so I could pour in the new stuff.

Because when I look in my medicine cabinet, I want to see certain things.

Lord, I sound like James' twin! No wonder I enjoy the Bleat!

juanito - John Davey says:
September 16, 2009 at 8:19 am

@hpoulter
Er, well right now not much. Duane told me that they have a bunch of additional guests set to start contributing. Ed Morriseey, Mary Steyn, Mitch Berg, Mary Katherine Ham, or Ed Driscoll – I would think it would be worth it for any of those. Truthfully I signed up
strictly for the Lileks offering.

**Matt** says:
September 16, 2009 at 8:22 am

People! People! How have we gone from shimmering autumnal moments to Dan Brown bashing? Aren’t we better than this? What next? An SNL video with the naughty words bleeped out?

Lileks- please don’t slap your ‘Keillor Curse’ on Dan. He’s a nice guy who has had success writing thrillers for Bleat’s sake.

I can only wish you some of the same success Dan has had, for your writing and hard work James. Hopefully without having to retain law firms in multiple countries to protect your work and royalties from opportunists and copycats.

Lulu-If you were expecting a classic American novel, I’m sorry. Glad you didn’t pay for the book.

**John** says:
September 16, 2009 at 8:31 am

I have no trouble giving away books I’m no longer interested in, but the key to maintaining space you could park a piano in is not getting interested in questionable books in the first place. A biography of Mao, indeed. All I ever cared to retain about that guy was a single reference to him, on a single page of Peter Fleming’s One’s Company, published in 1934: Mao is credited with military ability and is said to be suffering from a terminal illness. And that’s all. Perfect. You’re left thinking nothing, or you’re left thinking “Musta been contagious,” and either way you’ve summed up a large noisome place and saved much-needed room both inside and outside your skull. This accumulation of doorstops must be a liberal-arts thang. It makes much more sense to save one’s agronomy texts from college, which I did, and which as recently as this weekend I consulted. Someone wanted to know what “coir” was; I promptly pulled down a 35-year-old book and told her.

**juanito - John Davey** says:
September 16, 2009 at 8:38 am

*juanito – John Davey* :
@hpoulter

Er, well right now not much. Duane told me that they have a bunch of additional guests set to start contributing. Ed Morrissey, Mary Steyn, Mitch Berg, Mary Katherine Ham, or Ed Driscoll – I would think it would be worth it for any of those. Truthfully I signed up strictly for the Lileks offering.

Let me clarify what I mentioned above (hey that’s almost me in the third person! Kind of full of myself there). The folks I mentioned are not contributors to the Hughniverse, but offer those names of being worthy of a subscription site.

I should have attempted it thusly: “Wonderful bloggers such as Ed Morrissey, Mary Steyn, Mitch Berg, Mary Katherine Ham, or Ed Driscoll” (disclaimer: actual bloggers not included).
NessMonster says:
September 16, 2009 at 9:51 am

I still don't get the PC-holiday thing. We can only have “Holiday Parties” in December because Christmas is, well, too Christian, but we can only have “Harvest Festivals” at the end of October because Halloween isn’t Christian enough? Jebus Criminey.

Waterhouse says:
September 16, 2009 at 10:03 am

Exactly how someone can appreciate Lileks' writing and then not cringe at the godawful prose and insipid storytelling of a complete hack like Dan Brown is beyond me.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 16, 2009 at 10:21 am

If you have a Winter-like cold spell in the Spring can you call it Wasichu Winter?

Al Federber says:
September 16, 2009 at 10:24 am

granular: So I'm assuming that before they were hauled off in shopping bags, all those books were carefully scanned from cover to cover, for eternal preservation in the ever-expanding Lileks Digital Vaults, right?
FYI, the Shorpy link needs to be reinstated too.

You snarky troll. Lileks' obsessive scanning and hoarding could be the salvation of western thought and art in the post-apocalyptic world! I say “could be” because it all depends on what the Chinese do with the stuff after they pull it from the rubble.

Mike Gebert says:
September 16, 2009 at 10:33 am

Today's video production tip: screw chains, they're always like that. Find your last surviving neighborhood bookstore and shoot there; they'll appreciate the attention and let you come back again and again.


(If you like that, search the web for the one somebody did of the beginning of The Da Vinci Code rewritten as a Parker novel by Richard Stark. Best thing is, it's only half as long.)

HunkybobTX says:
September 16, 2009 at 10:40 am

NessMonster :
I still don't get the PC-holiday thing. We can only have “Holiday Parties” in December because Christmas is, well, too Christian, but we can only have “Harvest Festivals” at the end of October because Halloween isn’t Christian enough? Jebus Criminey.
I'm with you. I'll celebrate Halloween, Christmas, Easter, or whatever holiday I feel like. And if someone has a problem with that they can go sit on a Festivus pole and spin!

Glenn says:
September 16, 2009 at 10:56 am

James,

On the subject of pizza, and as a great lover of the stuff, it dispairs me to no end that your pizza experiences always seem to be terrible (or at best disappointing). Why is that? Why do you keep hitting yourself in the face with crappy pizza experiences? Surely there's a good pizza place in Minneapolis? For my sake, and the other pizza lovers in your audience, would you please go find it and treat yourself?

Thank you,
Glenn

raf says:
September 16, 2009 at 11:06 am

@juanito – John Davey
In the list: “Ed Morriseey, Mary Steyn, Mitch Berg, Mary Katherine Ham, or Ed Driscoll,” shouldn't that be “Mark Katherine Ham”?

Mark E. Hurling says:
September 16, 2009 at 11:07 am

Ah autumn! My favorite time of year, even in maple-challenged Southern California. Being from Illinois orginally, the Chicago Tribune always put a wonderful illustration called (you should forgive the term) “Injun Summer” http://www.tkinter.smig.net/Chicago/InjunSummer/index.htm on the cover of their Sunday magazine in the Fall. My Mom read it to me as a child and I just loved it and still do.

Steven King, strong start for his first three or so books but somehow became afflicted with diarrhea of the keyboard after the “Stand”. Pity.

Thanks, hpoulter for making me aware of Neal Stephenson. “Cryptonomicon” was great, and I'm on volume II of the Baroque Cycle. Like to discuss further if you're interested.

DryOwlTacos says:
September 16, 2009 at 11:11 am

Mike Gebert: Dead-on Wodehouse. Well done!

Bob says:
September 16, 2009 at 11:36 am

My daughter is eleven, very much a teenager in training: obsessed with lip gloss, desperate for a cell phone, diligent about picking out tomorrow's outfit for school. But sometimes, after she's been in her room with the door closed, I'll come in to see a couple of Polly Pockets left out on the bed. Always makes me smile.
Jennifridge says:
September 16, 2009 at 11:40 am

@Lulu
I too like my grammar served straight up and cold, but the criticism leveled at Dan Brown by the fellow Lulu linked us to smacks of intellectual snobbery. (Perhaps I should emulate Liberman and say “the fellow to whom Lulu linked us.”) I agree that Dan Brown’s writing is poor and almost hopelessly staid, and many of Liberman’s points have merit and even humor, but some of the distinctions he makes are a little too mincing for me. There’s nothing wrong with turns of phrase like “a voice spoke,” really, and if Liberman weren’t so busy congratulating himself by way of criticizing someone else, I dare say he’d have to admit as much.

juanito - John Davey says:
September 16, 2009 at 11:57 am

Teh weirdness… My comments for this post aren’t showing up… Must be a banned word, or, gulp… me.

I’ll submit Pepsi Cola as the subject of the ad. Artist Otto Soglow did several Pepsi ads.

juanito - John Davey says:
September 16, 2009 at 12:00 pm

And now my comment for today’s Out of Context Ad Challenge is posted in both of the 9/16/09 posts.

Huh?

Nixmom says:
September 16, 2009 at 12:16 pm

@Lulu
Wow. I’ve never read Dan Brown, either, and I’m pretty sure I won’t in the future.

Lulu says:
September 16, 2009 at 12:26 pm

@Matt
To be fair, I’m really the only one who “bashed” Dan Brown. And no, I wasn’t expecting The DaVinci Code to be the “classic American novel” (whatever THAT is)...I was just hoping it would be readable. I didn’t personally find it to be so.

Lulu says:
September 16, 2009 at 12:31 pm

@Mike Gebert
Wow. This was absolutely hilarious. Well done!
@Jennifridge

I actually agree that some of the points he makes are persnickety ones. Nonetheless, I was so relieved to find that someone had put into words that icky feeling I got when I read the opening paragraphs of The DaVinci Code. Thought it was worth pointing out.

GardenStater says:
September 16, 2009 at 12:41 pm

Funny thing about saving books vs. getting rid of them. I love to have books around, even if I know I'll never read them again. But I remember a Seinfeld episode where someone (Jerry? George?) questioned the whole notion of saving books after you've read them. After all, it's unlikely you're going to read them again.

People who don't save books just don't understand.

Mr_Lilacs says:
September 16, 2009 at 12:46 pm

Whew, I was afraid all that exposure to musical theater had made Mr. Steyn a bit lighter in the loafers (and elsewhere).

LindaL says:
September 16, 2009 at 1:19 pm

I liked the DaVinci Code as well as Angels and Demons. They are very much brain-candy books. Both are fast-paced and easy to read. His other books were essentially more of the same, and not worth the time it took to read them. I think that they are very similar to the Harry Potter series, fun to read ONCE. But if that read occurs during the down time of a very dull business trip, one won't be disappointed.

I made the mistake last year of commenting to a couple of people at work that I enjoyed both Christmas and Halloween as very important Christian/pagan mashup holidays. Whoa! Will I never do that again? You can bet on it.

Jennifridge says:
September 16, 2009 at 1:24 pm

@Lulu
I'm with you, Lulu. For some reason, that guy really annoyed me and I had to tell someone. 😖 You didn't write it, so I was certainly leveling no criticism at you. I feel kind of bad for wasting James' bandwidth on my response to it... and I continue to do so with this post. I shall desist.

dman says:
September 16, 2009 at 1:55 pm

hey, you got the date wrong its wednesday sept.16 i should know its my birthday!

curtsnide says:
September 16, 2009 at 2:26 pm

I don't really understand why someone would read a bad writer
when there are so many very good books that you're never going to
get to. And I don't think--I want something light-- quite works as an
answer. Wodehouse is light as a feather, but he isn't a bad writer
and so he's worth reading.

I also don't quite get the notion of not reading books again. Why
wouldn't you?

**Bob** says:
September 16, 2009 at 2:29 pm

GardenStat: I remember that Seinfeld episode, and I always thought
that “observation” was lame. A friend of mine can’t understand why
I keep books after I read them, so I asked him if I could have all of
his CDs. After all, he's already listened to them, right?

Oddly, he said no.

**curtsnide** says:
September 16, 2009 at 2:42 pm

Bob, exactly. It makes more sense to re-read a book then re-watch a
Seinfeld episode (and I do the latter all the time)

**JimBO** says:
September 16, 2009 at 4:21 pm

curtsnide -
Funny, I couldn't bring myself to watch the Seinfeld episodes the
first time around.

But, I do agree: Those who like to re-read books should keep same.
Just like the person who likes to re-listen to his music CDs should
keep those.

**boblipton** says:
September 16, 2009 at 6:47 pm

Ah, Pizza. The center of the Pizza Universe is, of course, New Haven
Connecticut. There are, of course, other worthy types of pizza: the
brick-oven, thin-crust pizza of New York City, the tort variety of the
Boston South Shore; there are even afficianados of Chicago Deep
Dish pizza. I, myself, am found of Sicilian and even the ancestral
Pizza Rustica, which is made without cheese.

The French, of course have delved far too deeply into the subject
and have somehow determined that there are exactly eight specific
variations of pizza. What they have in common is their inedibility,
doubtless due to the fact that they can't get it to my door in thirty
minutes.

I think, James, the problem is that you are eating some variation of
Swedish pizza. Good pizza, of course, requires something that goes
well with cheese, usually greasy. I can't think of much in the way of
Lutheran Church Dinner that really matches that, although perhaps
potted meatballs would do.

In the meantime, my cousin, Eric Lurio, the well known author and
cheap-skate, has been searching the world for Great Pizza. He has
found the best pizzeria in Zimbabwe. Indeed, I suspect he found the
only pizzeria in Zimbabwe. Next month he is off to Timbuktu and
perhaps Chad, where he will continue his quest.
In the meantime, James, might I suggest making your own? When we were little an English muffin, some Ragu and a bit of New York Cheddar was quite a treat. I hear you have some cheese around there too.

Bob

Mikey NTH says:
September 16, 2009 at 6:52 pm

It is beautiful, yes. But the light is paling. And I am chasing leaves out of the garage.

I would look forward to winter if it wasn’t so gray and drear – if there were a few more of those spectacular clear blue days when even the winter sun hurts the eyes.
Don't have a plethora of bleatage today, due to general good mood and job obligations. Hey, there's a new word – jobligation! I can't make my child's annual fun-run because of a jobligation. It's certainly better than “work-related conflict,” but portmanteau neologisms always lose to the tediously obvious terms.

What was the first lesson of Strunk and White? Something about writing clearly, using simple words? Something like that.

In the absence of a lot of words we have a lot of pictures. Later today comes a big update I forgot to post on Tuesday, and will delight those who treasure low moments in American comedy. Also, the Engraveyard starts back up. This next bit might go there if I get enough examples: Bank Vignettes.

“Vignettes” is the term for the art on stock certificates, so I'm borrowing it – with interest! (Sorry.) These pictures used to appear on checks, but no more. Now it's all logos. The smaller banks must have used the buildings for a reason; small-town pride, or cheap advertising.

Why do I have these? I'll get to that.

This one may mystify anyone who's not from Minneapolis, and mystify a good many locals as well.
The strange design harks back to the Marquette Bank's original location, an Egyptian-themed structure built after the Tut craze in the twenties. Really: see here. Chicago-Lake is nowhere near the old bank, but the M suggests it was part of the Marquette banking system.

Dilworth:

Every small-town 60s bank, right here. Tidy, modern. The international style boiled down to its smallest possible shape and seeded throughout the tiny towns of America. As the WPA and other Federal programs spread Depression Moderne style, the banks spread Miesian simplicity.

Didn't last.
The Fargo National fared better – still around.

In Lisbon:

The bank seems smothered by a Sunday morning.
At least I hope this picture was taken on a Sunday. Lisbon looks dead.

The fine old First National Bank in Moorhead:

Gone. This one seems to be making a rather fine distinction:

Yes, the First National Bank of Southwest Fargo. In West Fargo.

One of my favorite crazy buildings, the black-brick / white-marble Merchant's Bank.
Finally, another Minneapolis-area bank:

I like this building. Swing the google around by the tail and you'll see the hits and misses of this suburban intersection – a big condo across the street, then two strip malls, one of which has built-in housing. The bank building is the
most successful – and it manages to combine Prairie Style and the International Style. Well played!

Where did I get them? Found them in a thick stack of 1960s checks my dad set aside.

Every one of them was bad. Ah, the pleasures of being a small businessman.

---

**21 RESPONSES TO thursday, sept. 17**

**Dave (in MA) says:**

September 17, 2009 at 1:09 am

*A jobligation* is better than *funemployment*, I always say.

**John says:**

September 17, 2009 at 1:23 am

So uh James, how does it feel to have the “cool brother” in the White House?

**WatchWayne says:**

September 17, 2009 at 6:37 am

“Blog” certainly won out over the 300 words it would otherwise require to describe adequately the phenomenon...

**Grebmar says:**

September 17, 2009 at 7:03 am

“jobligation.” I like that neologism. And I’m pretty fussy about such things.

**Benito says:**

September 17, 2009 at 7:12 am

Someone once said–and it may have been you!–that before the FDIC banks looked like fortresses or Greek temples because the design would reassure customers of the strength and stability of those businesses. If your building looks 2000 years old, it will probably last for another 2000, right?

After the FDIC, such reassurances weren’t necessary and banks were made cheap, boring, and uninteresting, with the minimum construction material necessary to hold the roof up and get people in and out quickly. (This isn’t a slam on the FDIC, and obviously all architecture has changed over the years, but it’s a fun theory.)

**hpoulter says:**

September 17, 2009 at 7:27 am

“What was the first lesson of Strunk and White? Something about writing clearly, using simple words? Something like that.”
I think it was “Eschew sesquipedalianism”.

juanito - John Davey says:
September 17, 2009 at 8:09 am

Does your Dad still take checks today? They have EFT / Check readers that will sweep a checking account on the spot. No waiting for bank to bank communication, so check floating goes away.

Now, did he hold on to those returned checks because he is still pursuing those deadbeats? If so, huzzah! Ever vigilant!

krull says:
September 17, 2009 at 9:25 am

i miss those old, “tiddy” International Style bank buildings. Yeah, there were boring, but they were banks. They’re supposed to be boring. And at least they were honest, why do banks today all want to look like houses? With their sloped roofs and faux shutters, are they really fooling anyone? If I want to go into a house, I’ll go into my own, I don’t need the fake frieze and white columns.

While they’re at it, why don’t they have dirty laundry piling up and dishes in the sink if they want to look like a house.

DerKase says:
September 17, 2009 at 9:27 am

“Yes, the First National Bank of Southwest Fargo. In West Fargo.”

In North Dakota. In North America. Yikes!

I had a great aunt who worked at the York State Bank in Elmhurst, IL, (now the 5/4 National Bank (“25% more than other banks!”)) from the 20s to the 60s. She would go through the change and pull out the disappearing coinage after a numismatic switch. My dad inherited a ton of gold coins, V & buffalo nickels, mercury dimes, standing liberty quarters, etc, etc.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 17, 2009 at 9:58 am

John:
So uh James, how does it feel to have the “cool brother” in the White House?

I think I would favor Putin in the WH at the moment.

Russian bear strong like, uh, bear

:p

Larry says:
September 17, 2009 at 10:01 am

Hey was there a promise somewhere of details of how to register for pay extras. Like the Rushmore part of the near-cation? Did I miss it, is there a link?
Kristin says:
September 17, 2009 at 10:08 am

Uselessly adding my opinion that except for the Marquette Bank, those bank buildings are all hideous.

wiredog says:
September 17, 2009 at 10:09 am

In Cedar City UT, where Dad lives, there's a Bank that looks like a Bank:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/kitcase/3699314432/sizes/l/in/set-72157621102862200/
http://www.flickr.com/photos/kitcase/3699318640/in/set-72157621102862200/
http://www.flickr.com/photos/kitcase/3699319282/in/set-72157621102862200/

John says:
September 17, 2009 at 11:31 am

The occult reference above to some other “John” notwithstanding, I must say I was taken for a moment by the bank in Lisbon. I thought it was one in Lisbon IA, not ND, the one where, on a bicycle trip in 1980, I stopped to cash a $10 traveler’s check. A distinct memory, I don’t know why. Ten dollars? In a traveler’s check? What, was I afraid I was going to LOSE it? Now, it just makes me wonder not just what I ate on that ride, but if I ate on that ride. Anyway, the teller, a pretty black-haired girl, acted like this sort of transaction was perfectly normal. I am thankful. As for Lisbon ND, they might be thankful for anybody walking in, or out, with ten dollars, even ten 21st-century dollars.

bgbear (roger h) says:
September 17, 2009 at 11:52 am

If I did not have to go in to sign car loan papers, I would have not stepped into a bank in over 15 years. For me, the buildings are there to stick the ATM machine into.

Seattle Dave says:
September 17, 2009 at 1:00 pm

My mom has never used an ATM. She has this notion that it's good if the folks at your bank know you personally. I can't even imagine.

On the other hand, her bank doesn't screw up as frequently as mine does (and it's NEVER in my favor), so maybe she has a point.

Jeff says:
September 17, 2009 at 5:35 pm

A stack of bum checks from the 60's — a neat reminder that some problems reign eternal.

Michael Rittenhouse says:
September 17, 2009 at 8:48 pm

We had a 1st State Bank in Bellaire, Texas. The giant, white 1 stood
atop a rotating, digital display that served as the unofficial game clock at the Little League park three blocks away.

I don't think we had a 2nd State Bank.

jamcool says:
September 18, 2009 at 1:29 am

If you lived in Phoenix, you could bank in a geodesic dome. Or among concrete mushrooms...

http://www.modernphoenix.net/vnb/index.htm

Azrael Brown says:
September 18, 2009 at 8:39 am

Sharing, for the non-townies, and because I think I remember how it went: West Fargo was a small stockyard town a few miles west of Fargo; at some point, the meat packing plant bought the entire townsite and banished non-employees to the south, who said, “screw that, we’ll be our own town,” and Southwest Fargo was born just across #10 from West Fargo. Years pass, Armour sells the factory, West Fargo becomes its own town again and calls itself Riverside; Southwest Fargo doesn’t want a good name to go to waste, takes the name West Fargo. Go forward another few years, somebody finally realizes the lameness of two little towns so close to each other and both on the brink of being swallowed by Fargo proper, so they consolidate into the West Fargo we know and love today.

Ed Driscoll » Of Mies And Men says:
September 19, 2009 at 2:38 am

[…] his Bleat yesterday, James Lileks featured canceled checks and other images of several small midwestern banks from the 1960s, and [...]
BORING ENTRY AHEAD. I haven’t earned this Friday, but I’ll take it. Can’t bank time. Good thing, too – some people would die unexpectedly, and leave huge messy estates with Fridays and Saturdays stored all over the place. In boxes up on the shelf, in envelopes in the back of the drawer, in accounts accessible only by presenting stiff-covered passbooks. The heirs would either be prudent with the boon, or spend them all in a spree. Whoo-hoo! But if you could earn interest in time, it would change everything. Some would put their weekends in secure accounts that paid off in minutes per day; others would find a way to leverage a Wednesday against the value of an Italian Sunday in 2012, stake everything on a mad bid for a three-century lifespan, then lose it all when the Temporal Bubble crashed.

Even if the accounts weren’t insured by the government, I expect some people would demand relief. The headlines would be heartbreaking – Speculators Required To Cease Existing Or Face Jail Time, for example. Could you declare temporal bankruptcy and wipe the slate clean, or would you be required to borrow time from other people to pay your debt?

Time: the only commodity you can trade, but not purchase.
Anyway, Friday. When I picked up Natalie from the bus on Thursday, I rummaged through my sack of things that irritate her, and settled on a well-worn favorite: exaggerated enthusiasm over the approach of Friday.

“What's so special about FRIDAY?” she said. It's part of the ritual.

“Because I don't have anything due Friday night. Because I don't have anything due Saturday. Because there's pizza. Because I can take a long nap and stay up until 3. Because I can really get to work.”

By that I mean I can work on the hobbies. Hobby-time is in small supply these days; if I don't get it done Friday night, forget it. I've been planning three or four giant things – a big new super-modern front page for the WDS, or “Whole Damn Site,” an incremental re-theming of this page (because I'm tired of it) and a big site devoted to the Thirties, a period with which I have become quite fascinated. Before you say “yeah, yeah, believe it when I see it,” well: every week I build a subsite, and bank it. You have no idea how much stuff I have in the pipeline. The intention is to build a series of sites that collects everything on lileks.com by decade, and the 30s will be the first.

Real life & the job interferes, as well it should. My job now consists of getting up early, putting on a suit, driving to the office, and doing video pieces – sometimes three a day. It. Is. Heaven. In the past week I've done interviews with reporters about baseball, Jay Leno, aphid infestations, Romneycare, and other matters. We're building a new studio that will raise the bar.

Sorry for the cliche; bars are rarely mentioned except when they're raised, and that reminds me of something. There's a late-middle-aged man of military mien who stralks the neighborhood, holding a Bar. I assume it's some sort of weight he uses to make the daily walk all the more productive, but it's just odd: it's a long pipe with yellow tape on the ends, and he has the expression of someone who's been sent on a mission by Caesar. *I shall deliver this pole to Agrippa, by Numa, and if I die after I hand it over I shall die like a Roman, complete.* I saw him today striding through the wreckage left by a tree-trunk cleaving crew; the sidewalk was thick with sundered bark, the gutter littered with limbs from the fallen elm. He strode with steely confidence, eyes fixed on the block to come, pipe in hand. You come across this sort of conundrum often: he's working out, or he's insane.

Anyway: in a month we'll be in the new studio with a three-camera set-up and a teleprompter, and it will be sweet. I'm sure it will all fade to dull routine some day, but this year has been extraordinary. From sitting at my desk in sweats, blogging, not speaking a word aloud unless the dog wanders in and issues a questioning whine, to hurling downtown listening to the XM
radio 80s channel in a suit, wondering what the day might possibly bring. I couldn't have predicted this, which makes it all the more interesting.

A question for Friday: What's the best job you ever had?

New Strib column now; later, a site devoted to a 30s cartoonist – and of course 100 Mysteries. See you in a bit.

Pass it along, if you wish

94 RESPONSES TO Friday, Sept. 18

Jennifridge says:
September 18, 2009 at 10:31 am

Speaking of odd worker-outers, I work near St. Anthony Park and can relate a story that reminds me of James'. (For those of you not from the Cities, St. Anthony Park is a quiet, picturesque St. Paul neighborhood filled with lovely old homes.) When I used to run on lunch breaks, I would occasionally see a fit man anywhere between 35 and 55, with an enormous grin on his face, running through the neighborhood barefoot. Kind of weird on its own, but while running he carried some sort of slingshot-shaped device with balls on it that would clack together. I wish I knew what his story was. Any chance anyone around here has ever seen him?

I also frequently saw a man with a tragic toupee. It was so obvious and so sad that you wanted to cry for him and tell him to embrace baldness.

Trogdor says:
September 18, 2009 at 10:34 am

@Harold Combs
Wow, the BleatHouse gang is a tight community. First Benjammin, now a fellow WorldCom survivor. I got to fly to a 3 day seminar in Monaco, spent an extra 4 days touring around the south of France and up into the Alps. I was in England 7 other times. No more traveling now...but that's ok, I prefer being home with the family.

Robert says:
September 18, 2009 at 10:35 am

I wish I could save up time for a later date. Maybe that's the invention of the next century-saving up time.

Morrisey says:
September 18, 2009 at 10:41 am

Back-scrubber. YWCA.
Bizarcane says:
September 18, 2009 at 10:49 am

Best job I've ever had? Why, the one I'm in right now.

Robert says:
September 18, 2009 at 10:51 am

The best job I had was writing whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted and getting paid to do it! It didn’t last long, but the hours flew by and it didn’t feel like work at all. Whenever you want to take something home with you, it isn’t considered “work” anymore.

GardenStater says:
September 18, 2009 at 11:05 am

Jennifridge:
September 18, 2009 at 11:08 am

“I also frequently saw a man with a tragic toupee. It was so obvious and so sad that you wanted to cry for him and tell him to embrace baldness.”

“Tragic toupee”—I love it! So true. You look at the guy, and see the line at the back of his head. Or his face looks like twenty miles of bad road, but he’s got a mop of vibrant black hair! And you just think come on, man, who do you think you’re fooling?

And the answer, of course, is that he’s fooling himself. And sometimes, that’s what we need to do to get through the day.

Me, I started losing my hair in my late teens. Still have a fair amount thirty years later, but I have what some would refer to as a “fivehead.” I keep what hair I have pretty short, to avoid the temptation to do a combover. So I guess I’m embracing my baldness.

Spud says:
September 18, 2009 at 11:35 am

You can earn interest on your time, it just depends how you’re using the time you have now and where you store your treasure. You may have a whiz-bang moneymaking idea with those walking sticks. Just order up a few cases from China, print the Bleat logo on them and watch them sell like hotcakes. Well, does anything sell like hotcakes anymore? How about sell like iPods?

My best job … well, non-moneymaking job is dad, obviously. Them consarned kids just grow up too fast. My almost making money best job would be farmer. Wife and I (no kids at the time) lived on a small farm out in the sticks, where our nearest neighbor was a half mile away. We planted former cotton fields for a pick-your-own farm in the middle of NC. She was supposed to be the crop-tender, but I unfortunately was let go from my engineering job and it took awhile to find another.

I got to be the steward of the land for one season. We managed one crop of strawberries and grossed under $2K. There weren’t enough raspberries to pick, and the blueberry bushes (all 300 of them) were a few years away from bearing. You can’t make a living off the land if you’re making payments on it, so we moved away when I found a job in Toledo.

I can understand why farmers stay with it in spite of the gamble and hard life.
Nixmom says:
September 18, 2009 at 11:54 am

@Jennifer

If he had one in each hand and held them just right, would he be
“Crossing the Bar(s)”??

P.S. Everyone knows you can’t borrow time.

Juanito - John Davey says:
September 18, 2009 at 12:14 pm

David Bowie insists that “Time may change me, but you can’t trace
time”. But that doesn’t rule out borrowing time.

And the Supremes allow that “You Can’t Hurry Love”

And you can cross the bars, but “Crossing the streams would be....
bad”.

HelloBall says:
September 18, 2009 at 12:22 pm

Best job, being Dad. No question.

Most memorable job, also no question: three summers in high
school, first washing dishes, then bussing, then waiting tables at a
golf resort. I was a virgin my first day on the job, but made up for 15
years of chastity on my first weekend shift alone. The remotest
double-quad of bungalows was seldom booked, and as a result we
transformed it into a blend of Caddyshack and Animal House.
Everybody on the summer staff was there with somebody different
every night, sometimes more than one couple in each room. We
took turns serving as sentinel at the top of the footpath from the
main building. Sometimes sentinels would discover they couldn’t
whistle under pressure, and the woodland creatures surrounding
the fairways would be startled by naked teenagers racing their way.
I myself narrowly escaped being gelled by an enraged raccoon that
I had tripped over. Those little buggers have sharp toenails...

Yes, it was the late 60s/early 70s, as if you had to ask.

If one of my kids had ever mentioned wanting to work there over
the summer, I would have burned the place to the ground...

AA says:
September 18, 2009 at 12:24 pm

Best job was when I was in collage, I worked nights as a stripper.

No, not that kind.

3rd shift factory work running a jack hammer stripping waste off
pallets of boxes then stacking the boxes on other pallets.

I was as young and strong and free as I’ve ever been since.

Juanito - John Davey says:
September 18, 2009 at 12:25 pm
HelloBall:
Best job, being Dad. No question.
Agreed! None shall surpass it.
If one of my kids had ever mentioned wanting to work there over the summer, I would have burned the place to the ground...

Scorched. Earth.
Off to the convent for my lovelies.

EmGee says:
September 18, 2009 at 12:34 pm
“Lost time is not found again”
Best job so far: building semi permanent movie sets on a permanent site. Lots of exercise, we had free rein to come up with ideas, and a sense accomplishment when the boss drove up from Hollyweird to pat us on the back. Didn’t pay well, but nobody cared because we were appreciated.
Until neighborhood association next to us managed to circumvent zoning regs and have us shut down because they had more $$$$.
Disheartening in an area where unemployment hovers at 10% in good times (It’s 17% right now). Probably because these same nimbys fight employment opportunities for others at every juncture.

Seattle Dave says:
September 18, 2009 at 12:35 pm
@GardenStater
Yeah, I thought I remembered posting it on buzz.mn, so I tried searching for it there before boring everyone with repetition, but didn’t find it. Apologies to those who’ve seen it before. At least you know I didn’t make it up (or am consistent with my lies).

Trogdor says:
September 18, 2009 at 12:36 pm
@juanito – John Davey
This song about time cracks me up everytime:
Rush, “Need Some Love”
I’m runnin’ here, I’m runnin’ there,
I’m lookin’ for a girl.
‘Cause there’s nothin’ I need, there’s nothin’ I want more
In the whole wide world.
Well, I need it quick and I need it now
Before I start to fade away
That’s why I’m searchin’, that’s why I’m lookin’
Each and ev’ry day.
Chorus
Ooh, I need some love.
I said I need some love!
Oo yes, I need some love.
This feelin’ I can’t rise above.
Oo, yeah yeah!
Well I been hustlin’ here, I been hustlin’ there.
I been searchin' for about a week.
And I started feelin' this strange sensation.
My knees are startin' gettin' weak.
Well I need what keeps a young man alive;
I'm sayin' I need it now.
I'm gonna get the message across to you
Some way, somehow.
Chorus

GardenStater says:
September 18, 2009 at 1:40 pm

Seattle Dave: @GardenStater Yeah, I thought I remembered posting it on buzz.mn, so I tried searching for it there before boring everyone with repetition, but didn't find it. Apologies to those who've seen it before. At least you know I didn't make it up (or am consistent with my lies).

Oh, please, Seattle Dave, don't apologize–it was great to read it again!

(The mind races.)

And I'm digging HelloBall's story, too. We should have a Bleat convention, where we can drink all night and swap stories. Each person gets 10 minutes to tell their best.

I think I'd talk about the night I met James Brown backstage....

Wramblin' Wreck says:
September 18, 2009 at 1:43 pm

Every job I've ever had had many good parts and a few bad parts. But my favorite was a project we had in rural Italy (between Milano and Venezia just south of Dolomite mountains). No tourists. The local people were so nice and the food... what can you say other than spectacular!!! Unfortunately it has completely ruined Italian food for me here in US. Nothing comes anywhere close. I can instantly bring to mind sitting outdoors at the Trattoria for lunch, enjoying insalata pomodoro (a bowl of fresh sliced tomatoes with olive oil and balsamic vinegar) while we watch the beautiful young ladies walk by. Ahhhh!

The only difficulty I had there was adapting to their laid back attitude. Arrive late in morning for work; 2 hour lunch; work some more then siesta; work until 7 or 8 pm then dinner at 10-11 pm. Dinner ends 2am. Rinse and repeat.

It would be very interesting to see Italian drivers and Florida drivers mixed together. The irresistible force vs. the immovable object. I really don't know what would happen or who would prevail but it would be spectacular with lots of gestures.

RebeccaH says:
September 18, 2009 at 1:43 pm

My first best job has been my “crafting” career since I retired, creating sculptures of dancers and martial arts practitioners out of wire, polymer clay, and wood, and painting nature pictures since I took up kayaking. No money in this, but the personal satisfaction is worth my weight in gold. And that's considerable.
The next best job I ever had was my last serious one, at a middling midwestern university, verifying the graduation requirements of Masters and PhD candidates, and it was also the worst job I ever had. I had a horrible boss, who should have retired some time in the 19th century (I exaggerate, but only a little), but I got to advise and talk to students from just about everywhere and every culture, and it was a pleasure to make official the degrees of the hardworking good ones in the university database. (for people who think you're official when you get the diploma — uh uh. That's just window dressing, and in some universities, handed out before you're officially official — make sure you check all your grades.) It was, however, a blood pressure boiling point to grant degrees to those who knew how to pull strings, manipulate careless faculty, and game the system (thankfully a minority, but almost all in education). It made me horribly aware that the college-level education programs throughout the country are woefully lacking (except in cash and smug), and that academia is packed with people who live in a sort of wishful lefty utopia-as-soon-as-we-get-rid-of-the-[insert Christian, American patriot, or Republican here]-fascists. Those who don't keep their mouths shut out of concern for their careers. For the record, legal immigrant faculty tend to be more conservative than their native peers.

I won't even mention my jobs as wife and mother and grandmother as nobody regards those as real work anyway.

Robbo says:
September 18, 2009 at 2:16 pm

James –

On the theme of time is money, I recall a while back (perhaps in the early 90’s?) watching a show on PBS featuring three short sci-fi stories by “rising young artists”. One of them was set in some vaguely post-apocalyptic future in which each person was allotted a given lifespan and carried about a little clock device that kept track of it. They could buy and sell things for various increments, either adding or subtracting from their sum total. The only part that I remember at all was a young lady with a gambling problem literally throwing her life away on the slots. She realized, with about 30 seconds to go, what was about to happen, and went around frantically trying to borrow some more time. Too late. Clock wound down and so did she.

Oh, and during their lifetime, everyone was allowed one trip to see The Elders or The Ones or The Guardians or whoever they were, and to ask them questions on the subject of What It's All About. For some reason, these sages were all dressed as if they came from Del Boca Vista, Phase 2.

juanito - John Davey says:
September 18, 2009 at 2:22 pm

@Trogdor

I enjoy Rush, in fact our bass player back in HS wanted to play a majority of Rush songs, but meh, just too difficult for a group of kids clinging to their power chords.

I still think that The Trees can be deployed to the snarkiest effect. “By hatchet, ax, and saw”: sounds like such a puerile and juvenile threat. Fun.

To this day, I still live to take a ride in “A brilliant Red Barchetta".
jeischen says:
September 18, 2009 at 2:47 pm

Seattle Dave, I was a houseboy too, for a semester, at the Kappa Alpha Theta house at Okla. State. Wasn't a live-in position, though. The guys I worked with were a great bunch. We'd play “Beer Hunter” after work (shake up an 8-oz. can of Coors and put it back in a 6-pack mix. Everyone pick up a can, hold it to your head and open it a la Russian Roulette) The house mother was an almost-senile old bag who did things old school. The cook was a big black lady who knew how to cook. I actually learned to develop a taste for quiche. The next semester I was elected kitchen manager of my fraternity, not as fun.

Best job: Cub reporter on my hometown daily. Paid just enough to cover the rent and beer on the weekends. Took photos at plenty of community dinners and fundraisers where I ate for free, so that stretched the budget.

The guy walking with the stick reminded me of basic training. On long forced marches, our drill sergeants marched with tall, decoratively carved oak walking sticks, covered with commemorative tabs and such from their previous units. I think it may have been tradition picked up from hiking clubs which are popular in Germany.

wendy gunther says:
September 18, 2009 at 4:14 pm

Boy, am I jealous of a lot of the best jobs people have had. I never operated a crane, or ran the Dipper at Santa Cruz (though I’ve ridden it). Sure seem to be a lot of theater and paper and radio folk on here. Jealous of every one of them.

Though I have a cool job. I figure out why people died. (Hey, it’s a living.) Use mainly a scalpel, a microscope, and a telephone. And my eyeballs and my brains, such as there still are. This job has given me some of the best moments in my life, and the worst. But part of what's worst about it is I can't tell you any stories from it. Not one ever. Alas.

Susan says:
September 18, 2009 at 4:28 pm

The best job I ever had was being a school bus driver. Drove for a small rural school, had the same route for 12 years. The best part was seeing “my kids” grow up. I got to hear about new puppies and kittens, sometimes heard more than I wanted to about Mom and Dad fighting and watched the seasons change. The snow and ice storms on the country roads weren't fun, but there was a certain satisfaction knowing that I did my job very well and got them home safe every time! One of my favorite memories was the pig named Porky who thought he was a dog and met the bus every day!

benjammin says:
September 18, 2009 at 5:11 pm

@Trogdor

Hmm… I wonder if there might be more than one BenJammin around here? I’ve never had a job in Texas, in fact I’ve only passed through there once in my life.
c says:
 September 18, 2009 at 8:19 pm

I worked as operations manager for the top euro restoration shop in the country.
We restored automotive history plus worked for the rich and famous. I loved it and never begrudged the long hours and dedication it took to be the very best in the world. Sometimes when you are the best you get fame and fortune. Sometimes you get a gold medal or statue. Sometimes you get a giant trophy with the names of heroes carved in going back before your lifetime. Sometimes you just get the satisfaction of knowing for a little moment, your work was the very best there was on the planet. A difficult job but I loved it.

steveH says:
 September 18, 2009 at 8:29 pm

Other than being Dad for three (now grown up) kids...
Lineboy at a college airport FBO (fixed base operation) pumping fuel, washing windscreens and helping the bookkeeper. Cadging flights with anyone who’d let me come along made up for really low pay.

After that, five years at Apple as a technical writer. Paid much better, which was a good thing, with two young daughters and a wife to support.

Ed Singel says:
 September 18, 2009 at 9:36 pm

I had a great career designing and building communications satellites, but the job I remember most fondly was my very first one, beginning at about age 12. I worked for my small town weekly newspaper, and my job was to combine the various sections of the paper. The large printing press was in the middle of the front room, and they would first print and pile up the outer section. Then, as they printed the inner sections, we would grab piles of each section, and insert the inner sections into the outer, one by one. (We were called ‘inserters’). At the end of the evening, our hands were so covered in ink that it took several applications of Lava soap to remove it. While they reconfigured the press between sections, we would hang out around the office, among the linotype machines and other paraphernalia of that era’s printing technology (early 60′s).

Later, when I became the photographer for my high school newspaper, they let me use their well equipped darkroom, as well as their state of the art cameras (Crown Graphic, Rolleiflex). Just got spending money, but it was great fun.

MamaFish says:
 September 18, 2009 at 9:55 pm

What’s the best job I ever had? Renaissance Fair wench. 😁 Seriously. From age 14-20 I worked at the Maryland Renaissance Festival. Each year I did something different. Sometimes I was a chsier for an artisan selling his/her wares, sometimes I was a hawker, one memorable year I was a magician’s assistant (and no, I won’t tell you how he did it), one year I ran the knife throwing, star-throwing, and axe-throwing booths. Great times. I still go to the ren fair every year, and it’s still the best time I have all year, even if I’m
MamaFish says:
September 18, 2009 at 9:56 pm

Hmm... I should really preview a comment before posting. Sorry for the typos.

GardenStater says:
September 18, 2009 at 10:04 pm

@MamaFish
I did the NY Renaissance Faire (!) in 1980, or thereabouts. It was Sodom on the Hudson, let me tell you. Wild times....

NeeNee says:
September 18, 2009 at 11:57 pm

Best job? What I've done the past 12 years: own my own antique shop. Wish I had done it back in the early 70s when you could buy a box of pottery for $10. That being said, the most memorable transaction I've had was selling a rare Smith/Detroit pocket watch on eBay for $12,800!

First job was as a Girl Friday at the local weekly newspaper back in 1964 when I was a junior in high school. I proofread galleys set on the behemoth Linotype. Learned how to set type by hand, and to run the hand-feed press. Boss said I had quicker reflexes than his sons and could crank out hundreds of printed product before a mis-feed happened. Everything ground to a halt while I cleaned the "tampon" (waxy manilla-colored template) with gas. That job ultimately led to newspaper typesetting which led to graphic arts design. Still love the profession and it's held me in good stead—I design all my antique shop ads.

Greg VA says:
September 19, 2009 at 12:43 am

Only 9 jobs Mon!

My first job was a prep-cook/dishwasher at the Harborside Inn on Block Is. R.I. I was just 16 and freaked out by the pace and isolation, but as with almost any memory I only remember what a BLAST it was. If I could just get that time machine going again, I would relive that summer (most of it) again and again.

Sir, there are no bad posts. The worst post of all would be the one you decide not to post (clarity and logic are limited, I know, but you get the idea)

If you want to see the job I would like it probably would have been in the late 30's or 40's selling these to amateur photographers:
http://videomartyr.blogspot.com/

The Bleat (and its companions) is da bomb!

MaryIndiana says:
September 19, 2009 at 3:01 am

Trog – Just because the dot com bubble burst before 2001 doesn’t mean that there were no other start ups with crazy infusions of cash and dreams of glory after 2001. There were. There are.
Best job ever is the one that I have right now. It's a MISSION. It's my purpose in life and it makes me incredibly happy.

Now, another BEST JOB was being a waitress. Two summers as a teenager on a resort island where everyone was rich, drunk and on VACATION! They tipped like Rockefellers anyway, but since I was very personable and paid attention I gave good service. I made $$$$$. Okay, more like $$. But it was fun, fun, fun.

Emily says:
September 19, 2009 at 10:30 am

I'm going to be boring.

Best job: The one I have now. Mom. The pay is priceless.

gmann63 says:
September 19, 2009 at 11:17 am

@Trogdor
Yeah, maybe it had started then, but after 9/11 was when this particular enterprise began to really implode. While there was still some hope for investor money before 9/11, it was a lost cause after.

Preptile says:
September 19, 2009 at 2:39 pm

Thanks for asking James, and for writing and for other accomodations. (Wink).

Had several good jobs, altho none paid much.

Recently was caretaker alone in a big house w 7 bathrooms on 4 four floors.

That did not suck, but I would have preferred a ferrari instead of the ancient oldsmobile 'estate' wagon.

As a kid I was a gofer for 6 years in the operating rooms of the father of American heart surgery. That was intersting to say the least. Also worked in bookstores and tended bar in a chess club. Bottom line any job was fine, provided you were fond of your fellow workers.

The bookstore job was drudgery defined, as we did laps around the store, and had secret employee codes where one scratched his nose if cornered by a customer and needed to be 'paged' by management. That turned out to be the lowest payed, but most highly prized employment.

I loved the job, because I loved my co workers.

Wood that I would find such work again.

Grisha says:
September 19, 2009 at 9:15 pm

Best job I've ever had was when I was at the SEAL team in Hawaii. Spent my working hours either diving or driving twin turbo-diesel waterjet boats around the island. After work, I'd drive to the beach in my del Sol, T-top off, snacking on a Carl's Jr. Western Bacon Cheeseburger, with the Brian Setzer Orchestra blaring on the stereo.

That was in '02. Now I'm a mission commander for a US reconnaissance aircraft. Coolest job title ever, but I still yearn for those days.
alex. says:
September 20, 2009 at 7:22 pm

Best job ever? Let's see. I've worked prep/cleanup in a dental lab, monitored alarm systems, been a security guard, served on active duty as a steely-eyed, barrel-chested, amphibious jungle-fighter (otherwise known as a United States Marine of the Rifleman persuasion), printed payroll checks, baked bread in an Italian Bakery, ran the fuel desk at a truckstop, inventoried grocery stores, and finally ended up practicing law. The leathernecking changed my life, and gave me a lifetime's supply of sea-stories, and shystering pays the bills, but I sure miss that bread hot out of the oven.

Suzanne Goldman says:
September 21, 2009 at 5:50 pm

Driving the tractor on the communal farm, ordering the other farm hands around. (seriously) I'm still a “manager“ now but being inside an office with four walls and a roof isn't quite the same as a beautiful sunny day outside, fresh air and the sight of growing plants.

Preptile says:
September 21, 2009 at 6:36 pm

Ok, I have to try to post this again, as it was rejected I think, noonish on the 19th. Problem might be on my end, as every above word seems to be misspelled. My processor does have some pretty severe problems lately, as I have a virus, or Wordpress may again find my prose less than publishable. Perhaps my posts again have pushed the limits of permitted politeness. The library machine I was using claimed I double posted, yet neither appeared. Obviously comments had not closed as I thought. A new one as noted above, now appears.

Had several good jobs, although none paid much. Part time cabbie was kinda fun, as the passengers were pretty near perfect. Recently was caretaker alone in a big house w 7 bathrooms on 4 four floors. That did not suck, but I would have preferred a Ferrari (or even a Magnum), instead of the ancient oldsmobile 'estate' wagon. As a kid I was a gofer for 6 years in the operating rooms of the father of American heart surgery. That was interesting to say the least. Also worked in bookstores and tended bar in a chess club. Bottom line any job was fun, provided you were fond of your fellow workers. The bookstore job was drudgery defined, as we did laps around the store, and had secret employee codes where one scratched his nose if cornered by a customer and needed to be ‘paged’ by management. That turned out to be the lowest paid, but most highly prized employment. I loved the job, because I loved my co-workers. (No not literally). Wood that I would find such work again.
Marble says:
September 22, 2009 at 2:34 am

@MamaFish

@MamaFish
hey mamafish what year did you work at the knife star axe throwing booth at the faire? i have ran the axe throwing booth for the past ten years, and yes it is a powerful fun job.

Ross says:
September 22, 2009 at 3:54 am

Preptile:
“I loved the job,because I loved my co-workers.(No not literally). _Wood_ [emphasis added] that I would find such work again.”
Now, reread those two sentences. Doesn’t the second belie the first?
Know wot ah mean? Wink-wink, nudge-nudge—say__no__MORE_!
I’m sure you meant “would that I could...”

Trogdor says:
September 22, 2009 at 12:36 pm

@juanito – John Davey
I did play a lot of Rush on guitar (including Red Barchetta, my favorite to play), but we had nobody that could sing even remotely like Geddy (who does?)
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?
Something of a milestone on Saturday night. We went to a neighborhood fair, and child found some friends, asked for money, said bye, and ran off. That's not exactly new, perhaps. What was unusual was that I didn't worry. And by “worry” I mean assume invisible ninjas would descend from stealthcopters and pick her up. I suppose it helped that the entire place was ringed with barbed wire, but still. A milestone for me.

Actually, no wire. A very porous perimeter. The tweens gathered in the dim space between the church and the school; the teens hung even farther out, radiating obligatory rote disdain for all those younger or older. But I didn't worry. At some point you just have to stop thinking about the ninjas and the stealthcopters.

And then I spied him: Creepy Dude. Fifties, thin, aviator-style glasses with urine-yellow lens, sitting alone by the tent where the band played, watching the girls. The young girls. There was a horrible stillness to him, but I could imagine the mental shutter clicking 30 frames per second. I stared at him. From a distance of about 20 feet he must have felt it; he looked at me, and stared back. It's one of those contests you have to disengage with a slow fade. When I looked back he was still staring at me. When I looked back again he...
was gone.

I probably imagined any threat, and Lord knows I've spent enough time as a Dad in the World of Moms to know how suspicion falls on a guy who seems to be without a kid in a place where you're supposed to have one. Maybe he was just harmless. But the hair, the clothes – something said never had a woman tell me different. The sickly yellow lens. Could have just been a lonely local fellow, come to the church social, sit out among the folk. Driving home the other day Peter Gabriel's “I Have the Touch” came on the radio; hadn't heard it in years, but got the same old ooky chill, wondered if most people who heard it thought it was about the pleasures of human contact. Well, yes, it's that, but it's a monologue of an obsessive, a bus-groper, a frottage aficionado.

Went to find my daughter. No particular worries. Not like Friday when I went to get her from school – I'd watched the long parade, grade after grade, cheerful krill strained by the arms of the parents. No daughter. Well. I went up to her class; it was empty. Hmm. If I'd missed her, she'd get on the bus, and if I didn't beat the bus home, she'd . . . well, what? She's nine. She'd let herself in. She had a key.

She's not five.

I found her downstairs; her class was playing outside. I asked her what she'd have done if she took the bus and I wasn't there.

“I'd use my key and call you on your cellphone and say WHERE ARE YOU.”

No, she's not five.

After the festival I asked her how it felt to be on her own, running around with friends.

“Freedom!” she said.

From what?

“From parents!”

I can imagine. I'd better; if you forget that, you've forgotten childhood. To have a few dollars in your pocket, some tickets in your hand, friends all around, the lights of the carnival rides glowing in the dusk, free to yell and joke and just throw your arms up with the happiness of being here without the bonds of duty or expectations, well, it's wonderful.

Especially when you consider that the day began with a nosebleed, an upset stomach, and a double-rupe. And ended with three rides on in a spinning cage tossed up in the sky, seemingly powered by screams.

Some photos from the festival:
The wonderful old carousel horse:

Hideous dead-eyed impy chimp:
Some things seem more . . . authentic and American when they’re weathered.

I’ll have some more at the Strib blog later this morning.

No face painting this time; no silly games where you get plastic flotsam. Off with friends, into the dark. Love and laughter are like water; you need them to live. And they run through your fingers no matter how tightly you cup your hands.

**Anyway.** We walked home in the dusk, through the lovely neighborhood, into the woods, over the creek, up the steps to the street. Ran into a neighbor walking her dog, stopped to chat; forgot to ask if she’d heard anything about the fire truck that paid a visit to her neighbor Friday night. It’s the damndest thing: when a fire truck pulls up you assume someone’s sick. It’s like expecting cardiovascular surgeons to screech up in an ambulance when you see flames coming from the windows.
Once home I finished a book – the last, so far, of the Roma Sub Rosa series. Good as the rest, with plenty of detail about Caesar's four triumphs, but man, having the solution to the murder mystery come in the form of an elaborate, detailed conversation in a dream with the victim is about the laziest thing I've ever read. Dreams don't work that way. Last night I dreamed I lived in a huge Washington DC apartment, had just learned that a friend was stabbed, and when everyone got together we played some sort of trivia game using a tiny 1950s TV. (The answer was “Steve Allen imitating Jerry Lee Lewis.”)

Well, today, I don't know. Depends on whether I solve my Adobe problems. I put in a new hard drive, moved over the mirror from the Time Machine, and everyone gets along fine except for the critical Adobe products, which regard this as an attempt to foil their crafty copyrighting scheme. LICENSING HAS STOPPED FOR THIS PRODUCT. I love the Adobe help-page explanations:

```
This issue can occur after any of the following circumstances:
• Initial installation.
• Product has previously started successfully.
• During regular use of product.
```

Rather narrows it down, doesn't it? Look at this clusterfarg of a troubleshoot. LOOK AT IT. Tell me that's customer friendly.

At least I have one working machine (Update: solved the problem), so I can finish the glorious Forgotten Hooch site I started Friday night. That will be due this Friday. Already thinking ahead to Friday. The weeks seem so long.

---

**29 RESPONSES TO *monday, sept. 21***

**Amanda** says:
September 21, 2009 at 1:40 am

Funny you should talk about dreams. I took a nap this afternoon and dreamed I met you at a mall, and you had a 9 year old son who was with you, and we were at a financial planner's office learning about REITs. Really weird. And random.

**Kerry Potenza** says:
September 21, 2009 at 5:18 am

“Love and laughter are like water; you need them to live. And they run through your fingers no matter how tightly you cup your hands.” Lovely little gems like that are the reason I read the Bleat every day. Thanks James!
Kerry Potenza:

"Love and laughter are like water; you need them to live. And they run through your fingers no matter how tightly you cup your hands." Lovely little gems like that are the reason I read the Bleat every day. Thanks James!

Kerry, you beat me to it. What a great line. I concur.

kc duffy:

Ditto what Kerry and GardenStater posted. Lovely.

Having spent the weekend driving, riding, doing Pixie potty chair duty and visiting and walking in Damascus, Virginia, so Lovely Daughter and Handsome Son-in-law could bicycle the Virginia Creeper Trail with Grandpa, I see how very true those words are in my life. Thanks, James.

swschrad:

looks like the MassaKey system was broken by design. all the TS tips appear to be for different versions of windows, and my, it's a gothic novel. why not just put down, “Installation munged, remove and reinstall. Sorry, it happens. You sure you're not a software pirate? Arrrr?”

missed “talk like a pirate” day. had to make a speed run to the folks' for some papers and get homestead tax exemptions filed.

how about “walk like a pirate” day?

Michael Rittenhouse:

@swschrad

Talk Like a Pirate Day should be one of those floating-Monday holidays, so we can annoy our co-workers with it. As it stands, we have to explain twice what it is and why we're doing it today.

Patrick McClure:

Today my youngest turns 9. Knowing already how quickly these years pass (my oldest is 20, and in his own apartment now) I want to hold onto this one a while longer. Couldn't someone invent the Star Trek stasis field where we could place them every few days? I don't want to keep her 9 forever, maybe just 2 or 3 years worth of 9. Then I'll be ready to have my youngest slip over the border into double digits. Ah well, I like the young lady her older sister is becoming, and I hope my youngest will blossom the same way. Meanwhile I'll enjoy this time while I have it.

juanito - John Davey:

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=3826
Clearly 8 years old and 9 years old are a world apart. Our effort at unsupervised emancipation in reality means that surveillance goes more covert. I'm hoping that 9 years old means that the reins can loosen a bit more – our covert assets are diminishing...

Seems like such a work of frustration – get them built to the point of responsibility, but then cannot pull the trigger to let them deploy it. Almost like a nuclear failsafe: Have to develop it, never want to use it.

However, as a child, it is one of the most liberating experiences evah! So hard to deny them. What better place than a fair?

OS upgrades. Meh. Virtual machines can take the sting out now, but still, meh.

**aez** says:
September 21, 2009 at 9:01 am

Beautiful. Can't wait to read your book.

**rbj** says:
September 21, 2009 at 9:10 am

“Set the FLEXnet Licensing Service to Manual ”

Funny thing, if they had done this in all the ST:TNG episodes where the holodeck goes kaflooey, those shows would have only lasted 5 minutes.

Mad Men is a real good show. Damn fine show.

**Al Federber** says:
September 21, 2009 at 9:34 am

I once went to a large family event at a Unitarian church, and a trampy/pervy stranger came into the hall and sat around watching the kids. I accompanied a couple of the Unitarian regulars as they confronted the guy. They asked him what he was doing there, and he replied that he just came in to Worship Jesus Christ.

One of the Unitarians informed him that we didn't worship Jesus Christ, and that he should walk down the block to the Methodist church. He said okay, and ambled away in that direction.

Two birds with one stone.

**teach5** says:
September 21, 2009 at 9:35 am

Your creepy guy at the carnival is the stuff that parenting is made of. I'll never know if my parents of the 60's saw the same guys and had the same thoughts. If they did, they never worried me with their concerns.

MadMen was wild last night, no? They certainly are unpredictable!

**GardenStater** says:
September 21, 2009 at 9:43 am

Allowing your child the freedom to walk away from you is a great gift for both of you. I'm fortunate to live in a quiet town with straight, level streets. Since about age ten, my son has had the ability
to say “I'm going to ride my bike” and just take off to wherever he wants. It's a happy thing.

And I try to avoid thinking of all the things that might happen.

Margaret says:
September 21, 2009 at 10:34 am

I have a friend who adopted a child from China (and he is not Asian). He gets that look all the time when he takes her to the playground because people don't think that he belongs with her.

Glenn says:
September 21, 2009 at 10:48 am

At least you only have 6 steps in the Permissions solution. The poor Windows folks have three times as many...

Sam says:
September 21, 2009 at 11:12 am

I just came back from the institute of official cheer. I looked through “The Gobbler.” I want you to know that it creeped me out and saddened me at the same time. It is a great metaphor for the passage of time.

Gary says:
September 21, 2009 at 11:28 am

Give me neighborhood fairs over theme parks any day. That chimp and horse are priceless.

Seattle Dave says:
September 21, 2009 at 11:47 am

I have no kids of my own, but in my summer job for the last 15 years, I'm responsible for 180 twelve- to 18-year-olds, mostly girls, for five weeks. Many of them are in a big city for the first time. They are attending a summer program here and staying in the dorm I supervise, and my staff and I also chaperone groups of them around Seattle on weekends. It's remarkable how quickly that paternal creepy-guy-detector develops, even in the seemingly oblivious college-aged guys on my staff.

juanito - John Davey says:
September 21, 2009 at 1:59 pm

I do hope that there is a league of fellows for whom Creepy Guy detection is an ongoing collaborative effort. Sort of an Illuminati aligned against kid touchers, or, A League Of Extraordinary Creepy Guy Pummelers. Or, sumpthin'. Because, I'd join!

SeanF says:
September 21, 2009 at 2:11 pm

Margaret:
I have a friend who adopted a child from China (and he is not Asian). He gets that look all the time when he takes her to the
A while back my wife and I went to McDonald's with our adopted Chinese daughter. My wife took Jasper (yes, that's her name) to get the pop while I waited at the counter for the food. The clerk said, “Is that your daughter?”

I said, “Yes.”

He continued to look at the two of them for a few seconds, and then said, “Is she her daughter, too?”

I said, “Yes.”

He was still watching them when I finally said, “She’s adopted.” I could literally see the concern dissipate from his body as he said, “Oh, okay. Yeah, I was wondering…”

I didn’t get the impression he thought she didn’t belong to us, but he seemed to be trying to figure out how to tell me my wife might not have been 100% faithful.

**aodhan** says:
September 21, 2009 at 2:24 pm

Sure it was user friendly. Adobe used to have different annoying licensing troubleshooting documents for each product. Now, they managed through hard work to refactor the SAME error into ALL of their products. As a user, you don’t have to guess whether this or that annoying licensing troubleshooting document covers YOUR product or someone else’s.

**rivlax** says:
September 21, 2009 at 3:20 pm

Hope you got a pic of the guy in the urine-colored glasses, just in case you ever need it.

**Mary Margaret Thomas** says:
September 21, 2009 at 4:59 pm

I don’t know if my husband and I have “creepy guy” detectors. We both grew up in kinda slummy neighborhoods in which creepy guys were the scenery rather than the exception. I think kicking a guy out of church because he looks out of place is kinda harsh. It must be a suburban thing. However, my husband and I can tell when we’re being followed and what to do about it (leave the sidewalk and start walking in the middle of the street). We also are good at telling if someone is packing.

**GardenStater** says:
September 21, 2009 at 5:40 pm

*Mary Margaret Thomas:*

*I think kicking a guy out of church because he looks out of place is kinda harsh. It must be a suburban thing.*

Mary Margaret, I never thought I’d find myself in the position of defending Al Federber, but he did say “…a trampy/pervy stranger came into the hall and sat around watching the kids.”
If the guy just came and hung out with the grown-ups, that would be one thing. But leering at the kids is something else entirely.

Bob W. says:
September 21, 2009 at 5:56 pm

“Some things seem more . . . authentic and American when they’re weathered.”

In that photo, what says authentic to me are the oddly shaped, kind of squished (a technical term) red and yellow lights. Those always remind me of carnivals and I hope they never go away entirely.

Jano says:
September 21, 2009 at 6:44 pm

Among my sisters, we dubbed that vibe the “creep beacon.” If a guy is emitting the creep beacon, get the heck away. The rule applied to strangers as well as somebody we were dating. Depending on the situation, the exit strategy might be polite, or not so much. It’s just a matter of obeying your gut.

Yet Another A.J., I’m Sure says:
September 21, 2009 at 8:26 pm

And there goes another Peter Gabriel song into the bin of “Songs that you like a lot till you find out what the lyrics are really about.” Next time I find it on Youtube I’ll have to reinforce the mental image of that type-A yuppie who is so enthralled about his publicist job that he actually enjoys being stuck in traffic (in his car of course) in the first verse.

Jimmy H says:
September 21, 2009 at 8:56 pm

We should always be appreciative of the efforts of our firefighters and EMS personnel in emergencies, but hearing the engine of the fire truck stop in front of one of the houses on my street in the middle of the night is always creepy to me. One time it was a beloved neighbor who suffered a stroke (she recovered). Another time it was another neighbor who was going through some type of seizure. It’s never good news but thank God for those who put their lives on the line to help us out.

Chris says:
September 22, 2009 at 5:03 am

Not to be outdone by Peter Gabriel, Phil Collins did his own song about being a pervert, it was called “Thru These Walls”. The lyrics can be found here:

http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/p/phil_collins/thru_these_walls.html
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

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

© 2011 The Bleat.
After school we went off for the flu shot. I’m always reminded of the childhood dread of shots, a horrible endless pall that drapes over the entire day and intensifies as The Moment approaches. One year the nurse distracted me with a Viewmaster-type device; she pushed buttons to change the color and asked me what the color was. Thus distracted, I hardly realized a piece of pointed metal was being jammed into my flesh. At the conclusion of the event you got one of the Doctor Bandages, something to wear with pride among your tribe. (In those days you only got cloth band-aids from the doctor. Otherwise it was those plastic-y “flesh” colored things that slid off after a minute in the tub.

Natalie was concerned, but I told her she’d get the spray. Being over 49 – a rather arbitrary cut-off, I suspect – I got the poke. Upon arriving at the Target clinic, I was relieved to see the room was empty. No wait!

“There’s a two-hour wait,” said the clerk. She offered to give me a buzzer, and said I could shop if I wanted. I love Target, but unless they’re going to let me
open a DVD box sit down and watch a film, no. So we made an appointment for seven, and said we'd be back.

Went back. While we were waiting a fellow came out of the back room, having just gotten his shot. He faced the room of small kids and bored moms and grinned a wide devious grin. “Biggest needle I ever saw,” he said. He held his hands a foot apart. “That big.”

The kids looked at him with boredom: whatever, dude, I'm getting the nose stuff.

Had a very pretty nurse-practitioner or RN or Bona-Fide-Skin-Sticker or whatever the term is.

“Relax your arm,” she said. I said it was relaxed. “Daddy has muscles,” she said to Natalie.

I rethought my plan to bawl like a baby, just for comic relief, right then and there.

Afterwards we shopped, since my wife had requested I pick up some items. We toured the Halloween display, which is unutterably lame this year, a fact I will take up at the Strib Blog tomorrow. I bought an emergency flashlight, which brings the total number up to only six. You may ask: why? Well, they're all small, and they rest unused in a socket until the power goes off. Then they snap on, and everything is dramatically lit from below. Eventually I'll have every room done. And then I'll sit around and wait for the power to go off. Being prepared is so frustrating.

Flu is the subject of the week for work – I'm going a series of videos, the first of which will have the Benchley-esque subject of How Not To Get Sick. If I can get through one of these without mugging like a Ritz Brother I'll be happy. I did one straight video with a reporter today, and like the rest, it was a pleasure.

While waiting for calls to come back I read part of a book called “Most Evil.” It's by the fellow who decided that his father was the Black Dahlia killer, and put together a case that sold James Ellroy, among others. What do you do for a sequel, though? Well, he's now decided that his father was behind some other murders, including serial killings in Manilla, the Lipstick Killer case in Chicago, and . . . the Zodiac Killer. Really. Whether you believe the evidence – handwriting analysis doesn't seem convincing at all to the layman's eyes – he had an earlier theory that his father staged the Dahlia's body to refer to a Man Ray photograph. His case is bolstered somewhat by the fact that his father was a friend of Man Ray. Also that he was a person of interest in the Dahlia case, and the LAPD bugged his house. And his dad left the country shortly after the murder. And so forth. (The author/son, BTW, was an LAPD detective cop.) Whether or not it's true, the book has copious photos of the notes sent to the police during various cases, and they're harrowing to look at. Classic newspaper – magazine cut ups, pasted on a postcard. It's like the “from hell” note from Jack the Ripper; evil pours from the pictures.
I'll say this: A) The Dahlia case is still the touchstone crime of the post-war era, and if you start googling that one, well, fortify yourself: madness and horror and endless theories. One fellow says the killer had another victim, but Hearst hushed it up. Franchot Tone new the Dahlia, however briefly. And so on. It's the Kennedy Assassination of . . . of non-political murders, I guess. B) If the author's next book names his grandfather as Jack the Ripper, I don't think he'll move many units.

And now, another note about computers I love, and the things I hate. Apple has updated QuickTime, and I don't like it. No sir, I don't like it at all. The program's icon is cheap, and below the usual standards. I like the black windows with the black bar – it's where the GUI is going, and I understand why they'd roll that out in bits and pieces rather than spring it on everyone all at once. But the controller used to sit at the bottom of the window. When you went to full screen, the controller was small, and discreetly faded away after an interval like a good butler. Mouse movement brought it right back. Now when you pause, it sticks around. Big. Huge. As if it assumes you're too stupid to know what to do if the picture's paused. For someone who takes a lot of screen grabs, this is irritating. Let me give you an example.

Old:

New:
The new version lacks fine-tuning controls for exporting as well, which makes it useless if you absolutely have to make sure you have the right frame rate. Dragging frames out of the window to get .mov stills? Gone. This is the first time I can recall binding files to the previous version of an app so it doesn’t automatically launch. Gah.

I’ll save the Finder and Save Dialog issues for another day.

**Well:** today has a few items to amuse you. Coming up: Comic Sins, a random 1950 ad with a creepy beer can, and B&W world. See you soon!

---

**35 RESPONSES TO tuesday, sept. 22**

**Peter I** says:
September 22, 2009 at 1:16 am

Yes, Quicktime now BITES it, Lileks! I’m calling them tomorrow to see how to get back the old Quicktime, there must be a way, dear God, there must be!

**Cuneo** says:
September 22, 2009 at 6:41 am

I was at first expecting the new Quicktime to remove the pistol from Dillon’s hand and replace it with some more politically correct, like, well, a pointing finger. But the actual result is much worse. By the way, I like the picture on the home page. Who knew Dan Hedaya was such an avid bowler?
Larry says:
September 22, 2009 at 6:52 am

Two Gunsmoke references this week. Methinks Black and White World is going small screen and moving out West!

Being 7 years old than our host, I can recall viewing Gunsmoke at 8:30 Central time on Saturday nights. This privilege was the pay off for taking a nap on Saturday afternoon. Don’t think my parents really cared if I got extra shut eye, they just wanted to put me in suspended animation for an hour break.

Anyway, I much preferred “Have Gun Will Travel” which preceeded Marshall Dillon. Much better theme song and cooler hero.

Wagner von Drupen-Sachs says:
September 22, 2009 at 7:10 am

What I hate most is when they have a blog, say, and they “upgrade” it so that the “View Comments” button up at the TOP of the blog entry. That really gets my garter snappin’, and I don’t mean that in a nice way.

beebe says:
September 22, 2009 at 7:15 am

They’ve updated iTunes as well. Previously, you could click on the green button on the upper left corner and get the mini-version of the player. Now, click and it just shifts sizes a little bit. You have to key command the player to get the mini-version. How is that an improvement, man?

juanito - John Davey says:
September 22, 2009 at 7:50 am

Marshall Dillon said “Hide that controller!”

It looks like he has the drop on your Quicktime developers, so, better do as he says, nice and slow….

grayhackle says:
September 22, 2009 at 8:02 am

The anticipated horror of getting a shot was bad but for sheer, unmitigated dread, it was a dentist appointment. My mom would pick me up after school and off we would go. It ruined the whole day thinking about it. The whole week if I knew about the appointment.

In those days, dental work was a lot more painful (late forties). No novacaine or, if it was available, I never got it. Old, slow drills, the smell of burning tooth. I was an adult before I started going again and learned that they had taken most of the pain away. Still ruins my day when I have an appointment.

Andrew says:
September 22, 2009 at 8:25 am

Speaking of Ellroy, I just got a note from Amazon that they shipped his new book. This is exciting, but would be more so if I didn’t feel compelled to reread the first two.
GardenStater says:
September 22, 2009 at 8:35 am

grayhackle: In those days, dental work was a lot more painful (late forties). No novacaine or, if it was available, I never got it. Old, slow drills, the smell of burning tooth.

We’re the same age, and I too remember the days of getting a tooth drilled sans Novocaine. The pain was just excruciating, and it wasn’t helped by my cranky old dentist telling me to “Hold still!”

What amazes me is this: I’ve had receding gums for a number of years, and the semi-annual cleaning was always a little bit o’ torture. It was only this past March that the hygienist asked me, “Do you want me to apply a topical anaesthetic to your gums before I start?” Forty-something years, and nobody ever suggested that! What a difference. Thank God for modern dentistry.

Lou Shumaker says:
September 22, 2009 at 9:05 am

Recently, I’ve had a few of my ’60s-era fillings replaced. Time and tide have caused them to shrink. In both cases, the dentist (brace yourself) drilled out the filling, cleaned out the gunk underneath, then refilled and tinted the filling so it looks like the rest of the tooth. He even asked if I was planning to have my teeth whitened, so he could match it to the new color rather than the current.

The new fillings are fine and looks like I’ll carry ‘em to my grave this way, God willin’. Meanwhile, my children have 1 cavity apiece, thanks to regular visits and whatever treatments they got. Certainly wasn’t from brushing.

Everything’s amazing, and nobody’s happy.

browniejr says:
September 22, 2009 at 9:08 am

Quicktime 7 is still available…
You need to do it as an “Optional Install” from your Snow Leopard install disk. For details, see here:
http://support.apple.com/kb/HT3678

shesnailie says:
September 22, 2009 at 9:09 am

_@_v – yeeaaagh! uhura’s worst nightmare...

wiredog says:
September 22, 2009 at 9:18 am

Got my flu shot Sunday. $10 copay at the local grocery store, with insurance picking up the rest. Felt a bit off yesterday, but not too bad. Better than having the flu, which I had last winter.

Suzanne Goldman says:
September 22, 2009 at 10:08 am

Target Halloween decor this year was BEYOND lame. Martha
Stewart for grandinroad has some kick@ss props this year. (grandinroad.com/halloween) including a 15′ (yes, FEET) inflatable grim reaper/pumpkin carriage. Yours for only $279. Lights! Sound effects! Haunt your neighborhood within minutes! Only requires 4 AA batteries — not included. Sure beats hanging white sheets from the trees, masquerading like ghosts. My local Target had XMAS stuff for sale along the back wall as well. Disgusting. Couldn’t even find the Boo Berry and Franken Berry cereals they normally sell.

Tom in Denver says:
September 22, 2009 at 10:23 am

It is always good to have a surplus of flashlights. After all, the definition of a flashlight is a cylindrical metal tube used to store dead batteries.

beretta says:
September 22, 2009 at 10:38 am

I also was taken to an old school dentist as a child in the ’60s. Belt driven mining drill running at about 5rpm that would frequently bind and stall. The old butcher would get really upset if you asked for more Novacaine. He also had a giant antique X-Ray machine that looked like it was built by young Tom Edison himself and probably sterilized everyone in the building when he lit it up. In compensation, he would give you some Mercury to take home and play with if you were good.

hpoulter says:
September 22, 2009 at 10:41 am

Visit to the dentist? What a perfect excuse to quote Benchley some more:

(quite long, sorry)

THE TOOTH, THE WHOLE TOOTH, AND NOTHING BUT THE TOOTH

Some well-known saying (it doesn’t make much difference what) is proved by the fact that everyone likes to talk about his experiences at the dentist’s. For years and years little articles like this have been written on the subject, little jokes like some that I shall presently make have been made, and people in general have been telling other people just what emotions they experience when they crawl into the old red plush guillotine.

They like to explain to each other how they feel when the dentist puts “that buzzer thing” against their bicuspids, and, if sufficiently pressed, they will describe their sensations on mouthing a rubber dam.

“I’ll tell you what I hate,” they will say with great relish, “when he takes that little nut-pick and begins to scrape. Ugh!”

“Oh, I’ll tell you what’s worse than that,” says the friend, not to be outdone, “when he is poking around careless-like, and strikes a nerve. Wow!”
And if there are more than two people at the experience-meeting, everyone will chip in and tell what he or she considers to be the worst phase of the dentist's work, all present enjoying the narration hugely and none so much as the narrator who has suffered so.

This sort of thing has been going on ever since the first mammoth gold tooth was hung out as a bait to folks in search of a good time. (By the way, when _did_ the present obnoxious system of dentistry begin? It can't be so very long ago that the electric auger was invented, and where would a dentist be without an electric auger? Yet you never hear of Amalgam Filling Day, or any other anniversary in the dental year). There must be a conspiracy of silence on the part of the trade to keep hidden the names of the men who are responsible for all this.

However many years it may be that dentists have been plying their trade, in all that time people have never tired of talking about their teeth. This is probably due to the inscrutable workings of Nature who is always supplying new teeth to talk about.

As a matter of fact, the actual time and suffering in the chair is only a fraction of the gross expenditure connected with the affair. The preliminary period, about which nobody talks, is much the worse. This dates from the discovery of the wayward tooth and extends to the moment when the dentist places his foot on the automatic hoist which jacks you up into range. Giving gas for tooth-extraction is all very humane in its way, but the time for anaesthetics is when the patient first decides that he must go to the dentist. From then on, until the first excavation is started, should be shrouded in oblivion.

There is probably no moment more appalling than that in which the tongue, running idly over the teeth in a moment of care-free play, comes suddenly upon the ragged edge of a space from which the old familiar filling has disappeared. The world stops and you look meditatively up to the corner of the ceiling. Then quickly you draw your tongue away, and try to laugh the affair off, saying to yourself:

“Stuff and nonsense, my good fellow! There is nothing the matter with your tooth. Your nerves are upset after a hard day's work, that's all.”

Having decided this to your satisfaction, you slyly, and with a poor attempt at being casual, slide the tongue back along the line of adjacent teeth, hoping against hope that it will reach the end without mishap.

But there it is! There can be no doubt about it this time. The tooth simply has got to be filled by someone, and the only person who can fill it with anything permanent is a dentist. You wonder if you might
not be able to patch it up yourself for the time being—a year or so—perhaps with a little spruce-gum and a coating of new-skin. It is fairly far back, and wouldn’t have to be a very sightly job.

But this has an impracticable sound, even to you. You might want to eat some peanut-brittle (you never can tell when someone might offer you peanut-brittle these days), and the new-skin, while serviceable enough in the case of cream soups and custards, couldn’t be expected to stand up under heavy crunching.

So you admit that, since the thing has got to be filled, it might as well be a dentist who does the job.

This much decided, all that is necessary is to call him up and make an appointment.

Let us say that this resolve is made on Tuesday. That afternoon you start to look up the dentist’s number in the telephone-book. A great wave of relief sweeps over you when you discover that it isn’t there. How can you be expected to make an appointment with a man who hasn’t got a telephone? And how can you have a tooth filled without making an appointment? The whole thing is impossible, and that’s all there is to it. God knows you did your best.

On Wednesday there is a slightly more insistent twinge, owing to bad management of a sip of ice water. You decide that you simply must get in touch with that dentist when you get back from lunch. But you know how those things are. First one thing and then another came up, and a man came in from Providence who had to be shown around the office, and by the time you had a minute to yourself it was five o’clock. And, anyway, the tooth didn’t bother you again. You wouldn’t be surprised if, by being careful, you could get along with it as it is until the end of the week when you will have more time. A man has to think of his business, after all, and what is a little personal discomfort in the shape of an unfilled tooth to the satisfaction of work well done in the office?

By Saturday morning you are fairly reconciled to going ahead, but it is only a half day and probably he has no appointments left, anyway. Monday is really the time. You can begin the week afresh. After all, Monday is really the logical day to start in going to the dentist.

Bright and early Monday morning you make another try at the telephone-book, and find, to your horror, that some time between now and last Tuesday the dentist’s name and number have been inserted into the directory. There it is. There is no getting around it: “Burgess, Jas. Kendal, DDS… Courtland–2654”. There is really nothing left to do.
but
to call him up. Fortunately the line is busy, which gives you a perfectly good excuse for putting it over until Tuesday. But on Tuesday luck is against you and you get a clear connection with the doctor himself. An appointment is arranged for Thursday afternoon at 3:30.

Thursday afternoon, and here it is only Tuesday morning! Almost anything may happen between now and then. We might declare war on Mexico, and off you'd have to go, dentist appointment or no dentist appointment. Surely a man couldn't let a date to have a tooth filled stand in the way of his doing his duty to his country. Or the social revolution might start on Wednesday, and by Thursday the whole town might be in ashes. You can picture yourself standing, Thursday afternoon at 3.30 on the ruins of the City Hall, fighting off marauding bands of reds, and saying to yourself, with a sigh of relief: “Only to think! At this time I was to have been climbing into the dentist's chair!” You never can tell when your luck will turn in a thing like that.

But Wednesday goes by and nothing happens. And Thursday morning dawns without even a word from the dentist saying that he has been called suddenly out of town to lecture before the Incisor Club. Apparently, everything is working against you.

By this time, your tongue has taken up a permanent resting-place in the vacant tooth, and is causing you to talk indistinctly and incoherently. Somehow you feel that if the dentist opens your mouth and finds the tip of your tongue in the tooth, he will be deceived and go away without doing anything.

The only thing left is for you to call him up and say that you have just killed a man and are being arrested and can’t possibly keep your appointment. But any dentist would see through that. He would laugh right into his transmitter at you. There is probably no excuse which it would be possible to invent which a dentist has not already heard eighty or ninety times. No, you might as well see the thing through now.

Luncheon is a ghastly rite. The whole left side of your jaw has suddenly developed an acute sensitiveness and the disaffection has spread to the four teeth on either side of the original one. You doubt if it will be possible for him to touch it at all. Perhaps all he intends to do this time is to look at it anyway. You might even suggest that to him. You could very easily come in again soon and have him do the actual work.

Three-thirty draws near. A horrible time of day at best. Just when a man's vitality is lowest. Before stepping in out of the sunlight into the building in which the dental parlor is, you take one look about
you
at the happy people scurrying by in the street. Carefree children
that
they are! What do they know of Life? Probably that man in the
silly-looking hat never had trouble with so much as his baby-teeth.
There they go, pushing and jostling each other, just as if within ten
feet of them there was not a man who stands on the brink of the
Great
Misadventure. Ah well! Life is like that!

Into the elevator. The last hope is gone. The door clangs and you
look
hopelessly about you at the stupid faces of your fellow passengers.
How
can people be so clownish? Of course, there is always the chance
that
the elevator will fall and that you will all be terribly hurt. But that
is too much to expect. You dismiss it from your thoughts as too
impractical, too visionary. Things don’t work out as happily as that
in
real life.

You feel a certain glow of heroic pride when you tell the operator
the
right floor number. You might just as easily have told him a floor too
high or too low, and that would, at least, have caused delay. But after
all, a man must prove himself a man and the least you can do is to
meet
Fate with an unflinching eye and give the right floor number.

Too often has the scene in the dentist’s waiting-room been described
for
me to try to do it again here. They are all alike. The antiseptic smell,
the ominous hum from the operating-rooms, the 1921 “Literary
Digests,”
and the silent, sullen, group of waiting patients, each trying to look
unconcerned and cordially disliking everyone else in the room,—all
these have been sung by poets of far greater lyric powers than mine.
(Not that I really think that they _are_ greater than mine, but that’s
the customary form of excuse for not writing something you haven’t
got
time or space to do. As a matter of fact, I think I could do it much
better than it has ever been done before).

I can only say that, as you sit looking, with unseeing eyes, through a
large book entitled, “The Great War in Pictures,” you would gladly
change places with the most lowly of God’s creatures. It is
inconceivable that there should be anyone worse off than you,
unless
perhaps it is some of the poor wretches who are waiting with you.

That one over in the arm-chair, nervously tearing to shreds a copy
of
“The Dental Review and Practical Inlay Worker.” She may have
something
frightful the trouble with her. She couldn’t possibly look more
worried.
Perhaps it is very, very painful. This thought cheers you up
considerably. What cowards women are in times like these!

And then there comes the sound of voices from the next room.

“All right, Doctor, and if it gives me any more pain shall I call you
up?… Do you think that it will bleed much more?… Saturday
morning,
then, at eleven…. Good bye, Doctor.”
And a middle-aged woman emerges (all women are middle-aged when emerging from the dentist's office) looking as if she were playing the big emotional scene in “John Ferguson.” A wisp of hair waves dissolutely across her forehead between her eyes. Her face is pale, except for a slight inflammation at the corners of her mouth, and in her eyes is that far-away look of one who has been face to face with Life. But she is through. She should care how she looks.

[Illustration: You would gladly change places with the most lawless of God's creatures.]

The nurse appears, and looks inquiringly at each one in the room. Each one in the room evades the nurse's glance in one last, futile attempt to fool someone and get away without seeing the dentist. But she spots you and nods pleasantly. God, how pleasantly she nods! There ought to be a law against people being as pleasant as that.

“The doctor will see you now,” she says.

The English language may hold a more disagreeable combination of words than “The doctor will see you now.” I am willing to concede something to the phrase “Have you anything to say before the current is turned on.” That may be worse for the moment, but it doesn’t last so long. For continued, unmitigating depression, I know nothing to equal “The doctor will see you now.” But I’m not narrow-minded about it. I’m willing to consider other possibilities.

Smiling feebly, you trip over the extended feet of the man next to you, and stagger into the delivery-room, where, amid a ghastly array of death-masks of teeth, blue flames waving eerily from Bunsen burners, and the drowning sound of perpetually running water which chokes and gurgles at intervals, you sink into the chair and close your eyes.

* * * * *

But now let us consider the spiritual exaltation that comes when you are at last let down and turned loose. It is all over, and what did it amount to? Why, nothing at all. A-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Nothing at all.

You suddenly develop a particular friendship for the dentist. A splendid fellow, really. You ask him questions about his instruments. What does he use this thing for, for instance? Well, well, to think, of a little thing like that making all that trouble. A-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!... And the dentist's family, how are they? Isn't that fine!

Gaily you shake hands with him and straighten your tie. Forgotten is the
fact that you have another appointment with him for Monday. There is no such thing as Monday. You are through for today, and all's right with the world.

As you pass out through the waiting-room, you leer at the others unpleasantly. The poor fishes! Why can't they take their medicine like grown people and not sit there moping as if they were going to be shot?

Heigh-ho! Here's the elevator-man! A charming fellow! You wonder if he knows that you have just had a tooth filled. You feel tempted to tell him and slap him on the back. You feel tempted to tell everyone out in the bright, cheery street. And what a wonderful street it is too! All full of nice, black snow and water. After all, Life is sweet!

And then you go and find the first person whom you can accost without being arrested and explain to him just what it was that the dentist did to you, and how you felt, and what you have got to have done next time.

Which brings us right back to where we were in the beginning, and perhaps accounts for everyone's liking to divulge their dental secrets to others. It may be a sort of hysterical relief that, for the time being, it is all over with.

Lars Walker says:
September 22, 2009 at 10:55 am

My first dentist was also of the “who needs fancy novocaine?” school. I'm surprised they didn't have to strap me to the chair.

Years later, I mentioned it to my dad, and he said, “Funny. He always gave me novocaine.”

Freaking child-hating sadist dentist.

raf says:
September 22, 2009 at 11:06 am

I was a pre-novacaine kid, also. I am amazed that I actually sat still for it. Also that the chair arms were still attached to the chair afterwards.

GardenStater says:
September 22, 2009 at 11:18 am

Lars Walker: Years later, I mentioned it to my dad, and he said, “Funny. He always gave me novocaine.”

Dammit, Lars--my dad said the same thing!!! I think maybe it just saved our dads a little money on the dentist trips. And they probably said to themselves “Well, I never needed any novocaine when I went to the dentist!

One more thing to bring up in my therapy sessions....
juanito - John Davey says:
September 22, 2009 at 11:26 am

I had two dentists of notoriety,
One Dr. Orin Scrivello D.D.S. and a Dr. John Henry Holiday

I knew there might be an issue when Dr. Holiday told me that he'd be my Huckleberry.

Mark says:
September 22, 2009 at 11:27 am

About 2 years ago I was about to get a cavity repaired and the dentist asked if I wanted anything to numb it up. Wait a minute! After I looked at him funny and didn't say anything, he says that I should be fine without it. So what the heck, I gave it a try and... it was fine. Didn't miss that needle poking around in my mouth. I miss that dentist – no BS or trying to upsell the super-white laser cleaning sleep dentistry; just did what needed to be done.

Spud says:
September 22, 2009 at 11:53 am

The dentist from my yute had hairy arms, smoked cigars and sang along to the Italian opera music playing in the background. He also didn't believe in Novacaine, at least for the yutes. He called the fillings he put in “silver soldiers”, and if you survived the infantry drilling you got a spritz of peppermint spray.

Something you don't see anymore are the spit fountains next to the dentist chair – instead they have the sucking hose. I kinda miss drooling all over my chin trying to spit out of numbed lips (another dentist later in life did give me novacaine shots). Now I have to find some water and spit it out in the street after leaving the dentist's office.

JD says:
September 22, 2009 at 1:47 pm

For the screenshot problem, I recommend MPEG Streamclip: http://www.squared5.com/svideo/mpeg-streamclip-mac.html and you will also need Perian: http://perian.org/
Lots of nice features for MPEG Streamclip, including the ability to go frame by frame (or nearly) to pick just the screenshot you want. Also, it will play FLVs that you download from YouTube, as FLVs, without converting them first, not that you would download things from YouTube.

Vader says:
September 22, 2009 at 2:25 pm

Being somewhat asthmatic, I was encouraged by my doctor to get a pneumonia shot recently. The stick wasn't so bad, but the fluid going it hurt like crazy.

I'm not looking forward to double flu shots this year.
DerKase says:
September 22, 2009 at 3:03 pm

My least favorite dental experience was when I was stationed in Berlin in the mid-80s. I was in the Air Force, but had to use the Army dentists who were in (no kidding) former SS barracks. There was a German civilian dental hygenist who did the teeth cleaning. I swear she used rusty bits of cans, old metal files, and hammer & chisel to get every last bit chipped off my teeth. She would practically put her knee on my chest and go to work. My gums ached and bled for days afterwards. Low bidder, I guess.

Ed Singel says:
September 22, 2009 at 3:04 pm

My childhood dentist was also of the “no novacaine, slow speed drill” variety. He was an old guy, and was actually retired, but he kept going for some of his favorite long term patients, like my family.

Gee, thanks!

Mr. Manager says:
September 22, 2009 at 4:17 pm

Thankfully I have never had to have a cavity drilled by my dentist- But he is bad enough with his poky metal tools- I keep expecting him to ask me “is it safe”

steveH says:
September 22, 2009 at 5:46 pm

If you upgraded to Snow Leopard from a Leopard (Mac OS X 10.5) installation, you don’t even have to download the previous QuickTime player. You’ve still got it.

During the upgrade, it was moved to/Applications/Utilities/QuickTime Player 7.app.

They're in the process of rewriting QuickTime from the ground up, there's about 19 years of accumulated stuff to redo; you can still use the older player until it's all done.

As for the iTunes resize (green) button, it's finally acting consistently with most of the rest of the applications for the OS. Annoying until you either get used to it, or some third-party tweak swaps behaviors back again.

Remember folks, it's all just ones and zeros.

NeeNee says:
September 22, 2009 at 6:29 pm

I, too, am a Baby Boomer born in 1948. My first dental experience was probably in 1957 when the “country school in town” started requiring a legal-looking, filled-out dental card stating that you had seen a dentist and that all was good with your teeth.

As I recall, we had to go once a year. Trust me, this was before dental floss and fluoride. Each time I had at least 10 cavities. Think I had novacaine because I don't recall the excruciating pain all of you describe. But what gave me nightmares was a little wall art Dr. Morton had hanging on his “drill room.” It was a big, brown, hairy
coconut with a face carved into it. Mr. Coconut man had a mouthful of huge yellowed, misshapen teeth. “If you don’t brush your teeth and come see me, this is what your teeth will look like,” he used to say.

“If it weren’t for my teeth, I’d have a perfect set of fillings!”

My kids? All have my crowded teeth, but I don’t think any of them has ever had more than two fillings. Our water supply is fluorided.

Seattle Dave says:
September 22, 2009 at 7:21 pm

Uh-oh: Apple has peeved Lileks.

This can’t be good.

Raccoon Princess says:
September 22, 2009 at 7:51 pm

I had a friend who never took novacaine for any dental procedure and through practice had made his will stronger than pain. He used relaxation techniques to get through it. I asked him why do this. He said, “I don’t like needles.”

I imagine that’s why dentists didn’t give novacaine to the kids; they didn’t want to deal with a kid shrieking about a needle, but they would take the pain of the drill much better.

Raccoon Princess says:
September 22, 2009 at 7:56 pm

As for the Black Dahlia, she was reduced to drinking in a known hooker bar although she did not have all the working parts to be a full-service hooker. I always figure she was offering some services and when a john found out she couldn’t go all the way, his rage against women exploded. Since he wasn’t someone who had a connection to her before that night, they never found him.

metaphizzle says:
September 24, 2009 at 12:11 pm

steveH:
As for the iTunes resize (green) button, it's finally acting consistently with most of the rest of the applications for the OS. Annoying until you either get used to it, or some third-party tweak swaps behaviors back again.

Remember folks, it’s all just ones and zeros.

It's being consistent, but it's still a step backwards. Before, you could turn on the mini player by clicking a single button. Now you have to pull down a menu and select that option, or press three different buttons on the keyboard.

metaphizzle says:
September 24, 2009 at 6:42 pm

Ha, Apple just put out an updated version of iTunes (9.1) and apparently the feedback was negative enough to convince Apple to re-implement the thing where the green button switches to the
mini-player.
I'm happy now.
Not saying this is iron-clad science or anything, but my child hurled four times in the night after getting the nasal flu spray. Make that flu vaccine spray. I hope. I don’t remember specifying. She missed the bus, of course, and I phoned in an absence. The recorded voice asked you to specify flu-like symptoms, and I felt like saying “are enlarged buboes flu-like?” but then they have to go through the whole plague-reporting protocols, and they’re nice people. Don’t want to complicate their day. Once upon a time people would have chalked this up to the stomach flu, but I think we all know there’s no such thing. There’s food poisoning, Cruise Ship Fungoo, wife e. coli, and the rest, but no “flu” for the stomach.

Which makes me wonder what it was I got when I had the lower-torso grippe as a kid. Those miserable days spent in bed in a room with newspapers on the floor, a bucket, the TV dinner tray with a glass of warm 7-up – ugh. You could look forward to being well enough to watch TV, if you had a small set that could be wheeled into the room. Then it was “Noonday” and ladies’ shows and crappy westerns or B-grade mysteries. I must have watched a
hard-boiled movie at some point as a child, because when I was nine I called
my mother a “broad,” which she found amusing for 1.6 seconds before
admonitions took over.

Since I was home with her for the morn until she went to bed – wife was off
at Bunco – it had the character of the Old Days. From AM toast to the
goodnight kiss. I miss those days, but of course I’ll miss these days in a few
years. We had a little time to kill before choir, so we went to the antique
store. As usual, delights:

This is a sewing kit that ripped off, without shame or fear, the famous Rocket
88 car ad campaign.

Charlie McCarthy and Willie Talk and all the other dead-eyed dolls can just go
straight back to hell THANK YOU VERY MUCH
In a corner, an old wig model and some ancient fabric.
I love her. That's very 40s, pal, unless of course it turns out to be very 50s, daddy-o. I posted that one at the posterous account, which I keep reminding myself to tell you to go to. I try to put a picture up once a day.

I could fill up my camera on every trip. I found, and bought, two old Minneapolis Tribune cardboard inserts for point-of-sale displays; they’ll go up at my new desk. One of them promises full photo coverage of the Shriner convention.

**Wednesday night** somewhere in town they're playing a “high-def” version of “The Wizard of Oz” on a movie screen. I won't be going, but I'd like to. It's a beautiful film, and it occupied a large portion of my imagination as a small child, simply because there wasn't anything else like it. We had cartoons, of course, but they weren't real in the way “Wizard” was real.

The movie came along once a year, and even if you'd only seen it a few times you knew it by heart, because you’d stored it away. A perfect example: years ago I heard a comedian do the Wizard in three minutes or some such
compacted amount of time, and after he'd described the meeting with the Great and Powerful Oz he mimed the Cowardly Lion throwing himself through the window in the hallway, and said "COMMERCIAL." The audience paused, stunned, then roared, the sound of a million synaptic vaults thrown open.

When you watch it again as an adult you pick up on the things noticed by the adults of the day; you slip into their cultural language. When you’re a kid the first appearance of the Cowardly Lion is delightful, because he's the lovable Cowardly Lion. (My father would imitate him now and then: I'll fight you with one hand behind my back. I'll fight you with both hands behind my back.) At the time the shot meant something else: it’s Bert Lahr. There's no way you know that as a kid in the sixties. If someone pointed it out you wouldn't quite understand. It was a movie that took place in an entirely self-contained world with no external references. As the years pass and I learn more about the 30s, the styles and sounds, you reassemble the thing in your mind to make it more of a product of its era, but it resists. Either it's utterly unique or there's a little kid in your head who just doesn't care and doesn’t want to know.

To this day I remember seeing the Emerald City in color on Grandpa’s TV. That glorious translucent green! Those futuristic towers! Things to come, surely, things to come – perhaps. Unless. 1939 must have felt like a damned odd and nervous time. I've been scrolling through the late ’39 Tribune microfiche for a few weeks, watching the war news dominate the pages, and of course they’re side by side with cheery adverts for the latest in American conveniences. Like beer. Budweiser ran a series of ads about enjoying life drop by golden drop, and it hardly sounds like Depression talk. *We're free! We have appliances! We have natural resources and food and the most bounteous nation on the planet! Have a beer!* People weren’t “Depression weary,” in the sense that they walked around with chins on sternums, exhausted by a decade of craptacular economic stagnation. The songs were cheerful – gay, if you wish – and the colors bright. The movies were a pleasure. So many new ideas. So many new arguments. Better days ahead. Perhaps. Unless.

In ’42 you wonder if they looked back at “The Wizard of Oz” and it seemed like it came from a place a million years away. Probably not; it was probably re-released to great success. But for every kid who sat wide-eyed in the theater there were probably a few adults who remembered ’39, and felt a pang for the last summer before the world went mad.

I don’t know; guessing. It's the hazard of find easy symbols in things and dates. It's always 1939 somewhere.

Later today: Out of Context Ad Contest! Stay tuned.
54 RESPONSES TO wednesday, sept. 23

Greg VA says:
September 23, 2009 at 9:14 pm

Take a look at this matchbook, a short one, but the “Rocket Action” 65 Olds looks good... even on a matchbook. 
http://videomartyr.blogspot.com/

My 6 year old just went through a bout with a brief head cold. I went 9 rounds with the school's nurse and her verrrry inaccurate aural Thermometer! Now that they have lowered the “kick your kid out of school” temp to 100.00 even a laughing fit will show a temp. Curse you unfounded swine flu fears!!!

The bleat in neat!

Greg VA says:
September 23, 2009 at 9:16 pm

That’s “The Bleat is neat!”

Andre says:
September 23, 2009 at 10:24 pm

Don’t feel bad if you haven’t seen The Wizard of Oz on the big screen. I went to a screening several years ago. The opening scenes in Kansas were stunning. Then Dorothy gets to Oz. What looks so wonderful on the small screen looks really, really cheap on the big screen.

Although even on television, the painted sound stage wall in front of Dorothy as she leaves Munchkinland was obvious. My brother and I always laughed, hoping that she’d skip right into it.

Personally, I think The Wizard of Oz is the greatest American film ever made.

Barry says:
September 24, 2009 at 8:47 am

But for every kid who sat wide-eyed in the theater there were probably a few adults who remembered ’39, and felt a pang for the last summer before the world went mad.

I could say the same thing about kids enjoying the heck out of Playhouse Disney and Nick Jr these days – even Hannah Montana and Cars and WallE – there are parents feeling a pang for the summer of 2001, before the world went mad.
Long dang day it was; Everything in the world has to be done Wednesday night, so . . . sorry.

Specifics – busy writing a column and writing & doing the voice-over for a video. It’s been work since sunrise – sped off to the office listening to the 70s XM channel this time. Midnight Train to Georgia. Whoo-hoo. Gladys Knight may have gone back to George with the fellow who thought he’d be a star (superstar, but he never got far) because she was a failure, too, and he provided a handy excuse. Got to work, helped a bit on the newscast, did another segment in one of the new studios, then finished the first of three flu videos. I look fat. The camera may add ten pounds, but a blousing-out shirt adds another 15. I’m not at the fighting weight I was when I went on my great no-carb crash diet, but then again, about half the people I met during that period thought I was dying.

The one thing I learned from the no-carb diet was the pleasures of a breakfast sausage, and to this day I have a small one with a few jots of Rooster Sauce. Cub foods stopped carrying the brand I prefer, and switched to one that has no brand name as far as I can tell. Bob’s Slaughterhouse Miscellany, perhaps. As I typed on twitter this morning: has that gamy aftertaste kids love!

File’s almost done; leave you with this.
If Microsoft had been put in charge of marketing sex, the human race would have ended long ago, because no one would be caught dead doing something that uncool.

Some thoughts:

At some point someone will have to develop a post-production plug-in that automates the herky-jerky camera motion, just to save time and effort. I understand the appeal of the technique, and to be honest I prefer it to watching a straight-on boring wide shot with cut-away close-ups; it provides visual engagement when the content is utterly banal. As in this case.

Who are these people? How does the pathetic “geek” know Hot Maybe-Mom? Is the older woman his mom, or Hot Maybe-Mom’s? Not to get all sociological on you, but at the end Geekboy puts down Tall Cool Guy, and it’s totally unconvincing and almost awkward. He would never have slammed Grandma: disrespectful. He wouldn’t put down Hot Mom; turns off target market. So he can only go against Tall Cool Guy. But it just makes him look pathetic, and his sign-off surfer-d00d gesture nails that coffin shut.

There can’t be an analogous Mac version of this, because Apple would never presume that people might hold a multi-generational social event to upgrade their system software.

After watching the entire thing, I still have no idea what Windows 7 does, or why it’s different. Something about photos and email, yes, but aside from that it’s a blur. I did get the impression that you could go online and learn more about Windows 7. Crucial party tip: print off some stuff from a website.

Later today: First Day Covers. Thin pickings here, but Thursdays and Fridays are like that.
JamesS says:
September 24, 2009 at 6:53 pm

juanito – John Davey:

RLR:
Good thing I set up free Ubuntu Linux to do all the nifty things they finally claim they got working under Winders 7!

My beat up laptop is running PCLinuxOS for all my sysadmin tasks. All my servers (over 20 physical and several virtual) are running Linux. Sometime it is an effort to get things setup the way I want, but after that, its pretty much hands off...

Dudes, that's great. How's World of Warcraft running on those systems?

Jimmy H says:
September 24, 2009 at 7:15 pm

Tip for your Windows 7 party: prepare your salads with plenty of 7-up dressing. Have enough 7-up ice for the soft drinks (or, I think in this case good stiff hi-balls would be a better choice). And for God's sake don't forget the 7-up cake with 7-up icing.

T. Marcell says:
September 24, 2009 at 8:18 pm

Actor: “Wait... what's my motivation again?”
Director: “You're hosting a party centered around an upgrade to a Web browser.”
Actor: “um... why would I do that?”
Director: “Look... I don't know, just do it.”
Actor: “okay... I think I'm just going to go with ‘desperate actor so willing to work that he'll pretend to host a party for software.'”
Director: “hey... whatever works.”

Ed Driscoll says:
September 24, 2009 at 9:04 pm

Windows 7 Is Bringing The Sexy!...

As the Hollywood knew in its golden days, it's what you don't talk about that makes it intriguing. In other words, this is a pretty *#$@-ing good parody of an other staggeringly lame advertisement: embedded by Embedded Video YouTube Direkt...

Steve T says:
September 24, 2009 at 9:30 pm

Yeah, pretty lame.

Which is probably why there are over fifty comments on the subject here.

(Crazy like a fox?) 😄
Bridey says:
September 24, 2009 at 10:08 pm

Well, Apple left an opening with the appalling “I’m a Mac” campaign (“Hey, folks, it’s true! People who buy our products really are smug, condescending jerks!”). And the clever MS response to those ads inched soooo close to coolness.

But they just couldn't stand it — cool is just not in Microsoft's nature. This ought to undo any last little whiff of it.

bgates says:
September 24, 2009 at 10:39 pm

@NavySeabee
Worst?
Not even close.

Dave (in MA) says:
September 25, 2009 at 12:20 am

I have to use a Mac from time-to-time at work.
Hate. It.

It doesn't help that their spokesman is Brandon from Galaxy Quest.

browniejr says:
September 25, 2009 at 12:23 am

Just like “Lauren,” these people aren't cool enough for a Mac...
At least they aren't off their meds, like the “Windows 386″ loon.
WOW, just wow.

John Robinson says:
September 25, 2009 at 7:30 am

Caramba! For a six-minute video it seemed to last thirty. All along I kept thinking this has to be some very subtle parody, like Best In Show or Spinal Tap. But as the minutes ground on, the realization hit: these people are serious. Un-bee-lee-vable.

threedonia.com » I betcha Bill Gates isn't having a Windows 7 launch party says:
September 25, 2009 at 8:52 am

[...] Via Lileks.com [...]
Jennifridge says:
September 25, 2009 at 9:59 am

James got quoted at CNBC.
http://www.cnbc.com/id/33007219

Steven Knoerr says:
September 25, 2009 at 11:31 am

You guys are missing out on a great opportunity, and you should be ashamed of yourselves. How can you resist hosting a party EXACTLY like they describe it, just so you can blog about how many people either committed suicide or slowly, slowly backed out the door, without making any sudden movements?

EmGee says:
September 25, 2009 at 12:28 pm

Dave (in MA):
I have to use a Mac from time-to-time at work.
Hate. It.
It doesn't help that their spokesman is Brandon from Galaxy Quest.

I see comments like this nearly verbatim all the time. Just once, I'd like to know what irreplaceable Mac-Centric program(s)is out there that forces people to use a Mac “once in awhile” and “hate it”. I can see why unfamiliarity might breed contempt, but to make such vague statements seems awfully bogus to me. Maybe they had to check their email at a public coffeehouse kiosk? Yeah, that's HARD.

steveH says:
September 25, 2009 at 6:30 pm

John:

(2) I find myself actually waiting for Windows 7 because it has built-in speech-to-text capability. ... On Macs, you have to buy extra software for this feature.

No, it come with OS X, and has since at least as far back as 10.4, released in 2005.

No, thanks. Anyway, I don't get Macs. My hand has plenty of fingers; I feel no impulse or obligation to click with the heel of my hand.

I have no idea what this is supposed to mean. Absolutely nonsensical.

steveH says:
September 25, 2009 at 6:34 pm

Joe Broderick:
What happens, by the way, when Apple gets to OS XI? They
gonna start naming releases after canine species? OS 11.1 ...
Wolf; OS 11.2 ... Fox; OS 11.3 ... Coyote; OS 11.4 ... um, Dingo?

They never have to get there. OS X 10.23 is entirely possible, if not likely. (I'm voting for dinosaurs, personally. Or beetles, since there are so many of them.)

Software version numbers only look like plain vanilla decimals.

WalterPeck says:
September 27, 2009 at 8:11 am

Ah, OS flamewars (he said, sipping his coffee).

Thaddeus D. Neckbeardinstine says:
September 28, 2009 at 11:17 pm

Someone please do a spoof that involves strippers, cocaine, marijuana, etc … “For my Windows 7 house party we’re going to sacrifice little 7-year-old Jimmy to Moloch and paint a big “7” on each of the walls with his blood!” Gosh golly gee it’ll be ever so much fun!

Jonadab the Unsightly One says:
September 29, 2009 at 6:50 am

@WalterPeck
Yeah.

There are times when it's useful to bring up another OS, e.g., when Vista was new it was hard to evaluate its sidebar without comparing it to panel apps in Gnome and KDE, and when the OS X dock was new, it was hard not to compare it to other docks, and now with the pinning in Seven it's hard not to compare to the OS X dock. But these are details.

Each OS has its place, and any serious computer geek ought to be familiar with and able to work with at least three different environments. Otherwise you miss the forest for the trees and develop a narrow view of computing wherein you conflate general concepts with the one particular implementation of them that you've used.

John says:
September 29, 2009 at 3:58 pm

I think the idea of doing a party at home for Windows 7 launch is pretty cool. The video is maybe not the greatest, but it's really for people who've already signed up to do a Windows 7 launch party. In that context, it's not so bad… probably better than reading a dry list of suggestions for most people.

Microsoft Windows 7 House Party: Public Relations Disaster or Video Marketing Triumph? | Media News: Internet Marketing & Online Advertising says:
September 30, 2009 at 7:14 am

[...] James Lileks of The Bleat writes, “If Microsoft had been put in charge of marketing sex, the human race would have [...]

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=3903
Brien Lee says:
October 1, 2009 at 7:56 pm

There was a time... when I actually went to a midnight roll-out party at Egghead for Windows 95.

Windows 95 was the apology for windows 3.0, or 3.1, or 386-- who remembers? It was a reasonable advance.

I do know that the Mac at the time was pretty dead-- it was the non-Jobs period. And Egghead's only Apple product was the Newton.

I brought my 14 year old son with me.

We were there long enough to grab some free donuts.

The Windows 7 party kits they mail out do not include donuts.

So I didn't sign up.

Microsoft's Web Video for Windows 7 Roll-Out Parties | VideoStory News says:
October 1, 2009 at 8:04 pm

[...] Go here. Share and Enjoy: [...]

Microsoft = Kidding? = No « Steve Grossman says:
October 1, 2009 at 9:12 pm

[...] As CNBC mentions: “one Washington Post reader wrote: “If Microsoft had been put in charge of marketing sex, the human race would have ended long ago, because no one would be caught dead doing something that uncool.”“ [...]

Things Microsoft should never attempt at A Dixie Carpetbagger says:
October 7, 2009 at 10:15 am

[...] design, cuisine, and human reproduction. To quote Mr. Lileks: “If Microsoft had been put in charge of marketing sex, the human race would have ended long [...]
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?
Friday! A few hours until the slide down the dino-tail, and the weekend commences, for the usual fee. Plus expenses. (Name that tune! No googling.) As I may have whined – er, noted before, everything piles up at the end of the week, with the last official duty being the short Sunday column. When I send that one in I feel like Indy snatching the hat before the stone door drops.

Today, for example -

Oh, you don’t care. I don’t care. Nothing as boring as someone recounting all the stuff they had to do. Gosh, you had meetings, friend? Do tell. But it’s not a grind, and it’s not a life-sentence sitting in a beige pen typing and answering emails about the email about the meeting to discuss the email about the meeting. Ever since I was assigned to the video team it’s been the closest thing to living the “Front Page” model of newspapering I’ve ever experienced. This, then that, then this, then the other thing – all that’s lacking is a group of cynical guys with poorly knotted ties, halitosis, alcohol issues, and a skinny guy running in with a Speed Graphix camera shouting that they just found Lefty’s body in a trunk. Also, everything’s in color.

But since I am still Dad, there’s a guillotine that falls in the middle of the day: I have to go get my daughter. I race home, change into civvies, and stand at the bus stop. When she bounces off the day reverts, and we’re talking about
school (What did you do?) Stuff. What did you learn? Things), and then it’s piano and dinner and the dog-walk. And then the night shift begins. It’s a long smear.

Anyway. Here’s the recent short video, which people seem to enjoy. Wait for the sneeze.

Here’s today’s column. Somewhat related.

Here’s a new site about – yes, really – newspaper whiskey ads from 1939. I was going to save it for later today, but there’s a good chance I won’t have the time to post it. Or I would forget.

For a while, just bear with me. Adjusting to a new job occupies large portions of the brain. Here’s a Friday topic, as per the lyrics quoted in the first paragraph: try to suggest a song using the fewest lyrics possible. You can’t use the title, of course. Aim for a stumper, not a gimme, but don’t be mulishly obtuse.

See you later today, with 100 Mysteries.

---

197 RESPONSES TO friday! sept. 25

sbleiberg says:  September 25, 2009 at 3:52 pm

@Rex V

Aja, but I think it’s “when all my dime dancing is through, I run to you.”

Mel says:  September 25, 2009 at 4:23 pm

@action kate  
Perftec, as my 3-yr-old says! That’s her night-night song. Hummed, not the lyrics! Too mature and depressing for all the lyrics!

ok, partial lyric: “and fall down at your door”

Mel says:  September 25, 2009 at 4:24 pm

oh, and challenge #3 for me:

“starlight and moonlight are waiting for thee”

St. Chris says:  September 25, 2009 at 4:25 pm

The Proclaimers, “I’m Gonna Be (500 Miles).”
Further hint from my last item:
“it’s crazy, but I’m frightened by the sound of the telephone”

One of the best pop xylophone solos ever. Though not as awesome as:
“I’ll take you on a trip beside the ocean”

**GardenStater** says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:26 pm

*Mel:* “The other night dear, as I lay sleeping”

“You are my Sunshine.” Written by Jimmie Davis, who was governor of Louisiana!

**Bridey** says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:28 pm

@Michael Zensius
“The spotlight’s hitting something that’s been known to change the weather”

If no one’s picked that one up yet: B-b-b-Benny and the Jets.
And I will be staggered if anyone recognizes this one:
“Canoga Park is a straight safe drive,
It’s too far out of reach.”

**linny32303** says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:28 pm

teacher is teaching

**GardenStater** says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:28 pm

*Mel:* oh, and challenge #3 for me:
“starlight and moonlight are waiting for thee”

“Beautiful Dreamer,” Stephen Foster.

Mel, you and I must have similar musical tastes. Meanwhile, nobody's guessed mine, so I'll add another clue:

“Good authors too who once knew better words,
Now only use four letter words”

**Bridey** says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:33 pm

@St. Chris

Ah, that last one just put me right back in the San Fernando Valley in the ’70s — it’s “Moonlight Feels Right.”

(Best xylophone solo, frat-rock division: “Gone Daddy Gone”)
juanito - John Davey says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:37 pm

juanito – John Davey:
Another:
“What could be plainer than this”

Time to give out answers – as I will be away from electronica for the majority of the afternoon.

This one is:

The Tubes – Talk To Ya Later

juanito - John Davey says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:38 pm

juanito – John Davey:
Offered in honor of the spirit of The Diner, for now, lost in the mist...
“Radios of the world are tuning in tonight”

The Kinks – Around The Dial

juanito - John Davey says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:39 pm

juanito – John Davey:
Hand me down my soup and fish, I am gonna get my wish...

Perry Como, but performed by many – Hoop De Doo

juanito - John Davey says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:40 pm

juanito – John Davey:
I've lived twenty-five years, I'm a kid on the run. I got a pistol for action.

Night Ranger – Don’t Tell Me You Love Me (not so charming when your 4 year old daughter belts it out).

Mr_Lilacs says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:43 pm

Action Kate, I like your story 'bout Minnie the Moocher. Poor Min.

Mr_Lilacs says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:47 pm

Garden Stater, Anything Goes and so it has all gone.

St. Chris says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:51 pm

No takers for my other one? Is everyone still looking for clues?

On another note:
“My beacon's been moved under moon and star”

swschrad says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:51 pm

Which by the way was a great bathroom song. Anything over 5 minutes long was a fave of DJs on unformatted FM stations because it was time enough to get out of the studio, grab a slider, conduct business, maybe rip the wire if it wasn't REALLY an unformatted FM station. If the album version of a song was over 5 minutes, and it didn't reek, it had a chance to get mondo airplay and be a hit just because of its length.

Mr_Lilacs says:
September 25, 2009 at 4:53 pm

St. Chris: No takers for my other one? Is everyone still looking for clues?
On another note: “My beacon's been moved under moon and star”

St. Chris, you lead us to the Twilight Zone, when the bullet hits the bone. More rather lurid '80s memories.

Monkey David says:
September 25, 2009 at 5:11 pm

Easy one:
“...pompatus...”

Mr_Lilacs says:
September 25, 2009 at 5:18 pm

Monkey David: Easy one:
“...pompatus...”

Not saying this about you, but that song has a great line: “You're the cutest thing that I ever did see. Really love your peaches, want to shake your tree.”

Monkey David says:
September 25, 2009 at 5:27 pm

On another note, the gone but still sorely missed Los Angeles radio station KSAC used to have a contest in the mornings where the news
guy (well, the morning co-host, but he used to be the news guy on Mark & Brian) would read lyrics in his deep, deadpan voice and you had to guess the song. So it's the converse: what song could you quote the most lyrics from and still not have people get it?

I spend a lot of money
And I spent a lot of time
The trip we made in Hollywood
Is etched upon my mind
After all the things we've done and seen
You find another man

**Chuckles** says:
September 25, 2009 at 5:32 pm

@Monkey David

“Reelin' in the Years” by Steely Dan
Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to go look through the bent back tulips to see how the other half lives...

**Mr_Lilacs** says:
September 25, 2009 at 5:41 pm

The things you think are knowledge I can't understand.

**T. Marcell** says:
September 25, 2009 at 6:24 pm

While we're on the subject, here's one you can get in a single word: “Annandale”
Try this: “heaven rest us, I'm not asbestos”

**Grebmar** says:
September 25, 2009 at 6:38 pm

Are you reeling in the yee-ars, stowing away the ti-ime!

**Grebmar** says:
September 25, 2009 at 6:39 pm

As long as we're on the subject, “Hello, Felonius, my old friend...”

**Mr_Lilacs** says:
September 25, 2009 at 6:55 pm

“Now I got mortgages on homes; I got stiffness in my bones” comes from Fat Bottomed Girls.

That song came out when I was a freshman in high school. I immediately liked it quite a bit. I told my friend Dave about this great new song I heard. He asked the name and, on hearing it, without missing a beat said “Fat Bottomed Girls? They must have been writing about [insert name here].” He didn't realize that the girl he mentioned was standing right behind him. She decked him and stormed off fuming. Doubt I've ever laughed harder than that. She was a bit pear-shaped, which only added to the hilarity – and she was cute, which made it all the more memorable just about thirty years later, when I do have a mortgage and arthritis.
Mr_Lilacs says:  
September 25, 2009 at 6:57 pm

“Home is just a place to hang your head” and think of *Things to do in Denver When You’re Dead*. Freakishly new song, doncha know.

Jano says:  
September 25, 2009 at 7:11 pm

@St. Chris

Robert Palmer’s “Lookin' for Clues.”

Bridey says:  
September 25, 2009 at 7:25 pm

@T. Marcell

Indeed! Annandale = “My Old School.”

Brian says:  
September 25, 2009 at 8:00 pm

@Mr_Lilacs

Ding.

juanito - John Davey says:  
September 25, 2009 at 9:01 pm

*Mr_Lilacs*:  
“Home is just a place to hang your head” and think of *Things to do in Denver When You’re Dead*. Freakishly new song, doncha know.

And an equally freaky movie. Buckwheats and Boat drinks!

Bob W. says:  
September 25, 2009 at 10:55 pm

I couldn’t decide, so here’s two:

1. …You must be joking son,  
   Where did you get those shoes?

2. I understand just a little

DryOwlTacos says:  
September 25, 2009 at 10:55 pm

@Dave Williams

…I saw Maybelline in a Coupe de Ville.

I would not give you false hope that I could remember the rest of the lyrics.
Brian Lutz says:
September 26, 2009 at 3:07 am

A bit late, but here's one:

“I can’t complain, but sometimes I still do.”

Bob W. says:
September 26, 2009 at 8:34 am

“I can’t complain, but sometimes I still do.”
Life's Been Good, by Joe Walsh.

Bart says:
September 26, 2009 at 11:36 am

“All the worms and the gnomes”

Gerry says:
September 26, 2009 at 12:41 pm

What happened to 100 Mysteries?

Andre says:
September 26, 2009 at 2:28 pm

I'm trying to whittle songs down to the least words possible. Here's an easy one:

“S'paradise.”

Dave says:
September 26, 2009 at 3:13 pm

Speed Graphic, not grafix

Bridey says:
September 26, 2009 at 5:17 pm

“S'wonderful” too....

Jody Morgan says:
September 26, 2009 at 7:11 pm

Gerry:

What happened to 100 Mysteries?

http://lileks.com/institute/100mysteries/51.html

Oh, and in case anyone was curious: “Got a baby elephant vacuum cleaner” is from “Weird Al” Yankovic’s “Bedrock Anthem”.

Brian Lutz says:
September 26, 2009 at 8:43 pm

When your conscience hits you, knock it back with pills.
Tony Dickson says:
September 27, 2009 at 3:59 am

“But lie there shattered into fragments...”

Steve Ripley says:
September 28, 2009 at 12:40 am

Little Debbie, Little Debbie!

St. Chris says:
September 28, 2009 at 11:47 am

@Jano: Thanks! I was hoping someone would say it.

@Bob W.:
1. Steely Dan, “Pretzel Logic” (We seem to be on a Dan kick here, not that I'm complaining)
2. Wall of Voodoo, “Mexican Radio”

“Success or failure will not alter it.”
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
It became apparent Sunday that Fall wasn't indulging us, it was just distracted. Like a parent who tells the kids it's time to go, but gets a call on the cell, and walks around for a while dealing with some stupid thing at the stupid office that can't wait until stupid tomorrow and will be replaced by something else equally stupid the minute this stupid thing is settled. OKAY, I SAID IT'S TIME TO GO! And the kids say okay, okay, and everyone heads off to the car with a slight case of mutual grumps.

Like that.

By which I mean fall came in around 3 PM Sunday afternoon, and it was in no mood to go easy. Like a parent who tells the kids it's time to go, but gets a call on the cell, and walks around for a while dealing with some stupid thing at the stupid office that can't wait until stupid tomorrow and will be replaced by something else equally stupid the minute this stupid thing is settled. OKAY, I SAID IT'S TIME TO GO! And the kids say okay, okay, and everyone heads off to the car with a slight case of mutual grumps.

Like that.

By which I mean fall came in around 3 PM Sunday afternoon, and it was in no mood to go easy. The wind came up; the dead limbs came down; sun, then rain, then sun and rain, then gusts that made you think you'd land in Oz by day's end. (Wonder if any storms ever took Munchkins from Oz to Kansas? Maybe that's where all the circus midgets came from.) The windows came down; the temperatures dropped; immense dirty clouds moved overhead like an army on its way to the front. Everyone's fear has been a cold autumn and a quick leaf dump. The leaves have barely begun to turn; it would be a pity to skip ahead in the story. But the weather this year made no sense.

Sunday my wife got Mums, the transitional flowers. “Put out the Mums” is the floral equivalent of “Bring out your dead,” in my book; it's a sign that all the other flowers are soon to perish, and the Mums will defend the position as
long as it can. While she gathered her mums while she may I cleaned out the shed, another end-of-season chore. Summer's small details need neatening for the big sleep ahead. The fireworks punks, the croquet mallets, outdoor candle holders, all the things that say Warmth and Sun and Carefree Long Days – back in the box, back in the bag. For a moment – God help me – I considered putting down some extension cords, maybe draping a few Christmas lights. Get a jump on it. Better now when the digits are supple; in two months my fingers will feel like half-thawed sausage logs . . . . NO.

I had the same sort of defiance about putting away the sprinklers: NO.

Had a half-hour, so I thought I'd clean out the garage. You may ask: are you the Flash, that you may empty the Augean stables of the standard American garage in a half an hour? No; it's just underpopulated. There's a box of old DirecTV receivers and DVRs I can't throw out, because the minute I do they'll ask for them back. I went through the bug-out box, first assembled after 9/11. I figured, worst-case scenario, I need to get to Fargo. You say: why would you think that would be better? Because the family business is gas, and there's something to be said for having access to an enormous generator sitting on top of huge buried tanks of fuel. Just a thought.

To judge from the contents of the box, I presumed we would stop halfway to Fargo, have a meal on a collapsable propane stove, clean off the panic-sweat with moist towelettes, wave glow-sticks in the air, don ponchos and continue on. It's not bad, really; I've always been ready for a two-week interregnum of civilization. Even have lots of notepads and pens to write about it. After a fortnight, well, sorry. I had to make a decision: use the storage area for a year's worth of dried food, or Christmas and Halloween decorations? I can't see my wife being happy because all the tree trimmings are gone, replaced by 48 boxes of freeze-dried mac & cheese meals.

I finished the garage, went upstairs, and sat outside for a while reading the new Stephen King novel. I may be interviewing him next month, and want to be up on the latest. It's about a small town – in Maine, believe it or not, just down the road from Castle Rock – that gets cut off from the world when an enormous transparent dome appears one October day. It's good straight old-style King, with all the tics and ingenuity that implies. He can write about anything. Except religion. Belief is okay, in the general sense, but when it gets specific his characters turn into the sort of thin-lipped God-bothering tongue-talking booboisie you saw in the courthouse spectator's pews in “Inherit the Wind.”

A good weekend, though. A damned fine weekend. Saturday night Natalie had two friends for a sleepover, and they spent the night shooting videos. I taught them how to do cutaways, reaction shots, wide shots, master shots, that sort of thing. If they'd gotten around to editing, I suppose they would have applied their new-found knowledge, but they had too much fun shooting. Then they came upstairs while I was going through a New Wave playlist, and everybody did a mock-spaz dance to Jonah Lewie. When everyone was asleep I watched a movie – a remarkable thing you will enjoy
very, very much when I bring it up in Black & While World.

Aside from that, I scanned. Yea, I scanned. I finished arranging the last box of stuff folks have mailed me over the years. You are all awesome. I tidied up some sites that had been looking ragged, laid out a few more to be rolled out over the next few weeks, and completed the interface for the Thirties site, due Tuesday or Wednesday.

I managed to nip into Hunt & Gather to pick up something on sale: a plastic sign from a 1950s supermarket meat department. I don't know what I'll do with it, but I had to have it. Took some pictures, as usual; there's always something new to see.

Outside in the rain stood two old electric hairdriers – giant black devices that looked like brainwashing terminals. The nameplates were interesting:

The Aridor's companion was the Helene Curtis:
A proud product of NATIONAL MINERAL. I miss companies with names like that. AMALGAMATED OBJECTS. CONTINENTAL SUBSTANCES.

Creep-O Deluxe:

And of course the inevitable Jug roundup. A fine word, Jug; you don’t hear it
so much anymore. There were three examples of fine old graphics, beginning with Kwik-Way’s metal hot-cold JUG:

The Woodland Jug from Poloron, of New Rochelle – forever known for a generation or two the home of Rob and Laura Petrie.

They also made the Fiesta Jug, with festive firecrackery letters:
I always find something from my childhood, and was gratified to see an old friend:

Jeff Goldblum's less-successful brother? No. I love the sort-of-cape he's wearing; they didn't want to put him in a real cape with a high collar, but
they needed to suggest a cape, given his field.

Surely you recognize him, no?

**Later today:** Matchbook! And the Stribblog around noonish. See you then.

(Yes, I’m tweaking the site, as usual. Have to fix the link color. Will do today.)

---

**Pass it along, if you wish**

---

### 60 RESPONSES TO *monday, sept. 29*

**Robert** says:
September 28, 2009 at 4:32 pm

I can’t believe fall is here already.

**Susan** says:
September 28, 2009 at 4:53 pm

Here in Kingman, AZ we have the Little Brown Jug liquor store. Of course, we locals just call it the LBJ.

**Steve Biddle** says:
September 28, 2009 at 5:16 pm

I had the opportunity to do a radio interview with Kreskin when I worked for KIKI in Honolulu many years ago. He sort of crackled with energy when he came into the studio... and I was, well, amazed by T. Amazing Kreskin. What's he doing now?

**Greg VA** says:
September 28, 2009 at 6:04 pm

No BUG-out Box should be without one of these: Personal radiation detection kit: 

Great stuff Jim, I didn't have anywhere near the good luck you had. I need to invest in one of those combo scanner/printer/espresso machines to save the remaining square foot of available space on my desk.

Good luck with the King. Please share the back-story on the interview on the Bleat!

**MichaelsDaddy** says:
September 28, 2009 at 7:04 pm

Dang... here I thought nobody would have known about Kreskin and his ESP game. Except for the plastic pendulum, our set was eventually dismantled and tossed. Like so many board games in our home, we probably never used it for its intended purpose.
NeeNee says:
September 28, 2009 at 11:44 pm

Kreskin's still doin' his schtick. He was on Mike Huckabee's Sunday night show week before last.

And he's only 74 . . thought that the big 8-0 was breathing down his neck.

Real name? George Joseph Kresge, Jr. Any relation to the family that owned Kresge's Department store?

Jody Morgan says:
September 29, 2009 at 6:14 am

[browniejr]:

Maybe “The Amazing Kreskin” can solve the mystery of what happened to the “100 Mysteries” post from Friday...

http://lileks.com/institute/100mysteries/51.html

I almost wish I'd changed my username to “The Amazing Kreskin” to do this reply...

Tom Beiter says:
September 29, 2009 at 7:55 am

And here I was going to answer “Robert Q. Lewis.”

Jgrodnik says:
September 29, 2009 at 9:18 am

Don't feel alone, Tom B. I, too, thought it was Robert Q. Lewis.

LindaL says:
September 29, 2009 at 11:30 am

Borderman – I'll pass it along.
The front has passed; the wind is gone. We look overhead and see stars. The great seasonal change is over, and summer – never too sure of itself until it rallied in the ninth – is a past-tense subject. I walked outside this afternoon when it was 57; the wind may have taken it down ten degrees or twenty, but it was still practically tropical compared to what's coming. Time to start toting up the compensations: the pleasures of sweaters, warm blankets, fireplaces, cider, and all the other cliches we use to call up happy childhood autumn memories. It's never cold in the autumns of recollected childhood; it's misty, almost warm, either bright with that achingly lovely hail-and-farewell sunshine, or moody and mysterious, cloudy and private. Everyone loves autumn, but it's not the featured attraction. It's the short subject.

A good day to be indoors working on a set. Today, in an exercise in Team Building and Solidarity, we had the First Annual Union Rules Violation Festival: everyone on the video team moved the gear from the temporary studio to the new digs downstairs. I knew this day would be special when I saw this in the lobby:
Balloons! We can afford balloons now! Yes, we’re out of bankruptcy.

We’ve been shooting the videos in the newsroom, but the location had some problems. It was rather underpopulated, for one thing, because people who are typing and thinking and working on the wordy part of the operation react poorly to nova-bright klieg lights. It was a temporarily solution. Later we opened up a new studio in the old photography department, and there’s a lesson for the Way Things Change: when I came to the paper the room was filled with light tables and computers and darkrooms, a busy place where the Photogs did their magic. Digital changed all that. The room was emptied out and used to store excess desks.

We had a lot of excess desks.

A lot.

In fact a few areas of the building have been decommissioned, walled off and removed from air/heat/ventilation. Dead zones. I made sure to take many pictures before they were sealed off, and the empty rows of empty desks and abandoned offices – sometimes with a pathetic Successories poster still tacked to the wall – made the winter portion of the first part of the Great Recession a grim bit of business. I watched them decommission the Weekly publication area, and thought, well, that’ll never be used again. The entire second floor of the building is haunted, in a way; they used to actually make the paper on the Linotype machines, and ever since they removed the
machines and turned the floor into offices and meeting rooms, it seems lost
and empty and vacant and sad. Back then it was hot and smoky and loud and
poisonous, but what a world, what a place. The newspaper began and ended
in the building. A fellow could write a story, bang -30 – at the bottom, feel the
floors shudder when the presses rolled, and when he jammed on his hat to
head to the Wagon for a post-work drink of Crab Orchard, see the trucks roll
out of the garage.

Well, maybe. Perhaps I’m compressing events. It wasn’t the “Front Page.” But
it was different.

Anyway: the second floor has been retrofitted many times, as has the entire
building – the bones go back to 1913 or so. Now it's the home to our video
studio. We’re in the Weekly publication offices. We have a kitchen. We have a
big green room. We have a large curtained area for staging shows; we have
set furniture we can roll on and off, an by-God real proper lights. A three-
camera set-up running into a Trickster for editing on the fly, an enormous
flatscreen to which we can push stills and video during broadcasts.

We are starting a TV station from scratch. With a large newsroom upstairs
bigger than anyone else’s, feeding us stuff.

It’s like standing on the deck of the Titanic and watching it morph into the
Enterprise.

After you hit the iceberg, but managed to contain the flooding.

So that was my day, aside from shooting some video. We dragged out all the
boxes, opened everything up, put together the equipment, and did everything
but burst into song. It’s like an Mickey Rooney movie. My dad has a barn. Let’s
put on a show!

**One little selection** from the massive scanning project – this one won’t end
up anywhere, unless I decide out of an act of sheer madness to start an
undistinguished midsized hotel site. Which I won’t. Behold the New
Heathman, in Portland:

- August 2011
- July 2011
- June 2011
- May 2011
- April 2011
- March 2011
- February 2011
- January 2011
- December 2010
- November 2010
- October 2010
- September 2010
- August 2010
- July 2010
- June 2010
- May 2010
- April 2010
- March 2010
- February 2010
- January 2010
- December 2009
- November 2009
- October 2009
- September 2009
- August 2009
- July 2009
- June 2009
- May 2009
- April 2009
- March 2009
- February 2009
- January 2009

HOST WITH THE MOST
I believe it was less than new when the sign went up, and it was obviously anything but when the picture was taken. The style is pure 20s, rote 'n' dull: build me a brick box, boys, and don't bother me with ornamentation. People will be staying inside, looking out.

The interesting part is the ground-floor makeover:

- 
- 

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!
Some buildings are improved by modernization, no matter how much out of character they might be with the rest of the structure. It helps if the building has no character.

The building today:
Lots to come today, so stop back. There's a reason for the graphic up top; you'll love it.

Oh, what the heck. Now's as good a time as any. Here you go. CLICK HERE.

---

Pass it along, if you wish

---

38 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, sept. 29*

**Paul** says:
September 29, 2009 at 1:18 am

First!

James, you can still see an occasional glass-block section of wall in older homes in Sacramento. I think they might have been more practical in climes where 55 degrees is a darn chilly winter day. But I suspect their insulating R-value was a negative number.

Those kitchens were cool (or hep, or whatever) but you nailed it with your “where do you actually cook?” comment. They weren’t very bauhausian. The purpose of a kitchen, one assumes, is cookery. I was looking for things like refrigerators (or ice boxes). Were they hidden under Armstrong style #666?

---

**Ross** says:
September 29, 2009 at 2:16 am
I, too, rather like that cadet-blue layout with the porthole window; studio art directors must have been sharing the pipe (so to speak) with interior designers back then—you occasionally see such a kitchen in a ’30s romantic comedy, usually in some little place the couple has run off to in order to get away from it all. There were a couple “houses of the future” here in The Beer Capital of the World that had those glass brick walls (dunno if they were kitchen walls, but I recall hearing that they were stuffed with cool/bizarre features that no one ever got in any subsequent house—you know, like the kitchen-of-tomorrow promotional films of later decades or the WB ‘toons that took place in such Frankenhouses). As for those spring-loaded stools (sounds like a disgusting new novelty item), I seriously doubt anyone has fond memories of using them, unless they had an unnatural attraction to that counter. Just look at the tiny throw from inside seat edge to vertical surface: ask for “Hump-O-Matic” Stools by name! Ouch.

cgm says:
September 29, 2009 at 3:21 am

My parents had magazines with ads like these, but in the 60s and not just kitchens. I remember seeing one interior design of a boy’s bedroom with a firepole. Oh, how I wanted one of those. Of course, my parents said no. Thus began my lifelong embitterment and mid-20s conversion to Bolshevism. Or not.

Still, seeing those ads reminded me of that firepole. Maybe someday I’ll have one.

hpoulter says:
September 29, 2009 at 4:35 am

Those kitchens are cool, but they seem to feature counter space as an afterthought. I know hubby didn’t help out, but didn’t the lady of the house need more than 3 or 4 square feet of uncluttered counter space to prepare dinner?

Greg VA says:
September 29, 2009 at 6:07 am

Isn’t linoleum Latin for “That which causes feet to turn blue with coldness”? Except in summer, the only time I would walk on linoleum in bare feet was on a dare – brrrrr!

I love the mother/daughter stereotype graphic. It is as if the daughter is saying: “Oh mom, look at that kitchen! I just can’t wait to be barefoot (again – brrrr!) and pregnant, like you were!”

I looked it up- actually Lino – translated from Latin means to “smear, befoul, dirty”. There is no translation for “leum” too bad. Though I would have called the product something more appealing.

More musings on tag sales and retro items at:
http://videomartyr.blogspot.com/

PersonFromPorlock says:
September 29, 2009 at 6:07 am

Those sharp-cornered steel (presumably) hinge boxes for the folding stools, sticking out just at knee height when the seats are folded… ouch! Other than that, very pleasant designs that successfully anticipated how kitchens would look fifteen years later. My only
criticism of them is that they are so designed that you wouldn't have been able to change very much in them before the changes started to clash with the original.

Dick Hassing says:
September 29, 2009 at 6:10 am

When I first looked at the picture of the hotel, I thought the sign said The HEATHEN Hotel. Dyslexia! What would I do without it?

Lulu says:
September 29, 2009 at 6:15 am

That first kitchen really looks like it's from the mid-'60s or later, what with the faux wood-paneling and wallpaper. Kitchen of the future indeed.

I'm thinking we don't see iceboxes (very few people would've had refrigerators in the '30s) because they weren't considered very attractive. Also, they were small and close to the floor.

I think the counter space only seems skimpy compared to newer houses (I'm talking '90s and later) with their large spaces and kitchen islands. If you even look at homes built in the '70s or '80s, that small “u” most kitchens were built in did not really allow for a ton of counter space.

RE: color existing in the '30s. Pauline Kael took Woody Allen to task (in print) for the way he filmed “The Purple Rose of Cairo.” If you haven't seen it, it takes place during the Depression and is about an unhappy housewife/waitress whose happiness and reason for being seems to solely come from going to the movies. One day, the handsome leading man of a movie she's watching for the umpteenth time steps right off the screen and into her life. Anyhoo, the movie-within-the-movie is in glorious black and white, of course, and “real life” is in color – a kind of washed-out sepia, which is what Kael took issue with. She scolded Allen for not being aware that the '30s was a time of bright primary colors, not dull brownish tints. It didn't seem to occur to her that perhaps the sepia color of real life was deliberately being contrasted with the brilliant black and white movie world for artistic reasons. Then again, maybe Allen was being doofy – he thought it would be a good idea to wed Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman, after all.

Lulu says:
September 29, 2009 at 6:17 am

I would just like to add this: aren't we all glad that linoleum is no longer considered suitable flooring for bedrooms?

Jody Morgan says:
September 29, 2009 at 6:26 am

Because I'm pretty sure that at some point someone will ask about last Friday's installment of 100 Mysteries:
http://lileks.com/institute/100mysteries/51.html
A very brief entry for a very lackluster movie, and be warned that this entry does give away whodunnit.

(Oh who am I kidding, no one's going to care whodunnit for this movie.)
Michael Rittenhouse says:
September 29, 2009 at 6:52 am

I will always associate thundering floors with humiliation. If I were still at the office when the presses rolled, it meant I’d missed deadline and people were standing around waiting for me to finish my section so they could make the last of that edition’s plates.

I never knew exactly what the technicians were doing in the meantime; the stern looks I got when I turned in the proof told me conversation wasn’t on their to-do list right then.

hpoulter says:
September 29, 2009 at 7:26 am

Lulu: That first kitchen really looks like it’s from the mid-’60s or later, what with the faux wood-paneling and wallpaper. Kitchen of the future indeed.
I’m thinking we don’t see iceboxes (very few people would’ve had refrigerators in the ’30s) because they weren’t considered very attractive. Also, they were small and close to the floor.
I think the counter space only seems skimpy compared to newer houses (I’m talking ’90s and later) with their large spaces and kitchen islands. If you even look at homes built in the ’70s or ’80s, that small “u” most kitchens were built in did not really allow for a ton of counter space.
RE: color existing in the ’30s. Pauline Kael took Woody Allen to task (in print) for the way he filmed “The Purple Rose of Cairo.” If you haven’t seen it, it takes place during the Depression and is about an unhappy housewife/waitress whose happiness and reason for being seems to solely come from going to the movies. One day, the handsome leading man of a movie she’s watching for the umpteenth time steps right off the screen and into her life. Anyhoo, the movie-within-the-movie is in glorious black and white, of course, and “real life” is in color – a kind of washed-out sepia, which is what Kael took issue with. She scolded Allen for not being aware that the ’30s was a time of bright primary colors, not dull brownish tints. It didn’t seem to occur to her that perhaps the sepia color of real life was deliberately being contrasted with the brilliant black and white movie world for artistic reasons. Then again, maybe Allen was being doofy – he thought it would be a good idea to wed Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman, after all.

Pauline Kael makes me grind my teeth. I think she was an altogether baleful influence on American cinematic taste. She was in the vanguard of 70′s cultural decay.

She loved “Bonnie and Clyde” and “Last Tango in Paris” and hated “It’s a Wonderful Life”. Roger Ebert lists her as a primary influence on him. What more do we need to know?

Nancy says:
September 29, 2009 at 7:52 am

Oooo! Thanks for the juicy “new” 1930s kitchen content. I was struck by the similarity of the color schemes to the decorator rooms of the 70s.

As for Autumn... “Everyone loves autumn, but it’s not the featured attraction. It’s the short subject.”
We are blessed here n the South with–maybe not as dramatic a fall- but a minimum of 2 months of glory. Average days in the 70s, nights in the upper 50s. Colorful leaves come in late October. A few warm “Indian Summer” days here; a few cold-front-coming-in blustery chilly ones there. Easily my favorite time of year. Except that it is followed by winter.

Doug Imhoff says:
September 29, 2009 at 8:43 am

Hi James,
Last time we spoke was over something brown at the Monte Carlo. The Heathman has a fabulous restaurant these days, I was just there. When was the last time you found ‘suckling pig’ on a menu? Delicious with a flight of vintage sherries and when eaten at the bar, comes with local banter, gratis. Check out The Nines, it defines swanky. Located just around the bend from the Heathman, The Nines is worth a trip to Portland, rooftop bar, atrium design, the guest rooms were fabulous, never had a bed with that many pillows. When my time comes I will wisper not “rosebud” but “The Nines”...

Take Care,
Doug in Denver
PS: I enjoy the old Diners, I found a call in 1997 where you & I were discussing something obscure and a reference to Nike protective tongue gear was suggested...I enjoyed MN and my time listening to the very random pleasure that was The Diner.

Mr. Manager says:
September 29, 2009 at 8:47 am

love the 30s kitchens! If I didn't already have a 20's kitchen I'd be tempted to get the crowbar out and start another renovation.

Mikey NTH says:
September 29, 2009 at 8:54 am

“...unless I decide out of an act of sheer madness to start an undistinguished midsized hotel site. Which I won't.”

Yeah right.

Jay Eckert says:
September 29, 2009 at 9:03 am

“It's like an Mickey Rooney movie. “My dad has a barn. Let's put on a show!””
What movie is that from?

Rubo says:
September 29, 2009 at 9:15 am

I'm in the process of tearing out a 1950's kitchen and have found some hideous 1930's wallpaper. I'm sure it looked great then, but it has the look of a nightmare now.
I know this off the present subject, but how do you put a picture above your name?
Kim says:
September 29, 2009 at 9:17 am

Downtown Portland is full of old buildings/hotels with the bottom floor renovated – it’s becoming a gorgeous downtown, think of a clean San Francisco. If I could, I’d take a sleeping bag and live in Powell’s Books! You can (and I have) get lost in that place!

Thanks for the kitchen addition! :) My first house was built in 1924 and in the wall was a two-tier cupboard. The bottom of the cupboards had slats that opened under the house – they would put a huge block of ice there and put their perishables on the top tier. That was the “refrigerator”. It had one counter, thin, made out of black and white tile. The bathroom had a freestanding claw foot tub. I loved that old house….

juanito - John Davey says:
September 29, 2009 at 9:22 am

Jay Eckert:
“It’s like an Mickey Rooney movie. “My dad has a barn. Let’s put on a show!””
What movie is that from?

Hmmmm, every Mickey Rooney movie, I think. Or just anything Andy Hardy.

Which is funny, because the first Andy Hardy movie was “A Family Affair”, and that was the page from the 30s Kitchen site that jumped out at me last night when James tweeted the preview (page 12).

Those stools / chairs that fold up against the cabinets reminded me the bunks that slid out of the walls in the Cloud City jail cells in Star Wars Episode V The Empire Strikes back. I always thought, sure it is a space saver inside the cell, but you’d need six feet of empty space outside the cell when the bunk wasn’t in use. Must be a government design, on par with the Stimulus Plan.

I also get he impression that even when those stools were folded up, the metal supports stuck out far enough to shred hip or thigh flesh when someone would run into them. Imagine the litigation and damage awards in today's lawsuit go-go climate.

Lulu says:
September 29, 2009 at 9:23 am

Jay Eckert:
“It’s like an Mickey Rooney movie. “My dad has a barn. Let’s put on a show!””
What movie is that from?

Pretty much every movie Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland made together without the words “Andy” or “Hardy” in its title.

I think “Babes in Arms” was the first of the “let’s put on a show!” films, and thus the first to feature that quote.

Trogdor says:
September 29, 2009 at 9:24 am
Break out the hats and hooters, it's the 1930s AGAIN!

**gmann63** says:
September 29, 2009 at 9:28 am

@Rubo
Go to gravatar.com, set up an account, upload your picture, and presto!

**hpoulter** says:
September 29, 2009 at 11:19 am

_Mikey NTH_: “...unless I decide out of an act of sheer madness to start an undistinguished midsized hotel site. Which I won’t.”
Yeah right.

Reminds me of this, for some reason:

Basil Fawlty: Manuel... my wife informs me that you're... depressed. Let me tell you something. Depression is a very bad thing. It's like a virus. If you don't stamp on it, it spreads throughout the mind, and then one day you wake up in the morning and you... you can't face life any more!

Sybil Fawlty: And then you open a hotel.

**Lisa** says:
September 29, 2009 at 11:29 am

My mom used a food grinder way up into the 70s. Best way to make chicken salad (or beef salad from ground-up roast). She didn’t have a special place for it, though, had to attach it to the kitchen table!

I love glass blocks. I remember watching one of those “get it sold” shows on HGTV, and they were “staging” a 1920s house in Miami. They TORE out a curved wall of glass blocks — because they weren't “what people want” — and I died a lot inside.

**ScottG** says:
September 29, 2009 at 11:40 am

_Lisa_:

_I love glass blocks. I remember watching one of those “get it sold” shows on HGTV, and they were “staging” a 1920s house in Miami. They TORE out a curved wall of glass blocks — because they weren't “what people want” — and I died a lot inside._

That's the whole conundrum about remodeling. Looking at those pictures of the 30s kitchens showed very nice, large rooms. Seeing one in person is quite different. Small and dark is what you really get. I've always wondered how those lesser designers makeovers will be thought of in twenty years. Will HGTV ever go back and revisit a design and call it old and outdated then? Quite a few of those homeowners describe themselves as entertainers, as if they have parties for a thousand each weekend at their homes. They claim they need miles of countertops and more and more storage. I wonder if they're fibbing?
swschrad says:
September 29, 2009 at 11:44 am

another extreme newsroom makeover, if you will. will try to be brief and interesting. to me, these things are.

in Fargo in 1953, the race to TV was on. KXJB and WDAY were running neck to neck. KX got on first, March I think, a month after I was born. they ran for a week or so, and learned what a critical thing adjusting the diplexer was… it burned out, took the transmitter with it, and they were down 6 weeks. diplexers are a big ductwork thingie that mixes the video and audio in a TV transmitter, on the way to the antenna. there are separate transmitters for video and audio in the old NTSC system.

so WDAY got on to stay in April, and regular schedule in May. the transmitter was south of Fargo, with a lean-to studio, the lights were literally in your hair. sets were cardboard scrounged from the back of downtown stores, painted, hauled to the “studio”, the size of an efficiency apartment living room.

the construction area and film lab were at 503 Roberts, downtown. a maze. news and business were on the 6th or 8th floor of the Black Building, a block away. you put your collective act together and drove it over to the “studio.” FEMA would have rejected it as a proposal for a 1950s disaster trailer.

KX had everything together, but in a sad little building at the edge of a wheat field in West Fargo, on the low end of the field, which was probably fun when it rained. they added onto it several times.

WDAY finally moved downtown for all production in two floors and the basement of the American Life Insurance building, a wonder of urban renewal, between Firestone and a little savings and loan, Metropolitan. news, engineering, HVAC, four radio studios, the record library, bathrooms (mens room, home to Extension 40), art, photography, and a cafeteria.

25 years later, the Y bought the old Blue Cross building, added a studio building in the parking lot, and moved in stages. I was interning in news as this and Watergate went on; radio moved over first, then sales. I stayed up as radio was brought fully to 201 S. 8th the night the wiring was done and the class-A phone line to the transmitter was moved over. a little taste of the wild turkey with the chief engineer, and we departed.

nice studio, good digs for news, etc.

ten years later, Dad retired. an obligation to an associate he hired to run news in the western part of North Dakota and a little hankering to do something he’d envisioned for decades… a regional news roundup for public TV. KFME, proud recipient of the old transmitter site, old “studio” supplemented with a couple modular school units, still-serviceable TV equipment for 30 years, had bought the old AmLife building for studios and was gutting and rehabbing. asbestos, rat poison, whatever.

so I got a chance to look back at formative years for me, hanging around the old salts (and in the hallways, occasionally old saltys.)

the newsroom was a desk parade, a radio console rack in the middle, four teletypes, a wall of file cabinets with a Kinescope film station on top. film editing was a Snow-Walker triple cube, glass top, with two edit tables and Hollywood can storage. news and sports directors were in a S-W cube bullpen with one wall of police radio speakers. in front of that cube entrance was a floor hatch to the
building sewer valve... in heavy rains, you had to spin the valve closed or you'd get raw sewage in teh basement. the pager would occasionally squawk, “Street flooding possible, and the sewer is shut. don't flush!”

bare. nothing. echoes. you could see the floor anchors where the cubes were bolted down. and of course, the drain hatch.

radio: stripped. to bare concrete. there were poured-in wire chases, full, on the east wall a series of rack panels with Weston meters showing the feed from NEMOs (NEtwork/reMote lines), all amplified... WCCO, KSTP, KFYR, NBC, TV, FM, XMTR. gone. the WE console, gone... to a retired radio chief engineer's garage.

studio: nothing upstairs, but they were starting to block in the new control room and light grid.

it's a strange feeling.

and a year later, up and running, hosting commercial shoots because of the computerized control and edit board, Public TV North Dakota making money taking in commercial TV's wash. a far cry from one of every format video tape recorder ever made, sitting on makeshift tables, in a cut-rate portable classroom in the shadow of a 45 year old tower.

nobody has bothered to take the old tower down, now at 46th and University. it's not in commercial use any more. solid as a rock, 56 years later.

that's five turnovers of technology in the 45 years I had a link to that piece of my past.

two more since I had a surviving link.

I could never work in that business again, too much has changed. and yet, the basics hold.

long live the Strib in its new incarnation. you'll redo the studio again before you know it. that's how it works.

AA says:
September 29, 2009 at 11:51 am

Original idea though:

http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&source=hp&q=%22undistinguished+midsized+hotel%22&aq=f&oq=&aqi=

DryOwlTacos says:
September 29, 2009 at 12:07 pm

Love. That. Linoleum.
Contrary to modern flooring selections, you DO want a busy pattern if you have a lot of traffic. Or pets.

Jan says:
September 29, 2009 at 12:40 pm

The blue kitchen looks like it could have been in a Lustron home.

HelloBall says:
September 29, 2009 at 2:01 pm
My childhood best friend's grandmother's house had those fold-up stools! Let me tell you, even when you had ten-year-old dangly bits, you only sat on one of those stools ONCE without pants on. When Rick and I came downstairs after our bath and I had my Unpleasant Moment, his grandmother almost had a stroke laughing. She even lost her dentures a couple of times, which really took away what little appetite I had left.

juanito - John Davey says:
September 29, 2009 at 2:55 pm

@HelloBall

My sincerest, sincerest condolences on the tragedy that befell you.
Stay strong!

swschrad says:
September 29, 2009 at 3:09 pm

LOL, but we got our knickers on from 2 onwards. other unpleasantries befell us, and we conformed to society. no details to be posted.

*Di* says:
September 29, 2009 at 3:26 pm

Oh what glorious, yet impractical kitchens. Who cares. You could revel in the artsy-fartsy linoleum enhanced by unlimited light pouring throw the glass block. I think most of us probably did see some of those kitchens – but only many decades later after they became shabby and torn half asunder by half-assed remodeling projects.

*sigh*

I always associated glass block with those old “respectable” bars/clubs – the ones with the well maintained neon signs. Once I got old enough to get in, I was no longer interested.

ech says:
September 29, 2009 at 5:22 pm

Loved the kitchen book. Obviously a sales brochure for Armstrong Linoleum. I checked their site and they still make Linoleum, it's “genuine and eco-friendly”. Alas, it is only available in seven shades. See http://www.armstrong.com/flooring/products/linoleum for details. In contrast, Formica is still available in over 150 patterns, including Aqua Boomerang!

dbp says:
September 29, 2009 at 6:10 pm

I wonder if the Heathman you wrote about is related to the Heathman Lodge, right across the river in Vancouver WA? http://www.heathmanlodge.com/

We stayed there last Summer and were very impressed. It was priced like a mid-level chain hotel but had the kind of service and atmosphere we would have been happy with at a fine resort. One odd thing: It is located in a business park but looks all rustic and lodgey.
**Greg VA says:**  
September 29, 2009 at 10:58 pm

I really liked the Linoleum adverts. I remember those floors as being cold, cold cold! I have yet to visit a house that had a floor as ornate (or horrifying) a design similar to those pictured

http://videomartyr.blogspot.com/

**Jonk says:**  
October 4, 2009 at 11:46 pm

“It's like standing on the deck of the Titanic and watching it morph into the Enterprise.”

I love this line.
Turned on the Goofy Machine today. Reminded me that I have to bleed the pipes, or something, because the Goofy Machine should not be called that; a “boiler” or “furnace” is the usual term. But when the heat goes on the pipes make a sound I can only describe as GAWRSH. Loud, swooshy, like a giant swishing an ocean in his mouth. GAWRSH. GAWRSH. When the heat finally radiated from the pipes it had that start-of-the-season smell: burned dust. Heated mite-husks. Warm and familiar and autumnal.

Last night I turned on the fireplace while I watched “Flash Forward,” and got the same aroma. It’s a different smell than the empty robot-fever you get from an electric heater. In any case, I didn’t need it: the sun came out and the day warmed up by three, four degrees. Time to go outside and walk around in a bathrobe.

That was my job today: play sick. I played sick for a living. We’re doing another The Flu and You video, and this one was “What To Do.” There’s really not much to illustrate, is there? Sweat, sleep, have crazy dreams, watch TV, sleep some more. (Or, in the case of my friend the Giant Swede, get on a plane. Daily. His job requires him to fly a great deal, and he spent a week going up and down with ears packed tight with cee-ment, and when they finally popped I think it rattled china in Duluth.) So I figured I’d do a series of things you shouldn’t do, compared with the alternatives. The Not-To-Do stuff consisted of a trip to the video and grocery store, and I did these sequences in
slippers and a bathrobe.

So: there I am walking down the street in my neighborhood on a sunny fall day, in a bathrobe that says BATES MOTEL, looking like crap. The presence of a camera justified it all, thank heavens. You can get away with doing all sorts of stupid things if someone's taking pictures. Inside the video store a customer was REALLY SUPER INTERESTED in what we were doing; in the grocery store no one made eye contact. We shot one sequence outside my house, and a jogger slowed down to watch. And talk cameras. And stand in the shot. And ensure that when the clouds came over our shots wouldn't match. It's nice to be interested in other people's work, but it's like walking up to a fellow who's jackhammering a sidewalk, tapping him on the shoulder until he stops and turns off the machine, and then asking him what sort of ear protection he's using. Because I'm sort of an ear-protection buff myself.

Took a brief break to pick up daughter from bus stop. How was school? No, let me guess: it was fine. Was it fine? Did it achieve fineness? Finesseness was the general shape of the educational parameters? Good. She assisted in the shoot at one point, blocking a beam of light that was causing a white blanket to bloom and throw off the picture. I hope she remembers the special days when she was entrusted with photon-blockage while daddy laid on the sofa with Vaseline smeared on his face, drinking from a bottle of Nyquil. Over and over again. Take nine! This time make it seem like you're really enjoying it! I was, too; everyone likes the rich, satisfying taste of Nyquil. Don't they? No doubt there were cocktail specialists who sipped it, and thought hmmm – medicinal, but naughty.

We got some words of advice from professional TV-type people, via our boss; the important thing was this: don't be afraid of looking foolish. Or words to that effect.

I have problems, but that's not one of them.

Took Natalie to choir practice; we were early, so we shot some hoops in the gym. Happiest part of my day, I realize now. And it was a good day.

While working on other things tonight I paid partial attention to an early 1940s Batman serial – gosh, so did I! you say. What a coincidence! It's a bit surprising to realize they made Batman movies in the Time of Hitler, but they did:

-
Can't really say the budget matched modern levels; here's Batman in the Batcave, thinking, at the Batdesk:

The Batcar! Also known as the Carcar!
After they’ve foiled the gang, Bruce and Dick pull off their masks and have a
good theatrical Pepsodent chuckle:

The difference between that Batman and modern Batman is almost
unimaginable, given the technology and cinematography and overall husky
gloom. I wonder how many old guys who chomped popcorn as a kid
watching Batmen serials watched the modern movies – and whether kids
today will find themselves in 60 years immersed as seniors in a Batman
movie that feeds directly into their optical nerves while ultrasound
frequencies palpate their hippocampus. At some point movies are going to
require the participant to sign a medical waiver.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=3957
And now the day is done. Up and out early for Newsbreak, then the busy hell of Wednesday. For your subsequent entertainment this morning I recommend the post below, which is part of the newly spiffed Black and White World section, and has an amusing punchline. Out of Context ad challenge around 10:30 or so; Name that Town on the Strib blog.

Starting next week, if all goes well, I'm going to run Lance Lawson from the very beginning, the first strip through the last. Daily. So that's one thing from the previous era that will be back. And I do feel as if there was a previous era, now gone. A time when I blogged from home, mostly, and had total control over my own schedule instead of, God forbid, partial control. I miss it. I miss the solitude; I miss setting the plot of the day, the soundtrack, the costume, the priorities. But as I've said, it's nice to be useful; it's nice to be employed, and above all it's just jack-fargin'-dandy to have co-workers and be part of a team again. I haven't been part of a team since Washington DC.

Besides, I know myself: if I was doing something else, I'd wish I was doing this.

See you soon.

Pass it along, if you wish

28 RESPONSES TO wednesday, sept. 30

jamcool says:
September 30, 2009 at 12:30 am

Did you notice the Oceanic airlines billboard in the opening scenes of Fast Forward? A connection to LOST?

winwin07 says:
September 30, 2009 at 12:38 am

@jamcool

It's just an easter egg. Still cool though.

In a related thought, it's my great hope that one day two seemingly completely different shows on two networks end up weaving into one another. I sorta held out hope "Fringe" would turn out that way with Lance Reddick's characters turning out to be the same guy but, alas, that just isn't the case.

bgates says:
September 30, 2009 at 12:56 am

I remember hearing whispers that Heroes and Lost were going to do that.

But it turned out that was just whispering in the jungle that added atmosphere without advancing the plot at all.

His job requires him to fly a great deal
You can get paid for being a disease vector?

Dave (in MA) says:
September 30, 2009 at 1:01 am

alt text LOL

Lulu says:
September 30, 2009 at 4:47 am

It is indeed strange the power that film equipment has on the average person. I've been on a couple of on-location film shoots, and I've observed that upon seeing the camera(s), sound equipment, lights, etc., people do one of two things: 1) Skitter away as fast as they can, eyes averted; or 2) Stop whatever they were doing and follow you around cow-eyed, dazed grin on their face, looking as if they expect Harrison Ford to suddenly amble out from behind a tree.

The second group eventually wanders away once they realize that filming is comprised of 10% “action!” and 90% preparing-to-call-“action!” Also that Harrison Ford ain't in this puppy.

I will, however, admit that I enjoyed the fleeting fame and authority that walking around with the slate gives you.

swschrad says:
September 30, 2009 at 6:50 am

Bates Motel bathrobe. sounds cool.

one of these days, I will have fresh new PJs that are chock full of little pink piggies romping all over. would have been useful last night, but we pulled on another blanket, thanks to a proclivity of cramping since I was up in the attic for hours last weekend. I've been sleeping in sweat pants. but I am going to test my resiliance at the gym today.

heat's not on yet here. I did pick up a craigslist kerosene heater for the shed and my winter ‘o’ projects. we're probably good for a week yet without burning any oil.

Ken Paulson says:
September 30, 2009 at 7:31 am

I remember seeing this version of Batman back just before the Adam West debacle hit the small screen. I was impressed by the darkness, not really seen again until relatively recently, where The Batman actually kills people. The ears were a problem, though. As was Robin/Dick's outlandish lightbulb head.

Thanks.

Bob W. says:
September 30, 2009 at 7:48 am

“– and whether kids today will find themselves in 60 years immersed as seniors in a Batman movie that feeds directly into their optical nerves while ultrasound frequencies palpate their hippocampus.”

Kind of related to that, I had the idea over a year ago that as each generation of cell phones would be made smaller and smaller,
eventually they would be the size of a pill. Swallow the capsule, and when you hear the ringing in your ears, slap yourself upside the head to answer.

**HunkyBobTX says:**  
September 30, 2009 at 8:01 am

The Batman at the Bat-desk. I like the Gothic look of the Bat-desk. I notice he’s got two bat-chairs near by. For Bat-guests? Just two, so I guess they are for Robin and Alfred. I like the Bat-logo over the Bat-desk. Very Corporate. Is the Bat-corp an “S” corp or did he got with an LLC… “Bruce Wayne DBA the Batman”….nahl.

I wonder if the Batman has bat-stationary in the bat-desk. “From the desk of the Bat-man”. No Bat-phone on the Bat-desk. No Bat-blotters, Bat-pens, or Bat-notepads. Not even a Bat-desk-calendar. You’d think he’d want to know that Two-face was up for parole on the 17th. I’m sure all the pens had black ink until the 1970’s when he went with a blue cowl and shorts.

And what is the license plate number issued to the Bat-car? Does no one at the DMV think “Hmm… The Batman is driving a car licensed to Bruce Wayne. What's up with that?”

**juanito - John Davey says:**  
September 30, 2009 at 8:14 am

Nothing says Batmobile like whitewalls.

And nothing caps a day of crime-fighting and villain slaughter like pulling down the cowl and having a good chuckle with your ward. Good times, good times.

**Wilbur says:**  
September 30, 2009 at 8:46 am

The old Batman movie brings back a childhood memory. My brother and I — who were 8 and 6 years old in 1967 — were big fans of the Batman TV show. We thought it was the greatest thing ever. At the height of the show's popularity everyone was trying to make a buck off Batman, and someone had the bright idea of stringing together some of these old serials into a feature film that could be shown in theaters (back when there was still a concept of the kiddie matinee). When the movie came to our local theater, my Dad — who had loved the serial back in the 40s — was keen to take us to see it. Since it was a Batman movie, and we didn't know any better, my brother and I were excited to see it too. Sure Dad, let's go!

But we absolutely hated it, and made it plainly obvious to the old man. I mean, it was in black and white, the costumes looked stupid, the special effects were amateurish. After about a half hour of our sighing and eye-rolling, Dad had enough and took us out of the theater.

On the way home in the car it dawned on me that we had acted like spoiled brats. Here Dad was showing us something he had enjoyed when he was a kid, and we had totally ruined it for him. This is something I felt bad about for decades afterward.

The postscript to this story is that one day a few years ago the subject of Batman came up, and I told my Dad that no matter how much I had enjoyed the 1960s Batman TV show when I was a kid, I find it impossible to watch these days — just too campy and stupid.
He said he felt the same way about the old Batman serials he used to watch. He had enjoyed them as a kid, but when he saw them again in the 60s he realized they were unwatchable. That was his only memory of that afternoon.

**JoeNowe** says:
September 30, 2009 at 8:59 am

Wow, Batman and Robin look like Beavis and Butthead.

**William Young** says:
September 30, 2009 at 9:03 am

Uhh... wha? If you have a hot water radiator system, you shouldn't smell “burned dust.” If you have forced air, you have no pipes to bleed. What the heck kinda “power plant” does Jasperwood run on?

**MikeH** says:
September 30, 2009 at 9:54 am

I like the bat logo on the wall in his office. Is this to distinguish it from all the other offices he has in Wayne Manor? And what other logos would he have in the other offices? Also when he and Robin went out did they leave from the secret Batcave or just out of the casual Batgarage? Heck they could have done SOMETHING with the Batcar, tie the bat logo from his office onto the grill of the car. I don’t know, just thinking about it a little too much.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
September 30, 2009 at 11:11 am

When the Dark Knight is sick, does he wonder around the cave in his batrobe?

Ha, ha, ha...i crack my self up.

**juanito - John Davey** says:
September 30, 2009 at 11:15 am

@William Young

Dilithium Crystal powered Matter / Antimatter.

Jasperwood has gone green!

I suspect.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
September 30, 2009 at 11:20 am

when a kid, did you ever make the connection that Batman was a vampire? Could make an interesting story twist.

google search, opps,It has been done.

**GardenStater** says:
September 30, 2009 at 11:25 am

I really hate it when I finally have to turn on the heat. So far, I've avoided it, but I know wifey and kiddoes will soon decide they're
done with wearing sweaters and coats indoors, and I will have to experience that same smell that James did.

And BTW, I have steam radiators. The “burned dust” smell comes from the crevices of those iron beasts, where you can’t really clean.

**Lulu says:**
September 30, 2009 at 11:27 am

Did anyone else notice that Batman's smile is remarkably Joker-ish? And the Boy Wonder could double for Frank Gorshin-as-The-Riddler?

**John says:**
September 30, 2009 at 12:55 pm

What's fun with the Columbia serials from the 1940s is to try and spot the same sets that also turned up in so many of the Three Stooges shorts — and, going from that, the idea of Curly Howard in the Robin role is also interesting to contemplate (hey, it would have saved Harry Cohn a few more dollars in salaries).

**Vader says:**
September 30, 2009 at 12:56 pm

I really liked the series. I mean, any series whose theme song includes the phrase “Neener neener neener” is worthy of respect.

Or at least that's how I heard it.

**metaphizzle says:**
September 30, 2009 at 1:53 pm

Dang, in that pic of Batman at the Batdesk, it looks like his costume is bright white. The Dark Knight indeed. Was he wearing his Arctic Camouflage Batsuit, because he just got back from fighting the Penguin at the North Pole?

I remember catching a tiny portion of one of those b&w Bat-serials. All I remember is a scene where Robin is fiddling with a model truck, and some invisible guy attacks him from behind.

I have a better memory of that surreal Bat-series from the 60's. Loved it back when I was six. Then I saw it again when I was 16 or so and realized how unbelievably corny it was. Then I saw some choice scenes again when I was 20, and realized that the corniness was intentional, and really hilarious. And I have to admire Adam West and everyone else involved for being able to deliver ridiculous lines like “Robin! Hand me down the shark-repellent bat-spray!” with a completely straight face.

Has anyone seen the Bat-series that's currently airing on Cartoon Network: “Batman: The Brave and the Bold”? It reminds me a lot of the 60's series in tone, but it somehow manages to be simultaneously more outlandish yet more respectful of Batman and the DC comics universe.

**dhig says:**
September 30, 2009 at 2:28 pm

I know that old Batman serial very well. in the early 90s, my friends and I bought it on the cheap at a flea market and set about
redubbing the dialog for our own entertainment. We used the Danny Elfman soundtrack from the Tim Burton movie and created a plot where the terrifically stereotypical Japanese villain in this serial hatched a nefarious plot to open Tokio Fried Chicken franchises across America. Might be time to find the storage box with that tape and digitize it...

Baby M says:
September 30, 2009 at 4:13 pm

“A promotional fee was paid, and Batmobile provided by, the Packard Motor Car Company of Detroit, Michigan. Packard: ask the Bat-Man who owns one.”

Cory says:
September 30, 2009 at 5:53 pm

The best thing about 1960's Batman are the Villains. Come on, how can you not love Frank Gorshin channelling Richard Widmark or Burgess Meredith goofing on FDR. Cesar Romero, priceless. What can you say about Julie Newmar?
They all must have been instructed to show their special contempt for Batman because each of them would refer to him in some sneering contemptuous way (except Julie Newmar of course but that's another story). The Joker, The Riddler and The Penguin each had some unique way of indicating their contempt for the Caped Crusader and the Boy Wonder. And no one was better at his disdain for Batman than Victor Buono. Old King Tut would get so exasperated at the Dynamic Duo you'd think he was going to have a stroke at the mention of their names.
It was great TV acting for the third network in the 1960's- by some of the best actors and characters around.

Ross says:
October 1, 2009 at 2:41 am

bg bear:
You crack this self up, too.

metaphizz:
I rather enjoy this new CN series. The goal, I read, was to aim more for the tone of the '50s comics(although not as insipid) and feature as many of the lesser characters from the DC-verse as possible. They even started the series with a reason for the revamp of his costume(he terrified a child during a chase wearing the old one).
I'm waiting for an episode w/The Creeper—saw one issue with him as a little kid and was fascinated/disturbed by him.

Alex says:
October 1, 2009 at 3:54 pm

Thank you for being the first, and only, person I have ever heard describe that smell from the first time the furnace fires up in autumn! It might not be a great odor, but it does reming one of changing leaves, football, flannel and fires…not too bad a start for the season!

Fred says:
October 8, 2009 at 12:48 pm

“I'm waiting for an episode w/The Creeper”
I always thought the Creeper was one of the best characters in the DC universe. He never got the glory or the work he deserved, but there were a few times when the writers and artists got him just perfect.