Welcome back! Me, I could use another week. Some years I’m leaping at the return of the Old Ways, the end of the long bright sparkly smear of festivities, but this year – no. I don’t even want to take the tree down. Since it’s undead, there’s no fire hazard, and it doesn’t dump needles every time a truck rumbles past outside. Taking it down admits that it’s January, my absolute least favorite month. November is long, but it has moods; it can sulk and rage one day, be bright and almost decent the next. We had a warm November, remember. A man could walk outside without hat and gloves and not notice their absence. A warm January, at best, is still an antiseptic room with a dead radiator and cold bars on the window. A cold January is an enormous block of ice you have to gnaw with your teeth. Today I backed out of the driveway, and hit a snowbank – I actually wondered whether it had dented the car, because the snow is like a heap of steel plates. We got pounded with snow, then the temp nudged up to 33 to let it soften; it was glazed with drizzle, froze solid, and was piled on the boulevards by the plows. It’s like living in a world made entirely of concrete rubble.

I don’t know why people don’t believe me, but we sat outside on New Year’s Eve. The temperature was somewhere around one. Maybe twice as hot, like two. We had drinks we got at a bar made of ice.
Why should this be odd? This is Minnesota, after all. This is normal. This is standard. This is stupid, I thought. But at least there was a fire. A big square fire pit ringed by hardy souls, a few of whom wore strapless gowns and no coats. It's remarkable how a fire can warm you up on the outside, and four vodkas can warm you up on the inside. Suddenly everything about Russian history and culture made sense.
We were at the Chambers Hotel for New Year's Eve. It's a boo-tique hotel filled with Art, so you know the room will be expensive and have tiny gourmet chocolates (sustainably grown) on the 900-thread-count pillow, and the shampoo and soap will make you feel bad about the shampoo and soap you use every day. You become instantly aware of an entirely new level of soap. I've stayed at many such places, and prefer them to chains, although there's something to be said for the soulless anonymity of a giant metropolitan hotel. You could see goats in half in your room in some big hotels and no one would notice or care.

The Ice Bar was not our final destination; it was just a test, a Thing To Do To Say We'd Done It. After we finished the drinks we went inside, where wife & Mrs. Giant Swede checked out enormous faux-fur wraps from the hotel, and sat inside swaddled in ersatz hair. Then upstairs to the top-floor bar, where we danced for a while. Haven't done that in a long time, and while it was great fun the sense of looking really fargin' stupid sets in after a while. You look around the dance floor, you see no one doing any better (except for my wife, who was just wonderfully elegant and lost in terpsichorean transports) – in fact, most of the guys are doing a version of the timeless male dance, which consists of teeter-tottering your shoulders while making vague boxing feints with your hands. Also you must set your jaw and nod your head like you just don't care. Since the crowd was thin I decided to make a complete jackass of myself by spinning my spouse or dipping her or taking off my jacket and spinning over my head with one finger. Good thing I didn't let it go; there was my Department of Justice Zippo in one pocket, and that thing could knock you out.

All of this was done with no food and one drink – which, at 10 PM, is a recipe for setting your pants on fire and running around the bar shouting HEY I'M JOHNNY STORM! Seriously: had not eaten since noon. Peanuts, maybe. Crow, if I recalled the previous year. It's too bad there wasn't crow on the menu; wonder how many people would have ordered it. Which reminds me: earlier New Year's Eve I'd seen a great throng of Crow in the trees in the back yard, and wished – just once – that they would intentionally fly into a wall and kill themselves. I'm sure you can guess why.

Those are the things you think about, standing on the back steps, looking at the hard shattered ice at the bottom of the steps, enjoying a small evil cigar while the dog tiptoes his way over the painful ground to find a good spot to drill.

Anyway. Dinner was late, very late, and since it was fine cuisine the entire meal could have been served heaped in an ashtray. But they brought things out one at a time, giving you the opportunity to take tiny bites, sample, roll your eyes, make expressions of swooning delight, and so on. The desserts were huge, as if to ensure you left with the impression you'd been completely
fed. All delicious. Ran into the Mayor, wished him a happy new, met his daughter – the only guy I knew at the party, but I suppose Mayors count extra.

The staff passed out white plastic fedoras and 20s-style plastic feathered headdresses, so everyone looked as stupid as possible while blaring on the horns and whooping it up. As I’ve said, it’s not my favorite holiday. At all. But we had a grand time, and there’s something to be said for dancing on the rooftop bar with your wife on the last night of a year.

The old year wasn’t bad, all told, and it certainly kept my attention. More change than usual, but that’s been the norm the last two years, thanks to a rather, ahem, fluid situation at work. But the new one began with horrible news. My old editor and mentor, Deb Howell, was killed in a traffic accident in New Zealand. If I anchor Newsbreak Monday I’ll have more to say about that; if not, here, tomorrow.

To be really boring: did some behind-the-scenes work over the weekend, and will have BleatPlus up by the end of the week, and every kind contributor should have their user names by then. I did add a new section, imaginatively titled “Miscellany,” and it will be the place to put everything that doesn’t belong anywhere else. It has a new site devoted to postcard portfolios – a 40-page site that will be unfurled ten at a time over the next month. It’s here. A matchbook later, and lots of pointless tweaking all week along. See you soon!

Pass it along, if you wish

55 RESPONSES TO monday – sigh – january 04

shesnailie says:
January 4, 2010 at 6:18 pm

_@_v – i can’t help wondering why any self-respecting alien would travel millions of miles to eat humans when there are perfectly tasty cows milling about the planet all theirs for the taking. did they not smell the barbeques as their ship passed over suburbia?

shesnailie says:
January 4, 2010 at 6:18 pm

_@_v – i can’t help wondering why any self-respecting alien would travel millions of miles to eat humans when there are perfectly tasty cows milling about the planet all theirs for the taking. did they not smell the barbeques as their ship passed over suburbia?

browniejr says:
January 4, 2010 at 6:24 pm

@shesnailie
Perhaps the puny You-mans were merely grilling, not barbequing,
thus not emitting the proper scents… thus sealing their fates!!
Lesson- always BBQ, don’t grill!!

shesnailie says:
January 4, 2010 at 6:37 pm

_@_v – yeah but if that ship was coming over long island or new jersey they couldn’t’ve possibly seen or smelled anything possibly resembling a meal in humanoid form – especially if they in came over new jersey.

and god help them if they ever hovered over a lutheran church on lutefisk night.

lanczos says:
January 4, 2010 at 7:11 pm

Woody Allen's Radio Days – that's what New Years Eve is really like, after a certain amount of time.
something more, later.
Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
It's cold and I went to work and then I came home and made pasta and that was it. Mostly a mood of sulky dudgeon all day, with absolutely no time for things inside the head to brew and distill. Maddening. Woke up at the usual godless hour, pallid dawn daubing the horizon with all the enthusiasm of a hungover housepainter; went downstairs, which was in full icebox mode, and checked the temp: Eight.
Below. Got to work, checked the weather to write the weather, and to my amusement the page said “-9. Feels like: -8.” Yes, that one degree makes all the difference. I am not sure human flesh is calibrated to detect the difference between nine below and eight below. I don’t think anyone stands outside and says “well, it doesn’t feel like 12 below. It seems more like 11, max.” When you think back to a few months ago, you realize that the temperature has declined 80 degrees. That’s a lot of degrees. Yet everything that was built to take 80 degrees does fine when it’s eight below, even though you wouldn’t be surprised if a car rear-ended a bus and burst into a million shards, with the sound of someone putting a stick of dynamite in a glockenspiel.

Winter could be the worst in 25 years, say some reports. That would be the worst since 1985? Don’t remember that one, but I do remember ’82 and ’83, each with potent incessant snowstorm. It was different then, he said, screwing his corn cob pipe in his mouth and settling back into his rockety chair, gathering the young’uns around him. Back then, y’see, we went to college, and if’n there warn’t no collegiatin’, we went to the Valli. Now, the Valli was a place that had pinball tables and all the coffee you could drink, less’n some manager got a bee in her bonnet about folks sittin’ around all the damn day drinking from the same cup for a quarter, which they did from time to time. Then she’d impose a two-cup refill maximum. Oh, there’d be wailin’ and complainin’, and the waitresses and waiters who were new would stick to the rules until it all got forgotten. Anyway, they had pizza and breakfasts and they never closed, and we were there pretty much all the time, snow or not. But on a blizzard day it was something special. It belonged to the regulars entirely. Now me, I was both a regular and a waiter, so I had status. I could have all the coffee I wanted and I could go behind the bar. Someday you’ll understand what that means to belong to a restaurant, be above and beyond and all that, help out when you’re not even on duty.

Grandpa, you were talking about the weather.

Yes. Yes, I was. So the storm of ‘82 hit, and we had to get to the Valli because they hadn’t invented cable yet, at least not in our building. Me and the Giant Swede and I think Sam the Poet got in Steve’s big blue Buick. Steve lived across the hall from a good lookin’ girl, her dad owned the building; everyone liked her. Boyfriend shot her the next year. Can’t drive by the building without thinking about that, to be honest. Hit her dad hard, of course. One year he put in a window in the apartment, just took out a piece of wall and put in a window. Next year he took it out and walled it up again. He was a good man and it was his building and no one asked questions, and you
figured it was the sort of thing a man might do to keep himself from going right down into the dark place for good. But that was months away. When the storm hit we pushed the car out of the lot and made it down streets that hadn’t been plowed ‘tall and driven on less, so it was hands-and-knees all the way to the Valli. Once we were there we drank coffee and played pinball, as usual. But we had the place to ourselves, us and the rest of the regulars.

One by one, they all came in. Stamping their boots, cussing, grinning, and to be honest just a bit foolish-looking, as if they knew. Worst day of the year, and they couldn’t keep away from this basement. I can see it like yesterday – smell it too, what with the dead beer and the wet carpet and the cigarettes. You could count on Jack for that last one, since he went through a pack of Marlboros every two hours. What’s that? Oh, Jack’s in California now, retired, pool, couple of dogs. Still a Marlboro Man. Couldn’t get him to quit if they’d put a firecracker in every filter and they blew a hole in his lips when he got to the end. He tried to quit now and then, but we knew how that ended. He’d get up, walk over to the machine, put in two quarters, a dime, a nickel, and cank-chank. Jack was one of those guys who spanked the pack on the back of his hand after he bought it, too. The sight of him rapping his hand with a fresh pack, a look of complete resignation on his face, tells you all you need to know about Jack. Interesting fella. Was heading east on the train, got off in Minneapolis ahead of schedule because he’d met a girl on the train. She was long gone. He lived at the Valli.

So that was how we spent the days when the college shut down. We drank coffee and played Mata Hari and Ted Nugent and Asteroids and Missile Command, and waited for the rest to drift in. We’d end the day upstairs at the restaurant. Then we’d push the damn car out of the drift and drive home. That was ’82. Good to have friends in the winter. Good to have a place to be.

Oh, ’83? We all had girlfriends. Hell with the Valli.

As for the winter of ’84, as I said, I don’t know. After a while all you remember is snow, and the dark.

Hmmm. Well, I didn’t intend to go there, but it certainly chewed up some space and vented something. Not sure what, entirely, but it’s always nice to write without a purpose in mind. Some say you need to know what you’re going to write before commence to typin’ – Jeebus, enough with the Elly Mae speak here; next thing you know I’ll be talkin’ about the critters in the CEEment pond (and speaking of which: I blame the CEEment pond on The Beverly Hillbillies for the standard confusion between cement and concrete. They’re not the same. For one thing, no ever asks for “cement evidence” of a person’s guilt in a crime. I had the difference explained me to years ago on a train, when I was sitting in the smoking lounge late at night and struck up a conversation with a cement salesman.) (On a slightly related note: who decided that the Beverly Hillbillies show needed to end with everyone waving at the camera for the entire duration of the closing credits? It’s a pity other shows didn’t pick this up. I always loved the end of Star Trek, ending as it did with the Desilu Puppet:
It was years later, and I do mean years, that I realized what Desilu meant, and it just cracked my head in twain; Baalok, you got some ‘splainin’ to do.)

But think of the Dick Van Dyke show ending with Rob and Laurie sitting around on the sofa, waving; doesn’t work. Rob would give us a wave, then get back to the business of smoking a cigarette and finishing his drink, while Laura perched nervously on the arm of the sofa. Then Morey and Rosemarie would come in the door and Rob and Laura would greet them, a bit relieved to be free of the obligation of looking at us.

Imagine Star Trek ending with the crew of the Enterprise on the bridge, waving goodbye.
Nah.

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**Pass it along, if you wish**

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**87 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, jan. 05***

**Kim** says:

January 5, 2010 at 11:04 am

That was one heck of a photoshop job, or I am not quite awake yet – it actually took me a minute to realize James was on the bridge. I like to think he was Coffee Chief on the Enterprise Valli.

I'd love to give a snow story, but I wore a t-shirt yesterday and the sun was shining....

In terms of getting old, I thought Shirley Partridge was as old as the hills back in 1970. Now I see the show and relate to her instead of Laurie! I think the worse day in my life was when I realized Mr. Cleaver was handsome. NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

---

**Patrick McClure** says:

January 5, 2010 at 11:08 am

@Good Grief

“The Lenstrafer frames are a little anachronistic aren’t they? I mean, I HOPE they are anachronistic.”

Yet another James who is allergic to Retinox? You’d think that in 20+ yrs they would have come up with a good replacement that everyone could use.
bgbear says:
January 5, 2010 at 11:11 am

@Brisko
Although many folks are ignorant, some people use monkey for all anthropoids and do it on purpose kind of like Doctor Lizardo calling people “monkey boys”

Same as calling all felis “cats” and all mustelids “weasels”. Just shorthand.

I am sure my ferrets see me as a big monkey.

bgbear says:
January 5, 2010 at 11:19 am

wow, I watched the Star Trek DVD at Christmas and missed the first time in the theater that there was a Nurse Chapel in the crew.

Mr_Lilacs says:
January 5, 2010 at 11:21 am

I just noticed that, even in the 23d century, our host can't find a shirt that isn't too big for him.

swschrad says:
January 5, 2010 at 11:34 am

I wonder if the cement plant is still standing in Mason City, Iowa, or if it's redeveloped into rows of dusty, choking, tiny little apartments by now.

“Star Trek cast waving goodbye...” no, that would not be the bridge crew, it would be the redshirts.

XW CRANE: BEAMS COME IN FROM ALL DIRECTIONS, EACH TAKES OUT A REDSHIRT.

ROLL DESILU ANIM.

BLACK.

Patrick says:
January 5, 2010 at 11:36 am

@Nancy
The freakiest part of that blizzard was it occurred in fargin' mid-March, when one would expect Spring to start scouting the area for a new home, begin talking to the real estate agent, and perhaps fill out the preliminary paperwork to purchase said home. The closing documents would be filled out in late March/early April, and the actual closing date would be some time in late April/early May. Winter usually doesn't get foreclosed on without a fight. It fought very dirty that year.

JamesS says:
January 5, 2010 at 11:42 am

“Star Trek” as done by “Robot Chicken”:

The Enterprise is about to explode, and the regulars fight among
themselves to beam to the planet's surface. Kirk, Spock, McCoy, Uhura and a red shirt make it down before the ship blows. It's cold, windy and desolate, and as they shiver around a small fire they discuss what they'll do for food. All eyes turn meaningfully toward the red shirt, who pronounces (paraphrasing) “No way, man! May I remind you that I'm the only guy who brought a gun?”

Blackout shot of red shirt alone at the fire, gnawing on someone's leg...

browniejr says:
January 5, 2010 at 11:49 am

Kim:
... I like to think he was Coffee Chief on the Enterprise Vali. ...
... I think the worse day in my life was when I realized Mr. Cleaver was handsome. NOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Coffee Chief Lileks: “I canna change the laws of physics! I've got to have 5 minutes [to brew the coffee]”

Younger me: “Miss Landers (Sue Randall) is HAWT!” Older me: “Mrs. Cleaver sure looks fetching in those pearls. Maybe Eddie Haskell was up to something whenever he paid her complements.” Sad me: Sue Randall is dead, of cancer. (Hugh Beaumont is dead too... Barbara Billingsley is still with us.)

ech says:
January 5, 2010 at 11:56 am

So, I thought Pres. Obama had replaced James as Spock. Guess he had to hand the job back.

Bob W. says:
January 5, 2010 at 12:05 pm

@bgbear
Pure evil from the eighth dimension!

Bob W. says:
January 5, 2010 at 12:07 pm

My last post didn't work like I thought it would...
@bgbear
“some people use monkey for all anthropoids and do it on purpose kind of like Doctor Lizardo calling people “monkey boys”

Pure evil from the eighth dimension!

That's better. I wonder if Netflix has that movie?

Spud says:
January 5, 2010 at 12:21 pm

Yeah, as the ship's Archivist, James would have a blue shirt and not a red one. It's nice job security, as he'd be the only one to know what drivers go with the old scanners on board, as well as the proper response to “chmod”.

[That does sound like a Klingon word.]
**Pam-EL** says:
January 5, 2010 at 12:21 pm

Sulky Dudgeon, P.I.
Sulky Dudgeon, rock band
Sulky Dudgeon Does Dallas
The Adventures of Sulky Dudgeon
The Further Adventures of Sulky Dudgeon

**lileks_liker** says:
January 5, 2010 at 1:09 pm

James, you forgot the obligatory reference to tying onions to your belt, “because it was the style at the time!”…

**“Di”** says:
January 5, 2010 at 1:23 pm

*Mr_Lilacs*: I just noticed that, even in the 23d century, our host can’t find a shirt that isn’t too big for him.

I wanted to say that, but didn’t have the nerve 😊
A quick visit to the ship’s tailor will soon remedy this.

And, doesn’t “MISTER LILEKS” just sound like he should be an ST regular?

**hunkybobTX** says:
January 5, 2010 at 1:24 pm

I have to respectfully disagree with the choice of shirt color.

Mr. Lileks is obviously a historian, and ought to wear a red shirt (like Lt. McGivers did). I say this despite the risks inherent to that tincture. Also, He’s got a Lieutenant’s rank stripe, and I think he definitely ought to be a LCDR or even a full Commander.

**shesnailie** says:
January 5, 2010 at 1:30 pm

_@_v – eee! I think my mum was in that episode!

it was the one where the frogulans bombarded planet snail with salt meteors and we were trying to get that salt-eating lady to help with the cleanup

**Kim** says:
January 5, 2010 at 2:16 pm

**bgbear**: 

wow, I watched the Star Trek DVD at Christmas and missed the first time in the theater that there was a Nurse Chapel in the crew.

Hey, I missed that, too. Have to go watch it again….
Patrick McClure says:
January 5, 2010 at 2:24 pm

@Kim
What, watch it again? Well OK, twist my arm. Last summer's ST movie was the first movie since 1977 where I was ready to get back in the ticket line as soon as I got done watching it the first time. No it wasn't perfect, but d@mn it was a lot of fun. My lovely wife convinced me that she wasn't ready to see it again so soon, but then she up & buys me the DVD for Xmas. I've only had the chance to watch it once, because she also bought me the DVD set of the animated ST series from the 1970's. That's keeping me busy also.

Wagner von Drupen-Sachs says:
January 5, 2010 at 2:54 pm

A puddle o' vooty, a puddle o' gooty,
A puddle o' scooby, a puddle o' veet concrete.
First you get some gravel, pour it on the vout
To mix a mess o' mortar
You add cement and water
See the mellow roony
Come out slurp slurp slurp.

…or so says my buddy Slim

cgm says:
January 5, 2010 at 3:28 pm

Speaking of getting old: when I was in high school I would watch The Original Series in reruns on UHF TV. Lieutenant Uhura seemed like a nice, sensible, schoolteacher kind of person.

Saw The Original Series recently and... whoa. Uhura looks *good* in that miniskirt.

And don't get me started on Andrea the android or the babe in the cloud city.

Michael Rittenhouse says:
January 5, 2010 at 3:43 pm

@cgm
There was a collection called “The Galactically Hot Women of Star Trek” on Flickr at one time. The office filters seem to be diverting me, but here is the prize-winning still, IMO.

Brisko says:
January 5, 2010 at 3:55 pm

@Michael Rittenhouse

In regards to that picture:

As they say in Zot!, we warmly welcome you to the far-flung future of 1965. Roogowr.

xrayguy says:
January 5, 2010 at 4:29 pm

How about the blond warrior chick in the episode with the
Triskelions. I think she showed up in a Plyby photo shoot @ one time.

cgm says:
January 5, 2010 at 4:34 pm
@Michael Rittenhouse
I prefer this picture Andrea, but she looks good from any angle.
I looked up “The Galactically Hot Women of Star Trek” on Flickr, and to my astonishment there is not one single pic of the enchanting Droxine on the site.
About those earrings Droxine is wearing: they're gigantic, absurd, and yet somehow I never noticed them at all until now.

WatchWayne says:
January 5, 2010 at 4:42 pm
And an added bonus: LURCH!

Justin Smallbridge says:
January 5, 2010 at 4:44 pm
[banjo picking]
Well now it's time to say goodbye To Kirk and all his crew
And they would like to thank you folks for kindly beamin' through
You're all invited back next week to this locality
Unless you're squashed to nothing in a singularity
Black hole, that is.
Infinite density. Zero volume.
Take your tricorder off.
Set a spell.
Y'all beam back now, y'hear?

Drew says:
January 5, 2010 at 5:27 pm
Yet everything that was built to take 80 degrees does fine when it's eight below, even though you wouldn't be surprised if a car rear-ended a bus and burst into a million shards, with the sound of someone putting a stick of dynamite in a glockenspiel.
Actually, saw that this morning. The car that burst into a million shards was a Smart Car, and all it hit was another car that was only slightly larger. But apparently far more durable.
It didn't sound like a glockenspiel, though. It sounded like someone stepping on a styrofoam cup.

swschrad says:
January 5, 2010 at 5:35 pm
ah, the Smart.
it could be a clown car, except the clowns have to wear one on each foot, and they don't stay synchronized, so the clown falls and is dragged on his face for five miles.
and there's no room for a hip flask, so it's not a Shriner parade car.
Kim says:
January 5, 2010 at 8:08 pm

cgm:
@Michael Rittenhouse
I prefer this picture Andrea, but she looks good from any angle. I looked up “The Galactically Hot Women of Star Trek” on Flickr, and to my astonishment there is not one single pic of the enchanting Droxine on the site. About those earrings Droxine is wearing: they’re gigantic, absurd, and yet somehow I never noticed them at all until now.

Are you sure you were looking at the earrings : D? Or maybe it’s a sign of age that you NOW see the earrings! : D

Hey, how come there were never any ugly women in the future, but there sure were some ugly guys!

cgm says:
January 5, 2010 at 9:26 pm

Kim:
I’m sure there are a lot of guys out there thinking, “What earrings?” As for me, I think it took a few minutes of close study before I noticed them…

bgbear says:
January 5, 2010 at 8:56 pm

mediumwave says:
January 5, 2010 at 9:22 pm

The Babes of Star Trek: http://eeknight.livejournal.com/341538.html

cgm says:
January 5, 2010 at 9:26 pm

Kim: I’m sure there are a lot of guys out there thinking, “What earrings?” As for me, I think it took a few minutes of close study before I noticed them….

Loge says:
January 5, 2010 at 9:43 pm

#32: … Holy hell.

I’ll be in my bunk.

cgm says:
January 5, 2010 at 9:55 pm

Ha! The TOS scriptwriters must have had fun with the censors. In “The Cloud Minders,” when Spock and Kirk are beamed up to the cloud city, Spock says, “Remarkable. The finest example of sustained anti-gravity elevation I’ve ever seen.” Just then, Droxine walks in.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysjYoL-F3r4
starting at about 07:00.

xrayguy says:
January 6, 2010 at 4:03 pm
@bgbear
Drill Thrall Shanah, that's her.

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4: Sears 1934
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Screedblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

ARCHIVES
All entries, chronologically...

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Anything less than six hours of sleep, and it doesn’t matter how much I nap later: useless. Plus, I have lot going on up here (*taps skull*) and it’s unproductive, useless, wheel-spinning-in-an-icy-rut stuff. Wears on a man.

I’ve been chewing over this quote, posted by Terry Teachout Tuesday night. He posts these quotes as things on which to chew on, or worry like a hard candy, so I don’t assume any endorsement of the sentiment.

“Movies in America destroy that fine, seldom even perceived sense of the importance and dignity of one’s own life.”
Patricia Highsmith, notebook entry, August 27, 1945

Pardon me for being thick, but I don’t quite understand. If a movie throws up an image of life so large and lush and dramatic it makes the quotidian details of your own life seem small, and hence less important, I understand, but you can say the same thing about Les Miserables or an enormous Baroque painting. It’s one thing to say movies erode one’s ability to see your life as a haphazard thing with overlapping arcs, endless plots, characters who refuse to get an epiphany in the third act, but destroy? Did people in 1945 walk around with their importance and dignity destroyed by movies? Forties movies? They came in a few varieties

Domestic movies about the war, to mirror how the conflict threaded through
a civilian population geographically distant from the event

War movies, to sustain domestic support for a long struggle

Light comedies / romances / musicals, to add sweetness & amusement to life

Non-war dramas usually aimed at women, to give them stories with issues or characters above and beyond their own experiences – hardly injurious to importance and dignity, since the characters were usually suffering slights to both

Crime movies, which showcased the private detective – the superhero of the day, not in his powers but his role as an outsider who upholds the moral code

Horror movies, like the Universal classics.

I love 40s movies; it may be my favorite decade, if you include the end of the 30s as well. Movies flourished in the silent era, achieved amazing sophistication in a short time, then hit an plateau with the advent of sound, then made another leap at the end of the decade. (This is the Ann Elk school of theories, I know, but I’m simplifying for reasons of . . . of . . . for reasons of not wanting to get into it beyond what I just said.) It’s all artifice, but it’s wonderful artifice, and as I’ve said so many times before, the films have a great sense of cultural confidence and cohesion.

This would be a good place to post something that goes out of its way to make my opinion look wise and nuanced, no? So here. This has been making the rounds. Warning: bad lingo & spurty violence. But it’s sooo funny and it has a Facebook fan page and ironically girly music!

When I talk about these things I usually get “you have expressed enjoyment of Item A, so how can you disapprove of Item B?” Which is another way of saying “since I can’t detect a distinction, it seems unlikely you can.” Let me think for a moment about what . . . makes . . . this . . . different.
Shooting? That's it? I hates the shooting? No. There's lots of shooting in a good John Woo movie – the earlier, funnier ones – but not a lot of splodey-noggins. Violence? No; Lord of the Rings is violent. One of my favorite recent action movies, “Shoot 'Em Up,” is ridiculously violent, but it bears no relation to the actual world in which humans exist, except that this world has Clive Owens as well. (Yes, he should have been Bond.) I can think of a movie with violence that unnerved me greatly, and it wasn’t that explicit: “To Live and Die in L.A.”

There were three shootings, each shocking, two unseen. Two were sudden and horrible; one was coolly administered. The first one – the ambush of a law-enforcement agent by a crook who shotguns the officer then spits in disdain, somehow moved the entire movie askew, and nothing ever felt right or safe after that. It's not what they do, it's what's behind what they do. What's intended. What's disregarded. What you see, and they don't.

So what is it about this clip? I'm going to suggest it might be the little girl's language and the fact that she runs around and shoots grown-ups in the head. Bear with me; it's possible that makes it different. And that's what makes it great! some insist: It's all a game, it's a cartoon, it's not real, ya undie-bunched killjoy scold. You liked Item A; how can you possibly prejudge Item B?

Noted. Let me just go on record as believing that it is not a good or necessary thing to make comedic action movies about 12-year-old girls who shoot people in the head. Because this is what I think of when I read a quote about the loss of dignity and importance – the way a culture, not individuals, loses its sense of dignity and importance by finding opportunities to leach the innocence from anything previously regarded as sacrosanct.

The comments on the HotAir thread are full of the usual scoff-talk – why, comics were once considered corrupting to children! Elvis was forbidden to be seen from the waist down! Piano legs were covered by Victorians! Christians chopped peeners off Roman statues! and so on. If there was once a standard now seen as silly and puritanical, it must mean our current standards are the same.

Note: raising these points is tantamount to censorship, and a sure sign I have restrictive, uptight views of a host of tangentially-related items. While I am wrong to extrapolate anything from this trailer, you are of course correct to extrapolate anything from my objections. Just so we're clear!

**Compare and contrast:** here's this week's Black and White World. Out of Context Ad Challenge around noon, I hope; Bleat Plus now in the pipeline for next week. It's done, but except for tweaking, but I have to carve out the time to send out the eleventh million passwords.

**I tweeted yesterday** that I was doing a story about the fact that it is cold: here it is. Reporting from the Emergency Room of the Hennepin County Medical Center!

Really.
96 RESPONSES TO wednesday, jan. 06

madCanada says:
January 6, 2010 at 11:24 am

I remember Kurt Vonnegut saying somewhere that the real enemies of Free Speech are the ones who use it stupidly and harmfully, necessitating some sort of eventual crackdown.

I will say I'm a big fan of “transgression,” but that also worry when I see it creep into the mainstream. If it's mainstream, it's not “transgression” anymore, it's decadence, and there's a huge difference.

“Transgressors” know just what they're doing. I'm not sure if the makers of “Kick-Ass,” the movie, do.

Andy Maas says:
January 6, 2010 at 11:29 am

As a father of 12, 9, and 5 year old girls, that trailer is one of the most disgusting things I have ever seen. This is child porn, in its most commercial form. Shame on all involved.

JamesS says:
January 6, 2010 at 11:52 am

GardenStater: 

Nancy:
I loved him in Wild Wild West! He really stole every scene he was in—in spite of Robert Conrad's incredibly tight britches...

I watched that show as a kid, but I don't remember Burgess Meredith. Guess I was too young to realize he was the same guy as the Penguin.

Burgess Meredith was only in one episode of “The Wild, Wild West”: “The Night of the Human Trigger” in 1965. Perhaps you're thinking of Ross Martin, who played Artemus Gordon and was a regular?

juanito - John Davey says:
January 6, 2010 at 11:55 am

Chris M.: 

Mark O'Polo:
What would Fleegle, Bingo, Drooper, and Snorky think of this use of their theme song?

“That’s a triple ooch!”
Makin’ up a mess of fun…

**John M. Hanna** says:
January 6, 2010 at 12:01 pm

JANIE GETS MARRIED!!!

Oh, and…er…some guy named HItler was assassinated. No biggie.

A modern equivalent would be “TOM CRUISE HAS SOUP FOR LUNCH!!!”

“Giant asteroidobliterates Europe.” (Full story on page 8.)

**GardenStater** says:
January 6, 2010 at 12:02 pm

*Al Federber*: “Hit Girl” will make it easier for Boobus Americanus to accept young females in ground-combat situations. Mission Accomplished.

Al, it's a real shame you have such a low opinion of Americans. And such a high opinion of the filmmaker that you think this idiotic film will sway anyone's opinion.

Put some Ben-Gay on that knee.

**browniejr** says:
January 6, 2010 at 12:07 pm

*JamesS*:

**GardenStater**:

*Nancy*:
I loved him in Wild Wild West! He really stole every scene he was in–in spite of Robert Conrad’s incredibly tight britches...

I watched that show as a kid, but I don't remember Burgess Meredith. Guess I was too young to realize he was the same guy as the Penguin.

Burgess Meredith was only in one episode of “The Wild, Wild West”: “The Night of the Human Trigger” in 1965. Perhaps you're thinking of Ross Martin, who played Artemus Gordon and was a regular?

Or perhaps Dr. Loveless? (Michael Dunn)- I'll leave it to others to make the Star Trek connection.

**browniejr** says:
January 6, 2010 at 12:09 pm

*John M. Hanna*:
JANIE GETS MARRIED!!!
Oh, and... some guy named Hitler was assassinated. No biggie.
A modern equivalent would be “TOM CRUISE HAS SOUP FOR LUNCH!!!”
“Giant asteroid obliterates Europe.” (Full story on page 8.)

“World runs out of Silver Nitrate- No Film at 11”

MichaelsDaddy says:
January 6, 2010 at 12:14 pm

It's disturbing. It's unnecessary. I wish I could unwatch that clip. No need for lofty musings or moral dissertation, it's just wrong.

Stephen B says:
January 6, 2010 at 12:19 pm

Matt:
The final shootout in ‘LA’ was the one that totally surprised me; up until then, I’d never seen that happen in a major movie before. That's one I need to own.
For all you CSI fans, you see a certain fella from that show in the altogether, if that's your thing (back when he was in better shape, too).

I had the same reaction in that movie.

madCanada says:
January 6, 2010 at 12:33 pm

Ha ha. That kid said the C-word.

Nancy says:
January 6, 2010 at 12:36 pm

JamesS:

GardenStater:

Nancy:
I loved him in Wild Wild West! He really stole every scene he was in--in spite of Robert Conrad's incredibly tight britches...

I watched that show as a kid, but I don't remember Burgess Meredith. Guess I was too young to realize he was the same guy as the Penguin.

Burgess Meredith was only in one episode of “The Wild, Wild West”: “The Night of the Human Trigger” in 1965. Perhaps you're thinking of Ross Martin, who played Artemus Gordon and was a regular?
No, I remember Artemus Gordon. Wow—he sure did make an impression. I guess I saw that one episode multiple times then. And I know I probably blended it in with the other bad guys-including “little person” Michael Dunn...It was a LOOOONG time ago.

Bridey says:
January 6, 2010 at 12:55 pm

@Al Federber
“Hit Girl” will make it easier for Boobus Americanus to accept young females in ground-combat situations. Mission Accomplished.

Not up to Al's usual standard in non sequiturs, I'd say.

Stewart says:
January 6, 2010 at 1:19 pm

I've got to put in my agreement with Bonnie, Margaret and others who think it is appalling that such language was put into the mouth of this little girl. Kiddie pron, indeed. Degrading to the heart and mind and soul of all involved. One can only hope this thing bombs. Let me go find something to wash my brain.

Gibbering Madness says:
January 6, 2010 at 1:24 pm

Mr_Lilacs :
look, you're not as sophisticated as Astaire; look, you're not as cool as Bogie; look, you're not as tough as the Duke; look, you're not as funny as Danny Kaye...

... look, the place where you live isn't as real or important as New York...

Mike Gebert says:
January 6, 2010 at 1:29 pm

I prayed, prayed that this was a Funny or Die parody of the stupid modern movie.

No such luck.

Mike Gebert says:
January 6, 2010 at 1:32 pm

Also, I suddenly like Avatar a lot better. It may be a dopey enviro-screed, but nobody spends money on earnest sincerity like Cameron. Whoever made this hasn't seen sincerity since they abandoned it on their first day of work in Hollywood.

JP Gibb says:
January 6, 2010 at 1:52 pm

juanito – John Davey: I liked Hit-Girl better the first time in 1994 whey they called it The Professional.

But then again, I loves me some mayhem...
Ah, now there was a good movie: newly orphaned Natalie Portman (proving she can act, something the Star Wars Prequels brought into doubt) wants to take revenge on crooked DEA agent Gary Oldman (chewing so much scenery I swear I saw his jaw unhinge), and gets trained to do it by mob cleaner Jean Reno, all directed by Luc Besson. Best of all, the Blu Ray release contains both cuts.

**canajuneh** says:
January 6, 2010 at 1:53 pm

MichaelsDaddy: *It's disturbing. It's unnecessary. I wish I could unwatch that clip. No need for lofty musings or moral dissertation, it's just wrong.*

Well said. I'm as morally bankrupt as the next guy, but this is just worthless crap. Who wants to live in a world in which a great number of humans would find something like this to be entertaining? Where are we heading with this stuff? What would be interesting is to know how the girl's parents came to approve of this role for their child. Grandma must be proud.

**Al Federber** says:
January 6, 2010 at 1:58 pm

GardenStater:

Al Federber: *“Hit Girl” will make it easier for Boobus Americanus to accept young females in ground-combat situations. Mission Accomplished.*

*Al, it's a real shame you have such a low opinion of Americans. And such a high opinion of the filmmaker that you think this idiotic film will sway anyone's opinion. Put some Ben-Gay on that knee.*

“Hit Girl” isn't designed to appeal to all Americans. It has been expertly crafted to appeal to a particularly dim-witted demographic. They are crude, vulgar, easily entertained and easily influenced. What's to like?

**writeaway** says:
January 6, 2010 at 2:02 pm

Nancy:

*I think I need more than 6 hours of sleep. Sorry about the diatribe! @madCanada*

Your point was well put, Nancy — I just have to comment on the fact that you and our host didn't get more than 6 hours of sleep. Not that I'm trying to start any rumors or anything. Hmmmm…. we'll hope it's just a coincidence.

**Brisko** says:
January 6, 2010 at 2:13 pm
The funniest part of all this “dumb Americans will love Kick Ass and Hit Girl” and “This is designed to appeal to the dumbest segment of American society” talk is Mark Millar isn’t an American. He's from Scotland.

madCanada says:
January 6, 2010 at 2:18 pm

But Scotland isn’t the “Land of Opportunity”. He's peddlin' his wares Stateside.

Borderman says:
January 6, 2010 at 2:27 pm

margaret :

This trailer left me sad. Not only for the trashing of innocence, but that this actress, a real child, is being made to say filthy words for the delectation of grownups, offered up to be consumed like popcorn by fat cats and strangers who care nothing for her soul.

That was my reaction as well. Followed by a wave of mild nausea.

I enjoyed TCM's Bogart Wednesdays so much during December, and now it's back to this reality. Yuk! Bogie and his Bowery pals battling a Nazi fifth-column in New York because the cops won't believe it exists is so much more--realistic, by comparison. Not to mention entertaining.

I predict market forces will sink this Hit Girl piece of garbage at the box office when audiences stay away. In the proverbial droves. And I'm really disappointed that Nicolas Cage, one of my favorite actors, has a part in this.

As for the Twitter reference to the Japanese guy who survived both A-bombs on Japan: 1.) if you make it to 93, no matter what incredible chain of events you survived, be grateful because few of us get that far and 2.) tell me how this guy is more sympathetic than, for instance, the dead and wounded at Pearl Harbor.

Two-time nuke survivor or not, the guy was extraordinarily lucky to make 93, period. Unlike the 1,177 sailors and Marines who never got off the Arizona.

*Di* says:
January 6, 2010 at 2:29 pm

I just saw “Hitler Assassinated” (they wished).
Wow that was one wacky film. Love the proto-Bilko

All so sweet and harmless – relatively speaking . . .

canajuneh says:
January 6, 2010 at 3:22 pm

I was also surprised that Nicolas Cage would associate himself with this garbage, but the tabloids are claiming he is in some major financial trouble. Maybe that's why Robin Williams took the role in World's Greatest Dad. Certainly not because it was up to his usual script standards. Just didn't get that one at all.
xrayguy says:
Sunday, Jan. 03, 2010 at 3:36 pm

I don't care how young I see Burgess Meredith or how much hair he has, he still looks like he's 55 years old. Geez, they all do. 'Cept for Ging-oh, baby!

hpoulter says:
Sunday, Jan. 03, 2010 at 3:50 pm

Brisko: The funniest part of all this “dumb Americans will love Kick Ass and Hit Girl” and “This is designed to appeal to the dumbest segment of American society” talk is Mark Millar isn’t an American. He’s from Scotland.

In Scotland, they call the target audience for this kind of thing “neds” (non-educated delinquents). I have a highly educated friend named Ned who must appreciate that very much.

HunkyBobTX says:
Sunday, Jan. 03, 2010 at 4:14 pm

That film clip bothers me in that it’s just wrong to see a youngster use those kinds of words without batting an eye. Call me a prude, but if I had used such language at that age, especially to my parents, They would have tanned my hide.

I'm not sure I agree that “Movies in America destroy that fine, seldom even perceived sense of the importance and dignity of one's own life.”

I do think that we see idealized situations, appearances, and characterizations and that could lead one to think that their life is mediocre, dull, or in some way inferior.

One example that comes to mind is the lament that women today have impossibly high standards to meet in terms of physical beauty based on what we see in movies and TV.

If that's what is meant by “importance” in the above quote, then perhaps there's something to it.

madCanada says:
Sunday, Jan. 03, 2010 at 5:43 pm

Still, if I had to choose between Lady Gaga and Rev. Fred Phelps, I'd pick Lady Gaga, no contest.

lanczos says:
Sunday, Jan. 03, 2010 at 6:36 pm

Did a grad program in the early 70s in Radio-TV-Film – Film History. Here's the most important thing I learned: There is one principal reaction from The Audience about content (regardless of medium: music, plays, movies, TV, etc.) and it is:

“Seen It.”
“Already Done.”
“What Else Ya Got?”
“Anything new?”

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5054
“So, How Do We Sell This?”
“Don’t ya have something else to show us?”

That’s why violence has to expand geometrically over time; evil must be portrayed as reprehensible, then powerful, then addictive, then undefeatable; sexuality has to be progressively titillating – until EVERYTHING is shown – then CLOSEUPS, then...

Russell says:
January 6, 2010 at 6:58 pm

hpouter:

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hpouter:

Brisko : The funniest part of all this “dumb Americans will love Kick Ass and Hit Girl” and “This is designed to appeal to the dumbest segment of American society” talk is Mark Millar isn’t an American. He’s from Scotland.

In Scotland, they call the target audience for this kind of thing “neds” (non-educated delinquents). I have a highly educated friend named Ned who must appreciate that very much.

We (in Scotland) have other names for other things as well — hope you don’t have any friends named Randy...

DryOwlTacos says:
January 6, 2010 at 7:03 pm

No, sorry, Kick-Ass trailer is not funny at all. It’s pronographic. A minor is being exploited for the titillation of adults by using sexually charged images and language. Did anyone in the production loop not get this? In the spirit of Free Speech (a concept highly utilized by those who have nothing particularly interesting or uplifting to say, especially with other people’s money), I suppose we must tolerate its existence for the thirty minutes it takes for it to tank at the box office.

DryOwlTacos says:
January 6, 2010 at 7:21 pm

I’m also sad that Nicolas Cage is that hungry.

madCanada says:
January 6, 2010 at 8:21 pm

QUOTE: “What would Fleegle, Bingo, Drooper, and Snorky think of this use of their theme song?”

Agreed.

Not to mention Bob Marley, who would just shake his head and light up a fat one.
At the risk of over-commenting, I might mention that the Republic of Ireland has just passed an anti-Blasphemy law.

Importance and dignity … or else.

Back in 1985 (or whenever it came out), walking out of the theater after seeing “To Live and Die in L.A.,” I was in a fog. I did not want to be around people anymore. It took me a day or two to get over it. No movie before or since has had such an effect on me. But it wasn't the violence, it was the way everyone treated each other, and how the one good guy was ultimately too weak to resist being corrupted. (Sorry if that spoiled it for anyone; geez, you've had 25 years to watch it.)

The thing is, though, a movie that can provoke a profound emotional response in me is very rare. So, even though it made me feel bad, I really liked it. It's one of my all-time favorites. To this day, my speech is littered with snippets of TLADILA dialogue, arcane references nobody gets.

Man, that was a looong trip to the visual punchline…not that I didn't enjoy the digression, just sayin'. ;^)
In my opinion, films that show slights to “importance and dignity”, especially with ease and disregard ARE EXACTLY injurious to those things. Perhaps I have misunderstood what was being stated here, perhaps this is exactly his point, but as I read it, the sentence states that showing “slights” to those things are NOT injurious. Anyway. My $.02

ScottG says:
January 7, 2010 at 1:36 pm

@browniejr

Why, Alexander in “Plato's Stepchildren”....

mpbk says:
January 10, 2010 at 2:53 am

There's even a worse trailer out there where Cage shoots his daughter so she knows what it feels like when getting hit by a bullet when wearing body armor.

Ryan says:
January 11, 2010 at 4:29 pm

I'm looking forward to seeing this. But then, I don't have a young daughter. I think that colours how a lot of people are going to view this one. It just looks like good campy fun to me. But I might have a much different opinion if I had an 11 year old girl at home.

To those of you calling this kiddie porn (and come on... really? Let's ease off the hyperbole a smidge) – do you view this any differently from any of the horror movies featuring little girls as psycho killers, that do it in a creepy way (slitting throats in the night, setting houses on fire, etc)? I'm genuinely curious. I find *those* movies more disturbing than this one, in concept, as those ones strike me as far more realistic.

DJMoore says:
January 12, 2010 at 11:30 pm

Tell you what: I'll watch this movie after I watch the one about the young lady who defends herself against a home invasion with the WWII 1911 her granddad left her — and then gets put in prison because she lives in Chicago. Gosh, what was its name...? Oh, right, that one's never been made.
Please install and activate the "Twitter for WordPress" plugin to use this section.

Why A Stork?
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! […]

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?

© 2011 The Bleat.
Nothing is more exhilarating than being shot at without result, as Churchill said. Having just dodged the third bullet at work, I can attest to that. But it's also exhausting. The secret, if there is any: you're harder to hit if you're a moving target, and I've tried to do new things at work for the past few years. Don't know if I've any tricks left in the bag, though; have to invent a new skill to survive the next round.

It feels selfish to be relieved when so many others are about to be relieved in another fashion – relieved of their jobs. You feel guilty for feeling relieved, but it's the second emotion, and you find yourself circling back to the first again. Well, now we can proceed with the new plans for the new shows and other things – including more blogging at the Strib site, since it now looks like a regular blog. Posts stacked on top of each other like a pile of turtles.

Busy day, what with Newsbreak and the column and other bits of random duty; took time after karate to drive to the burbs and treat my daughter to a Perkins dinner. During karate I read some of the Nicholas Meyer book I’d mentioned the other day, an account of his directorial career – including the Trek movies. Sprightly prose, entertaining anecdotes, but he struck a clangorous note right off the top:

*The speaker, when I turned to look, was Walter Mirisch, a producer whose lost of great moves is probably as long as Barack Obama's list of ways to destroy the American economy.*
If I’d been the editor, I would have suggested the line be replaced, because 1) it’s the second page of the book, which is a little early to lose half your audience; 2) you might have some readers who do not believe Barack Obama intends to destroy the American economy, and hence think you a fool or someone unable to avoid viewing every single issue through the prism of domestic politics. 3) Avoid flat statements that seem to assume your audience surely agrees with you, because IT’S JUST SO OBVIOUS; 4) Since you’re describing an event that happened in 1982, it’s particularly clumsy. 5) If Obama’s crimes are so great, perhaps you might want to avoid comparing their number to the list of successful films produced by someone with whom the reader is unaware, because the result is not admiration for Mr. Mirisch, but the impression that you have compared his accomplishments to someone you detest.

The rest of the book’s okay, but – what? You think something’s wrong? Yes, I’ll admit, I changed it. The original quote:

The speaker, when I turned to look, was Walter Mirisch, a producer whose lost of great moves is probably as long as George W. Bush’s war crimes.

Equally stupid, for the same reasons. But later in the book he revisits the plot of Star Trek 6, and notes that the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the rapprochement with the Klingons – er, Soviets – did not bring about a wonderful new world. What follows is a passage of spectacular intellectual incoherence.

“In fact, however, a wonderful new chapter in human history is not what has occurred. Instead, we got 9/11 and a resurgent form of human horror, terrorism, in which incalculable destruction is visited upon us not by dictators and armies but rather by crazies with box cutters. . . . as of 2001, the world became an infinitely more dangerous place – all of which now leads me to wonder if the conspirators of Star Trek VI were not more justified than we gave them credit for being. Knowing what I now know, would I still maintain that Valeris, Cartwright, and their Klingon counterparts were misguided in their attempts to thwart detente between the Federation and the Klingon Empire?”

Yes, a fellow who was angry about war crimes on page 2 is speculating on page 231 that maybe his movie should have sided with the assassins who wanted to kill the participants at a peace conference that ended a long war and reconciled two enormous military powers. Yeesh. But there’s more!

“I also confess to being troubled by the Vulcan mind meld, clearly a form of torture, wherein Spock attempts to forcibly extract vital information
form a traitor. In light of the Bush administration’s treatment of ‘enemy combatants,’ I blush.”

Perhaps he is also opposed to the Vulcan Neck Pinch, and believes it should be prefaced with a few warning Vulcan Neck Tickles.

By the way: About his earlier movie, “Time After Time” – which I loved, like most of his work – he says “Wells represents civilized, progressive, constructive humanity.”

Wells believed in eugenics. I think back on how that movie’s wonderfully sympathetic portrayal made me admire Welles, and you know what? I blush, too.

**Some interesting stuff** below, if you like. And by all means say what you wish in the comments section, but let us not retread tiresome old arguments.

The really interesting thing – in a very nerdy fashion, I admit – is the pop-cultural history of the Soviet-Klingon parallel, and what Meyer seems to think about it now. Do us all a favor and stick to that, rather than debate waterboarding. I suspect that has been sufficiently debated here and there, no? See you later.

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151 RESPONSES TO **thursday, jan, 07**

**DensityDuck** says:
January 12, 2010 at 6:21 pm

Incidentally, after finishing Meyer's book:

Meyer is entirely unapologetic about browbeating Gene Roddenbury into letting him turn Starfleet into a bunch of bloodthirsty xenophobes, but he wishes that he hadn't had Spock do the whole forced mind-meld thing.

My girlfriend and I watched Star Trek IV the other night. Practically every other line is about what a bunch of arseholes contemporary humans are.

I'm starting to wonder if maybe Star Trek II was an accident.

← Older Comments
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Curse the Thursday that feels like Friday; you feel like you're in one of those loud long movies where the bad guy has been defeated twice already but comes back one more time, howling for blood. It's partly the weather – it feels very personal when it's cold and blowing and cruel. It follows you where you go; it waits outside when you've gone indoors. I wonder what people who have an aversion to swearing say when they get in their cars, turn on the ignition, and get a blast of cold air because they forgot to turn off the heater. GOSH just does not fill the bill. JEEPERS seems likewise insufficient. Some folk might find themselves flinging a fillip of a fricative-founded foul phrase, although FRICK IT might work, too.

Good day, though. Accomplished enough, but not enough. Took a nap that felt like dropping down the Marianas Trench in an overweighted bathysphere, and found it difficult to wake; finding myself was like fishing for a slender hair in a vat of cold syrup. Once up, I found my keys, somehow found the slot in the vehicle where they went, and picked up child to orchestra class. The caterwaul is really quite remarkable, and makes you wonder if they tuned every instrument a bit out of sync, they might sound perfectly harmonious.

Have to write a column now, and then watch a little “I, Claudius.” Still on a Roman jag; love me some Rome, as the annoying web-based locution would have it. This is probably my fourth viewing, and hence it's less gripping, but still wonderful TV; the more you know about Roman history, though, the
more the fancy and invention shows through. Brian Blessed's Augustus is still a wonderful character, but you suspect the jollity was more of a projection of British sensibility than historical fidelity. One of the things that's fascinated me lately is Roman religion, an elaborate, time-honored pantheistic construct that completely collapsed over time, but bequeathed its symbols, dates, traditions — and, after a spell, its architecture — to its inheritor. Greek and Roman mythology is an utter mess, and you can well understand the appeal of monotheism after reading that depthless cesspool of celestial squabbles. The Romans also absorbed gods like America absorbed musical styles.

Anyway. If you've never seen “I, Claudius,” by all means: Netflix. Now. If nothing else, it's a fair introduction to post-Republican Roman history, and it's incredibly well-acted and directed and staged. (Only about three musical cues, though.) A young but already bald Patrick Stewart as a villain? John Hurt as Caligula? Can't be beat. I still remember when it first hit the states — I was working as a seed salesman down south, and would try to end my anabasis in a town large enough to get a PBS feed. I'd put a six-pack on ice in the motel sink, sit back, and watch my soaps.

I had a longer section written to preview the Friday links, but it was lost; a peril that arises when working on different computers. So I'll just say this:

100 Mysteries stages its triumphant return, with an interesting remake

Comic Ads brings you some unexpected history

Sears 1934, one of my favorite sites, hits page #60. Halfway there, I think.

Enjoy! Have a grand weekend.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5099
102 RESPONSES TO *Friday! Jan. 08*

*Di* says:
January 10, 2010 at 3:54 pm

Up until a few years ago, there was a business in my adjacent town, El Cajon, CA, called “Hiram’s Guns & Liquor” – the name of which was largely and proudly painted on the side of the building. It says a lot about the flag-waving gun-toting mindset of EAST San Diego County.

Although it probably turned into guns, liquor & meth – meth isn’t quite so patriotic, eh?

shesnailie says:
January 10, 2010 at 4:49 pm

_@_v – hiram abiff was packing?
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!

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!

VISIT OUR FRIENDS!

A few highly recommended friends...

0: Main Menu
1: Matchbook Museum
2: Comic Covers
3: Black & White World
4: Sears 1934
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developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Be patient with the design. Last minute screwing around. I spent some idle
time this weekend tweaking one of those “free” templates, swapping all the
graphics, tweaking the code to change the font hues, and feeling very proud
of myself until I discovered I could not alter the footer text. It was possessed.
No matter what I did, it would display a link offering real estate in Bangalore.
This is of little interest to my readers. Even those in Bangalore, as I expect
such things are not closely-held mysteries accessible only to those careful
enough to squint at the credits on a footer. The links were apparently served
up by some arcane means beyond my ken; when I rewrote the code in
Espresso and uploaded the file, it was overwritten from beyond. Okay, well,
who knows what else it’s doing. Delete.

This is what it looks like outside the office:
You get used to this quite quickly. You become accustomed to streets suddenly narrowed; where once there were two lanes and parking, there's now parking, a lane, and half a lane paved with rutted ice. You can squirt past and pass if you are feeling brave and stupid, but it's not advisable. When I went on errands Saturday I lost communication with several toes for almost an hour; they checked out while I was in the car wash. (The heater in the Element must be turned off in a car wash, lest it short out the circuits: nice work, boys.) Since the temperatures were in your more-or-less-lethal range, the doors of the car wash were closed as much as possible, which meant cars could not roll off the line as quickly as usual. Which meant the line was stopped once or twice while you sat: washus interruptus. If you have claustrophobia I do not advise the experience; you look at the flat soapy tentacles of the washing mats, immobile against your window, and it's hard not to think you're being embraced by some horrid octopus.

Speaking of Octopus: do I have this right? The Vulture is the next villain in the Spider-Man movie? I don't care that much, since the third Spidey left me cold on the franchise, but the Vulture? He was the only supervillain who seemed to be a member in good standing of AARP. (Although AARP is a good bird cry, and perhaps apt for the Vulture.) What does he do, except fly
around and look old and bald? What are his powers, denture breath and the ability to eat certain meats most creatures would avoid out of instinct? I was hoping for Electro, or perhaps Mysterio. Well, it could work. As long as there's just one.

You know what would make for an interesting super-hero movie? No villain. Just a day in the life.

Anyway. I went to Target, of course, to procure the usuals, and my foot was still cold. It was like walking around on a canned ham. The only remedy is warmth, but that's the other side of this time of year: turn up the heat, it's stuffy. Turn on the fire, it's hot. You alternate between varying degrees of uncomfortable states – one room is sultry, the other is crisp; one room's just right, but you spend no time there. The family room / kitchen is good, but then the dog wants to come in, and you have to hold the door open for a minute because it takes him 30 seconds to believe you, and another 30 to climb the steps with care. Then the room is cold. You turn on the fire. Then it's perfect. You make a meal, using the stove; it's oppressive. I imagine in some states – say, your desert states – people just set the thermostat at 72 when they move in and never look at it again.

On Twitter I noted with approval the improvements Dominos has made. Let me clarify.

Oh let me be so very, very clear: Dominos was once FAILURE ZA, the sort of thing you ordered when you had a giggling horde of 7-year-olds over for an afternoon party. They would accept Dominos because it conformed to internationally recognized visual parameters of pizza. I thought it was horrible, of course, because it was. To call the crust "cardboard" is an insult to the producers of fine corrugated products; it was like a deep-fried Saltine cracker, without the subtle array of flavors.

For reference: I can't stand Papa John's – too sweet, pillowy crust. Dull. I love Geno's of Chicago, the gold standard for deep. Locally, I do like Davanni's, but much of their rep lies on the liberal application of oregano, and the thin crust can resemble a sauce-slathered cover of a hardback book. (The Traditional crust, served in-store, is a marvel.) For years I ordered from a local joint that had all sorts of proprietary recipes, but A) I never forgot the times when the sausage was half-raw, which gave you that hey-presto-it's-trichinosis feeling, and B) the last two deliveries brought melty landslides to my table as if the driver had taken every corner on two wheels, and the family rebelled. The really hyper-local place went bust, and it wasn't a surprise once you went there and saw pictures of Italy taped crookedly on the wall with Scotch tape.

So. A few weeks ago I gave Dominos a try, because you could order online. While I worry that the computer reduces valuable human interaction, I do not mourn the possible loss of talking to clerks who are confused by the concept of “Extra Sauce,” and have to put the phone down and yell for the manager because there doesn't seem to be a button for it. I was impressed with the way you can construct the pizza as you like, although that was a bit
like choosing the pattern on the upholstery for your electric chair: choice is not always a guarantee of a good experience. When I completed the order I was surprised to find a progress bar that told me what was happening to my pizza – when it was being made, when it went into the oven, when it left the store. Clever; it lacked only the option to track it from a satellite.

Then it arrived. This was not the Dominos I knew. Oh, we go way back; in college, we ordered lots of late-night pizza, and Dominos was the only one that came to the dorm. Or did, until my roommate wrote too many bad checks. (He was actually called into the bank and got a lecture from the branch manager, who gave him kindly financial advice about not being a total screw-up.)

Dominos entered the scene halfway through my Freshman year. The pizza joint switched franchises, and we were keen to try this “Dominos” about which so many people spoke. Same with Coors beer, which was supposedly nectar and had to be brought in by people who drove to Colorado.

Didn’t think Dominos was that good, but it was all there was. Same in my neighborhood in DC.

Years passed, and so many local pizza options became available I was surprised Dominos even existed. But now here it was, the New Formula. I tried. I was impressed. The crust is better – I actually ate almost all the crust, instead of leaving the bones for the dog – and the sauce has a definite punch. Doesn’t seem sweeter; if anything it’s less sweet. The cheese was fine. The extra sauce was well-proportioned – and yes, you can specify that on line. You are in control of the button. It is a small price to pay.

Also, the coupons – $5.99 for a two-ingredient – is literally a small price to pay.

So there.

Later today: Matchbook Museum! And some stuff on the Strib blog. See you later. Oh, one more thing: I’ve been chewing my way through all the original Treks, in remastered form with new FX. Always amazed by the hair women wear in the future:
That's like 3X her face area. If you're feeling clever and nerdy: name that episode.

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**111 RESPONSES TO *monday, jan. 11***

**John Robinson** says:  
*January 11, 2010 at 6:40 pm*  
Patrick: yes he was. I'm a writer these days, and most of my novels take place either in Cincinnati (my present home), or in southern Ohio. But my childhood was spent in Louisville (we lived in the St. Matthews area), and I may write a story about the town yet. *s*

**cookmefud** says:  
*January 11, 2010 at 8:00 pm*  
I like this design a lot.

**shesnailie** says:  
*January 11, 2010 at 8:00 pm*  
@_v – i don’t like the tiny dialog box you now hafta try and cram your words in to….
GardenStater says:
January 11, 2010 at 8:18 pm

Totally OT, but may I say:

RIP Art Clokey.

chrisbcritter says:
January 11, 2010 at 10:26 pm

 Tried Domino's again recently – the crust surprised me in that there was SOME flavor to it. I worked for the Pasadena store for a couple years in the late 80s – started out dancing on the corner in front of the place, dressed in a tiger costume and carrying a Domino's sign, then graduated to driver. Good money and tips (except the CalTech students) but it lost its thrill after I got robbed and shot at one night; then a little Vietnamese driver got strongarm robbed and beaten bloody by four big guys... Last straw was New Year's Eve 1990 when management insisted all of us should take insulated boxes holding five pizzas and walk up and down Colorado Boulevard hawking them to the folks waiting overnight for the Rose Parade. No bloody thanks.

Also, we employees usually ended up eating the rejected pizzas – we never starved, but it gave me an aversion to pepperoni that has lasted to this day...

Vlad the Impala says:
January 12, 2010 at 7:39 am

Pizza? There you go, talking over our heads again with your fancy dinners!

My most memorable childhood pizza was when Mom would buy a cheep frozen disk of something labeled pizza, and we'd have to tart it up with canned mushrooms and cooked hamburger for 8 hungry kids, think quantity over anything else.

The most memorable young adult pizza was coming home from college, almost dead broke (still 6 siblings back home), on a train from Boston to Chicago. A friend at Northwestern College picked me up and we took the El and a bus to his dorm. He had very little cash too, so I tagged along to his dining hall where he had a meal plan so I watched him eat. Then we combined our meagre cash and went to a deep-dish pizza place for MY supper. Ohhh, that was some truly great stuffed pizza! And the waitress was cute too, so all in all a great trip.

Paul in NJ says:
January 12, 2010 at 2:55 pm

I actually met Barbara Luna (Marlena Moreau) at a convention several years back. She was older, of course, but her beauty was that inner kind that manages to obscure that fact.

And her voice was still sultry enough to keep a gaggle of twenty-somethings hanging around.

Archer says:
January 12, 2010 at 4:08 pm

There was a Domino's that I used to order from in the late 1980s off
of King Street in Alexandria, VA...and the sauce was totally awesome. I ordered from other Domino's before and after and it was the tasteless tomato variety. What gives? I would think it would come in at least five pound plastic buckets nationwide, but there was definitely a difference.

Mike G says:
January 12, 2010 at 8:33 pm

I don’t know, something about this is resolutely un-Lileksy. Aren’t there any WordPress templates from the 40s?

“You know what would make for an interesting super-hero movie? No villain. Just a day in the life.”

It’s called Unbreakable.

ScottG says:
January 12, 2010 at 8:59 pm

Looks around… good, no one’s here.

To all you pizza snobs, your local pizza places are not good. Every Mom and Pop or Joe Blow Pizza place has lousy pizza, with sickly sweet sauces and wayyyy too much cheese. Forget about loaf of pizza, thin crust is the only way to go.

Round Table, Straw Hat, and Shakey's rule!!!! Local joints drool… and give you heartburn.  

Slips back into corporate…

Alex says:
January 14, 2010 at 8:53 pm

Thanks for the redesign! RSS is now working (didn’t work for me on the old design)
Morning assignment: do something on Vikings tickets. They're in the playoffs, and it's sold out – but tickets can still be had if you know where you go. So we did an interview with a ticket reseller. Not a euphemism for scalper: it's legal-like now, y'see, just as bootleggers later became, oh, hospitality distributors. The shop's phones were manned entirely by females, and while I was tempted to make a reference to Phil Spitalny and His All-Girl Call Bank, it would have confused many. There's no point in making a small ancient pop-culture reference unless it has some resonance, and Phil's orchestra, from what I heard, was a scratchy, reedy thing whose purpose seemed to be novelty first, and an ironfisted reassertion of social norms for bonus. DAMES AIN'T THOSE WHAT OUGHT TO BE PLAYING JAZZ.

Phil was born under the rule of the Tsar, and died an old man in Miami Beach.

Anyway. After the interview, we shot a scene in the Metrodome. Always nice to be there when it's empty: it's so blue.
Then I did a couple of bits to round it out; the piece can be found here. It’s short.

Ended up, as ever, at the bus stop waiting for my daughter. When she got home I made her hot chocolate. So it has always been and thus it shall ever be! Until it stops, which is why every simple basic routine of the day has to be a joy. Or at least done with a smile and a song and some sort of happy banter. All these years in this same place; the things we’ve done, the things I remember, the things she forgot. It’s all in one cup of hot cocoa after school.

Then she drew.

**Daughter** has given me permission to post some of her work, which means she’s proud of it. Really proud, I suspect. I like the face on this one:

This one is based on something she saw on the internets:
It’s “Gin” with a hard G. She’s doing a drawing a day, and while she spends a great deal of time on this, I find myself unwilling to say “Stop drawing, and read a book!”

**Not to be pad out** a Bleat with drawings, or anything: tonight I had a moment and banged out the copy for the first part of the overhaul of the Old Ads section. It was a leetle tiny site put up in 2001, grainy scans of grainy ads from the newspaper fiche files. My collection has become enormous, and over the years I've cleaned them up and chosen some favorites. So: almost 30 pages of ads from the 1930s you may enjoy, with some jarring cultural differences between then and now. It's here – enjoy! See you later with today's Comic Sins.
Rick Lee says:
January 12, 2010 at 9:10 pm

Geez... buy the girl a drawing pad with no lines on it.

Gina says:
January 12, 2010 at 9:51 pm

To Klinger! And his all-girl orchestra!

Ahem. Sorry. Had to get that out of my system.

So this girl writes AND draws? Is it okay to be envious of an elementary-school kid? 😊 Go Natalie!

granular says:
January 13, 2010 at 7:16 am

Plural internets? I thought Gore only invented one. How many are out there anyway? Come on Lileks, you were doing so well with that new favicon, too. That now leaves Drudge as the last hold-out.

T. Thompson says:
January 13, 2010 at 4:39 pm

Wow.

I just wandered into this place after laughing and cringing my way through a friend's copy of *Interior Desecrations* and thanking God I was too young (born in '72) to feel the full brunt of the decade's horror.

In '81, when I was nine, I could not have done the drawings your daughter is doing. And I was, by any standards for my age, a very good artist; I make a living at it now.

Get that kid some real drawing supplies. A sketch book, some nice drawing pencils, a kneaded eraser or two. It'll provide a lot of return on a very small investment, and when she gets her hamster, she can sketch him from life.

Patrick says:
January 13, 2010 at 10:56 pm

@ Aleta

Miyazaki would have to be one of the best mentors for animation/anime. Haven't seen My Neighbor Totoro or Kiki's Delivery Service, but I do love Howl's Moving Castle and Spirited Away. Both are awesome in both story, character development, and artwork. Worth renting or even buying.

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

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

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is HERE!
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

3: Black & White World
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Screedblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5131
Daughter wants a hamster. She'll get one, I suspect, but first she has to prove herself worthy of the responsibility. First step: carrying around a five-pound sack of flour all day, feeding it, changing it, not being able to leave the house because she has a five-pound sack of flour, calling up the sack-daddy and yelling at him for not coming by with some got-damned Pampers already it's the least he could do seeing as it's sack too and all, and generally proving to us that she's up to the task of caring for another life.

I had a hamster as a kid. My mother hated mice, so it was a struggle for her to say yes, but she did. Later it escaped. In an act of surpassing cruelty I wadded up a fuzzy sock and stuck it at the bottom of her bed. The shriek peeled the wallpaper. I think it did something to the wall itself, no wallpaper would ever stay glued to that spot, as if she had somehow stripped from it a property we do not yet know, let alone understand. If they tear down the house birds will pass through that spot and feel a chill, and lose their feathers. It was a shriek like that.

How the hamster got out, I don't know, but it's a lesson; he had all the food he wanted, dry aromatic bedding, a wheel, liquid, and warmth, but he wanted freedom. So he squeezed through the bars somehow and died behind a fridge in the basement, like a junkie.

Good thing the dog's in his dotage, or he would just sit all on the floor and
look up at the cage and wonder just when he would be allowed to “play” with
the juicy, squeaky little thing.

Poor hamster! Poor junkie hamster. He was going in for treatment to get
clean the next day, too. Probably not, but this is something I’ve learned from
COPS – drug users caught with the equivalent of a Costco-sized Arm &
Hammer box quantity of meth will attempt to convince the cop he was going
in, tomorrow, for treatment, and he’s been trying to get clean. That’s the way
the cruel world works: you make up your mind you’ve had it with meth, and
you’d best stop while you’ve still a half-dozen teeth in your head, and seconds
later you’re pulled over and arrested for having a pipe and a baggie. Maan.
It’s like they don’t want you to go straight. The popularity of meth is one of
those things I cannot understand: unlike the other drugs that provide a slow
decline to loserhood, or can be managed with some degree of skill, you’re
talking about something that converts vital people to twitchy stinky sweat-
shiny zombies with relative ease; surely everyone who does meth knows
someone who turned into a monomaniacal chancre-puss would couldn’t
sneeze without losing an incisor, but they still said “oh yes, meth for me,
please. Let me experience what everyone’s talking about.”

COPS remains one of the most interesting shows on TV; this weekend I saw
something you rarely see: a bona-fide jerk of a policeman. There are many
levels of jerkhood, of course; someone overly polite and mockingly solicitous
could be regarded as a jerk, although it’s more a cheerful WHATEVER,
FELON, I’M SLEEPING IN MY OWN BED TONIGHT attitude you’d probably get
after filing liars in your back seat for a decade. This policeman was just wired
tight from the git-go, and was pre-steamed and highly peeved at a fellow he
stopped for jaywalking. Everything he did under the circumstances was
correct, including the seemingly callous command to the jaywalker’s parents
to GO AWAY. The jaywalker’s ID was hinky, the “parents” appeared out of a
motel; who knows? Couldn’t fault him for anything, except that you got the
feeling every encounter with civilians was like this.

It’s the only reality show I ever watched, and it never fails to fascinate. The
lies, the pleas, the crimes, the disbelief, the swift judgment – it’s like a live
feed from the Pearly Gates.

Anyway, yeah, a hamster. She brought this up on the way back from the bus;
she had that tentative hopeful smile of kids get when they’re bursting with a
proposal and they SO hope you say yes, and when I didn’t say “we’ll see,”
which means “probably, no,” but said “that sounds possible, yes,” it was the
cue to hear all the reassurances: I will buy it with my own money and feed it
and change its stuff and give it lots of love I PROMISE PLEASE, CAN I?

We all know where this is going, don’t we.

Interesting day; Wednesday proves to be more so, with an early AM
documentary shoot on an ice factory. Yes, an ice factory. My goal: work in
“Paradise Lost” and the idea that the lowest rung of Hades is solid ice, with
Lucifer endlessly chewing on the heads of Brutus and Judas. Which reminds
me: on the way to choir, Gnat said “Looks like Penelope is down in the underworld again.”

“What?”

“It’s cold! She's down in you know the H place and Demeter is mourning.”

She's been reading a series of books that have lots of Greek / Roman myths.

“That's nonsense,” I said, having some sport. “Demeter should be used to it by now.”

“You're MEAN. He's mourning, and so nothing grows.”

“Seriously. If every year she goes down to Hades, well, she comes back again, and shouldn’t he figure that out by now? It's like she's gone to Arizona for the season. And why punish everyone else with cold weather?”

“He's MOURNING.”

“Okay, well, how about someone takes him aside and says Demeter old chap, we understand it's hard for you, but how about lightening up a bit on the rest of us? Experience teaches us she'll be back. Meanwhile I can't feel my feet. It's humbug. I don't think even the Romans bought that one.”

“Well they didn’t know.”

“Yes, because they hadn't conquered Australia. Where it's summer. So Demeter doesn’t care about the southern hemisphere.”

“Oh.” She smiled. “You're right.”

And thus were ancient myths punctured in a trice as we bounced along the rutted road. Mythology. Meh. High school drama + thunderbolts.

Later today: Out of Context Ad Challenge around noon. See you then!

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100 RESPONSES TO *Wednesday Already? Fine by me*  

**Ryan** says:  
January 13, 2010 at 12:15 pm

I had an escape artist hamster when I was a kid. I ended up tying the door to his cage shug with metal twist ties, because he figured out that if he pried is front teeth between the bar of the door, and the bar of the cage, it would pop open the latch. If you get her one of those “let him roll around on the floor” balls, make sure she doesn’t leave the hamster in it for too long. They WILL pee, and it WILL stink up your carpets. 😝
Al Federber says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:17 pm

Wifey and I frequently watch COPS, but change the channel when pot users and prostitutes are being hassled. It's pretty stupid to drive around town smoking pot, though, so my sympathies are somewhat limited.

Al Federber says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:27 pm

About cops who like to hassle and provoke people: Never talk to a cop. If an officer tries to start a conversation with you, ask him/her if you're free to go. If you are, then you should leave immediately, without saying anything else. The cop's job is to make a case against someone, and it just might be you.

Nick Fury says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:30 pm

Marvel Sets New Standard in Bad Decision-Making….ignoring over 40 years of complex and developed multiple storylines and crossovers in the comic books:

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1242820/Tobey-Maguire-quits-Spider-Man-4-new-script-sends-Peter-Parker-high-school.html

DensityDuck says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:31 pm

“….surely everyone who does meth knows someone who turned into a monomaniacal chancre-puss would couldn't sneeze without losing an incisor, but they still said 'oh yes, meth for me, please. Let me experience what everyone's talking about.’ ”

Yeah, man, but it's not gonna happen to ME, man, I've got my head on straight, man, I know how to handle myself, and I only do it at parties or clubs anyway, or when I'm with friends, or when I'm home safe and I KNOW I'm not going out again that night, or you know when I get home from work and it's been a BITCH of a day (and that's when I suddenly notice that I've been awake for three weeks and don't know any of the naked people passed out on the bed next to me.)

DryOwlTacos says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:53 pm

Does Natalie read your Bleat comments? If she doesn't, I would let her read this thread to get an understanding of what having a hamster would mean for her status quo. From the smell to the inevitable demise of the little captive creature, she would find that she liked her life better B.H.E. (Before Hamster Era).

On the other hand, I understand the budding maternal instinct and the wish for something small and soft to cuddle. I would recommend an adolescent cat (about 5-6 months of age) that's big enough to defend itself from Jasper's curious advances but young enough to bond with a child. A litterbox is certainly easier to deal with than a whole cage full of reeking bedding.

And on the other other hand, a tribble would be an even better pet.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5161
Just toss it some quadrotriticale once in awhile. From anecdotal evidence, they make no mess at all.

**benjammin** says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:34 pm

From what I've heard, the best pet hamster would be a female Robo Dwarf Hamster. Females smell less (contrary to somebody else's comment above), and the Robos are friendlier and less likely to bite.

I personally have a pet hamster right now, and I don't even have any kids. My wife is allergic to cats and I don't like dogs, so a hamster was a good compromise for a pet. She's not very social, but adorable as all heck. Whenever I put my hand in the cage, she tries to nibble my fingers, but only because she's checking to see if I'm food. Can't blame her, since most of the time that I reach into the cage, it's to bring her food. She takes food out of my hand though, and while she's eating I can pet her without her caring.

She doesn't smell at all, and never tries to escape. The key to preventing escape is to use a glass cage (fish tank, 10 gallons or more). The only downside is that hamsters are nocturnal, so we only really get to see her during the late evening.

**RJ** says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:39 pm

What I learned watching COPS:

1. Cops are really well trained in fast talking with the intention of convincing you to ‘voluntarily’ give up your constitutional rights. In fact, I would go so far as to conclude that cops hold the constitution in contempt.

2. Meth aside (granted, a big exception), the drug users I've seen arrested are far less violent than the average shirtless drunk that's arrested.

3. Some police officers are very aggressive, even on camera. Makes me wonder what they're like when the camera is off.

**ScottG** says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:42 pm

“So would an ermine violin, Doctor, but I see no advantage in having one....”

**Mike Gebert** says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:42 pm

I recommend a guinea pig, for one reason: it's the only rodent I've ever had that acknowledged any of our existences as anything more than a source of food and warmth. It would hear my voice and ignore me, but if it heard my son's voice– it was “his” guinea pig– it would start squeaking with delight. It was really was a dog-trainer, and yes, I did make him do the cleanup. Sadly, we learned the hard way that guinea pigs do not get a complete diet from their COMPLETE DIET NUTRI-TOTAL ALL-INCLUSIVE RODENT RESORT MEAL PLAN food, and need lettuce and carrots fairly constantly. I figured disastrously failing something you're responsible for is right
up there in the most important lessons to be had from a pet.

ScottG says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:43 pm

Baby M
January 13th, 2010 at 9:58 am

Parakeet. Cleaner than a hamster, less adept at escaping, and they make a pleasant sound.

See above…

DensityDuck says:
January 13, 2010 at 12:49 pm

I agree about the parakeet–my girlfriend has two of them and they’re really cute.

“Sean Bean is playing Zeus [in The Lightning Thief]”

Sean Bean is probably thinking “hooray, a movie in which it is 99/44-100% GUARANTEED that I won’t die!”

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:04 pm

Sean Bean, the actor whose name only rhymes on paper.

Mark E. Hurling says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:09 pm

Ah, Gollum/Federber, back at it in 2010. As is so often the case, the vision offered up is distorted by past personal drama and bile. The job of policeman is to protect people. That is why most of them do it. There is no other way to protect people without stopping the predators one way or another. Since the police don’t have super powers, they have to talk to victims and witnesses to get the bad guys. You should perhaps live in some crime area and wear a t-shirt saying “Lie or Die”. Some police fall short and need to find other work that limits their exposure to everyone else. Too bad lighthouse tenders have been pretty much automated out existence. Maybe a good job for you, if it doesn’t remind you too much of the Eye of Mordor. If you have any luck in finding that job, be sure it doesn’t internet connectivity.

Vending Machine says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:23 pm

The pet hamster is 100% in the column of “things that will end badly.” My son’s escaped into the jaws of the dog (or so I believe — she used to stare at the cage, ears forward, tail level, licking her chops). I didn’t find any evidence of carnage, but I also didn’t find any evidence that poor, stupid Melfred made it any further than off the desk once he’d Eried his door open.

And the thing would hiss at me. Not a fan.

rivlax says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:27 pm
Had a guinea pig once. He just wasted away, no matter how much food I gave him. Think he had guinea pig AIDS.

**Lee Kleypas** says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:30 pm

I've heard that blood-curdling/wall paper-peeling scream before. Our neighbor kids’ ferret decaged himself and decided to say howdy to my wife by sneaking up behind and putting sharp little ferret paws on her bare legs while she was doing laundry in our garage-based laundry room. Sounded more like an air raid siren or a diving Stuka. Hamsters smell way better than ferrets.

**Frederick Le Murre** says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:31 pm

I've had both hamsters and rats, and I would recommend the rat over the hamster. Preferably a medium sized male rat. The Pet rat is more agreeable to human contact, has a longer history of domestication (150 years) and I found is generally neater in its habits with less odor. The domesticated rat's ancestors were pack omnivores, and as a result have a social structure and a personality more akin to a dog's. Mine were exceptionally polite, and established their cage as their proper home.

They would run back to their cage (from halfway across the house) for their dinner, or to eat an offered treat.

My only cautions for a new owner, would be to make sure that their fingers are never smeared or coated with food like peanut butter, when you are giving rats a treat, and never stick anything through the wire of the cage, that you don't intend on becoming the property of the rat. Regular mealtimes with food presented in a dish being best.

**Dan Mercer** says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:35 pm

You and your daughter need to brush up on your mythology. **Persephone** was the daughter of **Demeter** – who is a goddess. **Penelope** is the wife of **Odysseus**.

As for the hamster, we had pet rats. They last two years, tops, and usually die a rather painful death from cancer. I euthanized one, the other one just dropped dead. My kid lost interest almost immediately and they became my pets (the wife wouldn't go near them). Good luck.

**Tom in Denver** says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:38 pm

I've never had a hamster but it seems like getting a hamster may be the second happiest day of your life.

**gp** says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:42 pm

Forget the hamster. They don't live very long, and they are too fragile for a kid's pet.
The SHWAMY says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:45 pm

Siberian Dwarf Hamsters are small and their smell's not too bad. I had a few as a kid and they were great (for hamsters — we couldn't have any “real” pets — just fish and tiny hamsters). Warning though, they jump. High. But they never escaped their cage.
FYI don't let them run around in the yard. Hawks are VERY fast.

And not to nit-pik but police ARE civilians. Even the especially jerky ones who we'd rather not admit are civilians like the rest of us. A lot of people have been refering to police as something more than a civilian lately and I'm sorry but they are not.

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 13, 2010 at 1:46 pm

ferrets don't “smell” /defensiveness

Margaret says:
January 13, 2010 at 2:01 pm

I am definitely in the bird camp. I had gerbils as a kid, which are more rat like than hamsters but both have limited social/playing with potential and the escaping thing is never pleasant, especially since you have a dog who will be sincerely and genuinely annoyed when this happens. When a tame bird escapes, it goes to high ground, like a curtain rod but will usually come back to its cage (cage= nest+food) unless lost. A rodent will just look for holes to hide in and things to chew. I would skip over parakeet and go directly to something not much larger or noisier than a hand tamed cockatiel or even a Senegal parrot. Conures are gorgeous (don't let her see Paulie!) but issue an earsplitting noise for all sorts of reasons including simple joie de vivre so it's unfair to expect one to stay quiet unless you want it to be depressed all the time. Also—unless you want a life lesson in the next 5 years, don't go with gerbil, hamster or parakeet. Cockatiels can live well into the double digits. A Senegal will last her through college, maybe longer. Teaching a bird to talk is also rewarding and entertaining.

RJ says:
January 13, 2010 at 2:02 pm

SCHWAMY: “And not to nit-pik but police ARE civilians.”

You're right but I will argue that it's not a nit-pick. They are *civil* servants, not a military occupying force. It is not an unimportant distinction.

browniejr says:
January 13, 2010 at 2:51 pm

A pet peeve of mine: (sorry, couldn't resist...) All animals smell, if they are normal/ have noses. It is whether they STINK/ what they leave around that stinks or not that is the issue. I have always been a dog/ cat person, so cannot comment on the stinkiness of ferrets, guinea pigs, hamsters. birds, etc. I had a nephew that had mice- and they definitely stunk. An uncleaned cat box or uncleaned back yard where the dog has relieved themselves will certainly stink.
Mark E. Hurling says:
January 13, 2010 at 3:09 pm

SCHWAMY and RJ: An interesting set of comments. Never really considered your thoughts on this matter. If you have ever seen or attended a police academy, a real one, not the movies mentioned above, you might be surprised. It looks and feels a lot like what happens at basic training in Fort Leonard Wood for the Army in Missouri, or the Marine Corp Recruiting Depot in San Diego. Lots of PT, lots shooting, lots of running, and even marching in formation. Now does this make them military? Of course not, because the rules of engagement are way different, although the differences seem to getting less lately with the military. Both take an oath, although those in the military have a broader brief than the state, county, or city limits. I have to say though, you do not come out of that experience feeling like a civilian in the sense of the other 90%+ of the rest of the population. Perhaps the term para-military fits better, but I recognize there is a lot of baggage that goes along with it.

DensityDuck says:
January 13, 2010 at 3:09 pm

@Margaret: I want to reinforce the comment about noisy Conures. My across-the-courtyard neighbor has two, and I can hear them scream at her even when both my windows and hers are shut...

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 13, 2010 at 3:13 pm

@DensityDuck

Oh no, they are quiet little birds.

Does anyone want one? Sun conure about 15 yo. Will no doubt out live me. Hopefully I’ll go deaf before then.

Luipaard says:
January 13, 2010 at 4:28 pm

Except...Demeter is a goddess.

Swampfox says:
January 13, 2010 at 4:51 pm

Our vet said it best...“Hamsters are only good for teaching children about death”. Heed his words!!!

Simmering says:
January 13, 2010 at 5:10 pm

Wallpaper peeling shriek...HA! I'm with you brother as I have been in a similar situation. I can laugh now, but I still can feel the pain in my ears and my back side, nearly 40 years later. What a good laugh I just had!

T. Thompson says:
January 13, 2010 at 5:52 pm

I've never understood about meth, either. "I know! I'll start using this stuff that'll burn out my brain like I was snorting Drano through
You'd think that seeing even ONE tweaker would be enough to stop people from ever wanting to go there, and yet they do.

Nothing much to add to the Great Hamster Debate, except that I disagree with the people who are recommending a parakeet as an alternative. Mine was a mean-tempered little SOB who bit and was no fun whatsoever. If your dog is agreeable, I'd recommend finding a nice, friendly cat at the local shelter. As long as it's chosen for personality rather than looks, it should be a joy. The cat who comes right to you, purring and soaking up affection, is about as safe a bet as you can make with animal ownership.

Nixmom says:
January 13, 2010 at 6:00 pm

My sister and I had gerbils. Mine was an ill-tempered little brat that scratched, bit and then, rather quickly, died. Hers was a cuddly little fuzzy ball of joy that allowed her to dress it in doll clothes and silly little hats. (no, no repressed hostility, none at all....)

Years and years later, I learned (totally by accident) that actually, *her* gerbil had cacked (done in by salted sunflower seeds and a regrettable lack of water) and that my sister (aka “the little sneak”) had, in a moment of panic, slipped the corpse into *my* cage and absconded with *my* gerbil...

..which later met a gruesome fate on an electric keyboard when it stopped bouncing from key to key making “music” and tried to leap for freedom—thereby Sis to *slam* the lid down on the keyboard. Cute lil fuzzy thing didn't quite move out of the way quickly enough.

And that was the end of small furry rodents in our house. I'm sure my mother was secretly thrilled. (and we got to have two gerbil funerals, which was a fine departure from the usual bird-or-squirrel affairs we generally had.)

Iw says:
January 13, 2010 at 6:15 pm

Just bought the fourth Riordan book for my daughter on our way to basketball practice, guessing that is what Natalie is reading. KT is ten years old and a leftie redhead to boot. She got a hamster for her birthday last April, and his name is Smokey.

It (the hamster, not the kid) is not as smelly and hard to care for as I remember the little mouse slaughterhouse/cage my siblings and I ran many years ago. Twenty minutes a week for a completely clean cage, no problem. New fangled cage stuffing holds down odor nicely. I thought I wouldn't like the little guy, turns out I am as big a softie with animals as my Dad.

My daughter has an email address on MSN hotmail, and if (G)Nat is up for it, I'll bet my daughter would like to correspond about hamsters and favorite Greek heroines like Persnickety and such. Haven't said anything to daughter yet, so let us know!

Iw says:
January 13, 2010 at 6:19 pm

BTW, daughter had to feed the cat every day (without being asked) for the three months before her birthday to get the hamster. She loved it.
lw says:
January 13, 2010 at 6:19 pm

BTW, daughter had to feed the cat every day (without being asked) for the three months before her birthday to get the hamster. She loved it.

Warren says:
January 13, 2010 at 6:37 pm

Hamsters, huh? My thing was hermit crabs. This was fine with my folks, because prior to the hermit crabs, my thing was tarantulas.

Hey, at least they were furry.

GardenStater says:
January 13, 2010 at 6:45 pm

@Mark E. Hurling:

“Ah, Gollum/Federber, back at it in 2010….”

I resisted the temptation to feed the troll. But I concur.

Lisa from MT says:
January 13, 2010 at 6:50 pm

I cast my vote for the rat. I've had all of the small furry pets and some of the feathered. G-pigs are easy to handle and mildly interactive. Need a big open cage, toe nail clipping, live about 5 years beyond a kids interest level, poop and pee a lot, eat bales of hay and veg is critical. Hamsters/gerbils are cute, short lived, cheap and have really fun cages. Negatives are that they aren't really affectionate, often very nervous and squirmy, small to handle, nocturnal and can smell bad. Parakeets and cockatiels are wonderful animals but can be very loud and demanding. They MUST have attention on a regular basis. They can live to well over 10 years. Adequate cages are pricey. Rats are small but enjoy human company, smart, clean, can learn tricks, live about 2-4 years. Downsides: can smell if kept in a fish tank, need regular human contact, poor eye sight that makes fingers look like treats, tail grosses people out. Females by far the best choice. Mice – small and smelly but short lived. You can probably find anyone of these critters looking for homes at the local animal shelter. Perhaps ask your daughter to research her options before settling on a species.

GardenStater says:
January 13, 2010 at 8:10 pm

How about just getting another (younger) dog? Try Petfinder.com. That's where I got my St Bernard (adopted her at 5, and in May she'll be 14), my Scottie (adopted at 8, now she's 11), and my Fido (mixed breed, adopted this past May, he's about 1-1/2 now).

I know, I know–Jasper's the king of the castle. But having a younger dog around may help ease the transition when the inevitable happens.

Sorry, Bleatniks–I know how much we all love Jasper. But we all know that one day we'll get a tearful posting from our Genial Host.
Seattle Dave says:
January 13, 2010 at 8:14 pm

Ha! I was so busy pointing out our host's apparent error regarding Demeter's gender that I completely overlooked the Penelope/Persephone mix-up. Guess I'm not as smart as I like to think.

Seattle Dave says:
January 13, 2010 at 8:15 pm

Also, I vote for a cat, although I have a vague idea that we may once have been told that someone in the Lileks household is allergic.

Marilynn says:
January 13, 2010 at 8:36 pm

I would not recommend a hamster. They bite! We went the gerbil route. They don't bite, but they do jump. As in out of your hand onto the hard floor. Plus you need two because they are social animals. Long story short, they escaped and made the cat very happy for about 15 minutes. Then we did a little research and a lot of looking and decided on mice. So far this has been the best of the bunch. No biting and seem a bit more docile. They will let you hold them without a lot of activity.

Mike Gebert says:
January 13, 2010 at 8:38 pm

"Guinea pigs… live about 5 years beyond a kids interest level"

Not the way we did it!

Marilynn says:
January 13, 2010 at 9:09 pm

Yeah we had guinea pigs too. We had to get two, one for each daughter. Mistake! The female guinea pig killed the male. At least thats what we think happened. Back to the pet store to replace said pig and to calm down daughter. This pig also mysteriously kicked the bucket. Back to the pet store. Im sure the employees were getting suspicious about now. After about two weeks this one also was killed by the female pig. I guess no meant no. My daughter said at this point, please no more pigs. She said it was just too cruel.

Pam-EL says:
January 13, 2010 at 9:53 pm

To resolve the three sub-topics of this post: get a hamster, feed it meth, then place it in the paper tray of the nearest Lexmark. Total resolution.

DensityDuck says:
January 14, 2010 at 12:28 am

Pam-EL: you win. thread over.
Joe Libson says:
January 14, 2010 at 1:35 pm

Thanks “Dan Mercer” above. But it bears repeating.

Demeter is a chick! Not a dude!

Well…a mythological chick, but a chick nonetheless.

This “Lileks” fellow is hilarious btw. He should have a blog.

Zoe Brain says:
January 17, 2010 at 2:40 am

My older sister had a Hamster – I was quite friendly with it until it bit a chunk out of my thumb, and ate it.

After that, I fed it through the cage, using a spoon.

I love budgies though – parakeets. They can be very affectionate, intelligent, but mischievous. Keep a mirror in the house, with a place to perch, and only cage them at night. But of course they break your heart when they die, and you recall them saying the dozen or so phrases you teach them.
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Woke in a state of utter crapulousness; had a glass of wine last night that had that chemical that gives you a headache. I think it's called "alcohol." I checked the label in the morning, and sure enough, it was a winner of the 2009 BEST OF SHOW award, but it was a paint-thinner competition. Damned small print. I considered pouring it down the drain, but you know that scene in "Alien" where they race down three levels to see if the blood is still eating through the deck? Yeah.

Off to West St. Paul to do a documentary on an Ice Making Factory. Unlike sausage and legislation, those who like ice should see how it's made, but be prepared: the aroma of the chilling units was so overwhelmingly ammoniac I asked if they were using the wine I had last night as a refrigerant. Great fun, and if you'd told me a year ago I'd be standing in an ice factory at 8:20 AM, I'd ask if I'd been fired and forced to seek employment on the line. On the contrary! This is your new job.

Drove back to the office listening to an old radio show called "The Black Museum," wherein Orson Welles narrates clumsy tales of British crime, punctuated with library music. (The entire series is here, for free.) They have
the same actors for every episode. Welles narrates with faintly amused contempt, although whether for the show, himself, or both, you can’t quite tell. It’s interesting how he went from playing one of early radio’s greatest heroes, the Shadow, to playing shady characters with equal parts charm and malevolence – there’s a macabre cast to his narration, the way he leans on the word murder with a hint of unseemly fascination. He could have gone down the Vincent Price road quite easily.

**Back at the office** I banged out, and subsequently declaimed before a camera, the headlines, and that was the majority of the morn. Time for the Pathetically Unvarying Lunch. We have a barfaterium in the building, and they can steam a mean clam, but whenever I go up there I A) spend money, and B) end up with hobo-sole chicken because I know I shouldn’t have the hamburger or the pizza or the enormous Panini (Italian for “overpriced toast.”) I make an exception for the grilled tuna-and-jalapeno melt, which comes around as often as a comet that gave the ancients great anxiety – at least the day after it departed – but usually I have my own. A small sandwich made of shaved, pressed, formed, mechanically-separated chicken remnants, with a DOUBLE FIBER bread slice. But it’s one slice cut in half, so I suppose it’s SINGLE FIBER. It gets 25 seconds in the office microwave, which often resembles a box in which a small hairless animal stuffed with cheese exploded. **Etiquette:** you clean your meal-spatter, and you also zero out the counter. If you call up 30 seconds on the microwave and use only 25, because at the last minute you realized you were heating the meal beyond design parameters and jerk open the door, you are obligated to push CANCEL. If you can **find** it, that is. Microwave interfaces are the great mystery for most, and once you’ve mastered one you learn quickly it is not a skill you can transport to another unit. There’s no incentive to develop a standard interface; the manufacturers make a bid with a flashy option-set, unconcerned with the lack of portable skills. When people try to use my microwave, they usually rear back and clutch their breast: it has KNOBS and DIALS, which you just don’t see on microwaves. I love it – you dial your settings instead of punching them in – but KNOBS seem so wrong on microwaves.

Anyway. Also an apple and a sack of carrots and a 100-calorie bag of desiccated reformed potato products and a can of soda devoid of calories, carbs, or joy. I take my meal in front of the screen, wherever I happen to be, and proud of myself because I haven’t been a glutton.

It’s my belief that if you manifest two conflicting deadly sins, they cancel each other out.

**Natalie would like to thank you** for your kind words; she was tickled. To answer a few questions – yes, she does have good unlined paper and pencils and erasers, but those came from a sketchbook she carries around, and as someone who spent a year carrying around a pretentious little Moleskine and feeling ever-so-civilized whenever I pulled it out, I am not the man to question anyone’s choice of mediums. She draws on the computer a lot, and
uses a Bamboo tablet. Sometimes she will switch to the PC side on the
computer, use PAINT FOR HEAVEN’S SAKE, because she likes the “old look” of
jaggy graphics. Mind you, she’s a better writer. She wrote a story for class the
other day about “911-2” – an emergency number you could call to fix
something you thought was horribly wrong with the world. But you could
only use it once, so no one used it. This was a replacement for a story she was
supposed to submit at the end of the year, but misplaced; it concerned a
mouse who was mistakenly mailed to Paris. She wanted to write the same
story over again, but I told her “you’re not Anthony Burgess.” Blank looks.

Of course, blank looks; most of these things I say for my own benefit, as if
orating to an auditorium filled with nothing by Me, chuckling at the
reference. *Clever bastiche he is for saying that, and clever bastiche I am for
getting it!* The great writer Anthony Burgess – finest British novelist of the
20th century, if you ask me – once told a tale of finishing a novel, walking
down to the post office in Rome to send it off, only to have his bag stolen by
some crooks on a moped. It being the only copy, he went back to his room
and wrote it again. If true, it makes you mad with envy; if false, well, tsk tsk,
Tony. Given the speed with which he wrote his great early-60s novels, I don’t
doubt it.

Yes, most of his rep rests on the often-misunderstood “Clockwork Orange,”
which some think is nihilistic and violent because they saw the movie and
felt slightly guilty later on for liking Malcolm McDowell. As literature, it’s up
there with “1984” in its use of invented language; as a dystopian novel, it’s his
best, since the others are predicated on assumptions that seem dated now.
(The overpopulation of “Wanting Seed,” the union-rule of “1985.”) His best
work describes the last days of a certain vision of England – the pubs, the
small towns, the small-mindedness, the provincialism, the weekends at chilly
seaside resorts, the shabby post-war world waiting to be shoved aside by the
Beatles and James Bond. Since we don’t care much about that era anymore,
we don’t care much about Burgess beyond the Kubrick vision. Damned
shame.

Anyway, I harangued her to write a new one, and eventually she did. It was
different and it was better. A lesson for all, including her remorseless father.
Oh, and let the record show that I DO read the comments, and enjoy them. I
glaze over political snark, though, and wish some things could be avoided,
but I suppose it’s inevitable now and then and I don’t want to walk around
like Vulcan wielding the Ban Hammer.

**So that’s the day.** That plus the column and novel, which is why I end here.
The out-of-context ad challenge solution is below. I neglected to get around to
Black and White World – here! In all its glory.

Bleatplus has now been uploaded and the password-protected scheme in
place. Those who donated to lileks.com will get their passwords over the next
few days, and I thank you for your patience. Have a grand day!
77 RESPONSES TO thursday, jan. 14

GardenStater says:
January 14, 2010 at 1:03 pm

@Mike Gebert:

“It’s a fish, it has scales if you look, which I’m pretty sure most of that other thing don’t. Oh you filthy-minded people!”

Well, it doesn’t look like any fish *I’ve* ever seen. Except maybe in a nightmare.

DensityDuck says:
January 14, 2010 at 1:19 pm

*Knobs on microwaves. My parents’ current Radar Range has a knob, which clicks, and each click adds fifteen seconds to the cook time, and ONLY fifteen seconds, and this is the ONLY way to set the time because there's no keypad on this Ultramodern Kitchen Appliance. Everything in the house gets cooked in increments of fifteen seconds now, which means that the butter is either frozen or Butter Soup. (Unless you want to stand next to the microwave and wait, in which case the thing that is being cooked is YOU.)

*Microwaves in general. My dad told us a story about a time shortly after he and mom had bought their first microwave (which used a dial and went DING.) He woke up one night to find my mom standing by the bed, jabbing at the alarm clock. He asked what she was doing, and she angrily replied “I’m COOKING these LITTLE SQUARES!” Apparently she was not-quite-awake and her stress about learning to operate the microwave was asserting itself.

*911-2. A surprisingly nuanced notion!

Mark E. Hurling says:
January 14, 2010 at 1:30 pm

That low dull thunk you may have heard was me applying the heel of my palm to my forehead. Doh! Thank you Mr. Gebert for the explanation. In retrospect it should have been glaringly obvious, but alas, not to me. Made me think of the sound track for cattle noises in almost every western since the 40′s. If you listen and pay attention to it you can detect a pattern of moos and bellows that goes randomly up and down the scale until you hear that one higher pitched moooo! Then, as Mozart said to Salieri, it repeats.

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 14, 2010 at 1:33 pm

I don’t even think about it but, our microwave at home has dials. It is about 25 years old.

joexrayguy says:
January 14, 2010 at 1:48 pm

Worthless Observation-Hey, your right! While cell (or cel) phone interfaces have become standarized(which my wife still doesn't get),
you can't walk up to any given microwave and do any cooking without standing there for 20+ seconds looking like an idiot. Right-o, James! (Yes, I'm toadying)

**Writeaway** says:
January 14, 2010 at 1:51 pm

In the category of blank looks for comments made, if someone asks,"Can I help you?" I used to quote the line from the movie Harvey "What did you have in mind?"

Depending on age/sex of the other person, I have truly gotten some strange looks – it made me cut back on the usage.

**joexrayguy** says:
January 14, 2010 at 1:56 pm

I'm Ok w the Vulcan reference-guy worked at a FORGE, used a HAMMER, ya' see. By the way, it's exactly that kind of stuff I read this site for. And all the funny B&W stuff. Yes, toadying again.

**joexrayguy** says:
January 14, 2010 at 1:57 pm

Try the Groucho Marx line sometime-
Mrs. Rittenhouse “May I join you?”
Groucho “Why, am I coming apart?”

**browniejr** says:
January 14, 2010 at 2:30 pm

Re: Library Music- relevant, since Kirstin Flagstad/ Wagner was featured in B&W world- Wagner actually originated the concept for his Ring Cycle operas- he called them leitmotifs, and had a specific theme for each character or concept (such as Redemption) that he wanted to convey.

Re: microwave controls- our first microwave for our house was a huge radar range, and had a touch pad interface for entering running time, activating start, etc. During spring and fall, when the temperature in the house would change, the display would randomly display digits. It would often show "666"- we thought it was possessed.

**shesnailie** says:
January 14, 2010 at 3:52 pm

_@_v – I'd say something about the old microwave i have but i don't want it to croak on me…

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
January 14, 2010 at 3:57 pm

You know the microwave at work is getting old when your popcorn is popped while waiting for your co-worker's hot pocket to finish.

Also, no one has had a baby shower in several years.
Renee V. says:
January 14, 2010 at 4:22 pm

Dear Mr. Lileks,

I did a somewhat dunder-headed thing last week. I donated to your very fine website through my bank's on-line bill pay website. (That's not the dunder-headed part!) Through no fault of yours or your site, because of technical problems, I was unable to use PayPal. I thought the next best thing would be to use Bill Pay. What I neglected to realize was that you may have no way of identifying me. (I love your site and would gladly donate anonymously, but I will admit to wanting access to the BLEAT Extra features.)

So I don't know if this will help or if it's even needed, but here's some identifying info so that you may verify my story. A check from Bank of America in New Jersey was mailed to you on January 11th. You can dispense with “thank you”s… We should be thanking you for all the pleasure you give your readers everyday. Once you verify my donation, I'd simply like to request the password or secret hand shake or whatever it is I need to access the BLEAT Extra features when they become available. I can be reached at the email I provided when I registered to make comments. I'm sorry to do this publicly, but I didn't know how else to contact you. (Your old email address is no longer accepting mail.)

Once again, thanks for all you do!

Renée Volak

hpoulter says:
January 14, 2010 at 4:25 pm

Non-standard interfaces.

The one that drives me wild is the menuing system for DVDs. There is a standard set of buttons on the DVD remote control (e.g. “Root Menu”), and the DVD menu supports some subset of those control functions. But the DVD menu designer is free to indulge his creativity. You may get to watch a 5-minute animation before you even get to the menu, which might have been cool the first time you saw it but gets old quickly. Then, you are confronted with somebody's idea of a new, improved menu. Someone who has played way more video games then you have. Sometimes, after exploring “Additional Features” or “Sound Options”, you find there is NO WAY BACK to the top menu. Or there may be, but finding it is akin to solving “Riven”.

All indications are, Blu-Rays will be worse. My T2 Blu-ray actually connects to the Internet and determines where your ISP is, and downloads the current weather report before it loads the menu, so it can show an animation of Skynet apparently targeting you. Cute the first time, but a real case of “Why? Because we can”.

hpoulter says:
January 14, 2010 at 4:30 pm

bgbear (roger h)
January 14th, 2010 at 3:57 pm

You know the microwave at work is getting old when your popcorn is popped while waiting for your co-worker's hot pocket to finish.

Also, no one has had a baby shower in several years.
I admit, this comment took me a moment to digest. It's definitely not a case when the tin foil hat is called for, though. Nor tin foil underwear.

Don Tuite says:
January 14, 2010 at 4:31 pm

Burgess, of course, would have agreed with James' assessment. I'm partial to the Enderby books myself. But what has crawled onto his scalp in that photo?

Joseph Kell says:
January 14, 2010 at 4:57 pm

It's several years since I read anything by Burgess, and even more since I wrote him a fan letter and got a gracious but badly typed letter in reply (the word “typed” alone shows how prehistoric this exchange was). You don't even hear much about him or his work any more, so I was pleased to see this short but accurate summary. I think that, at least in the UK, his eclipse is due, not only to the factors mentioned in the original post, but also to
(a) discomfort with his habit of ranging across genres, and writing music as well as novels, since that automatically makes him seem pretentious and overambitious,
(b) the usual suspicion that he was racist, sexist, imperialist (etc.), when in fact he was an equal-opportunity misanthrope, and had the kind of sense of humour that allowed him to poke fun at everybody and anybody, which doesn't go down well with the po-faced, earnest critics and professors, and
(c) his lifelong obsession with religion in general, and his native Catholicism in particular, which puts off both believers, who don't like his applying ambiguities and wordgames to things they take very seriously, and atheists, who, well, don't like it either.
I'm now off to the library to start re-reading some of his books.
Thanks for the inspiration!

Mikey NTH says:
January 14, 2010 at 5:37 pm

In Re: Microwaves. My office has two – the little modern one with all of the buttons, and the big, old, honkin' one with the dials. I prefer dials, and when I pull something out I turn the time dial to done *ding*.

In Re: Rewriting. An attorney in the office was writing a brief for the Michigan Court of Appeals. He went on the Thanksgiving break and took it with him and finished it. His dad was lighting the fire and used the brief as his paper source. Yeah, he re-wrote it – not much choice, really. He was able to get the other attorneys to agree to a motion to provide extra time for his brief (and I bet the judges had a good chuckle over that motion).

In Re: Barfeteria. When I worked as a law clerk for the judge, I called the little store in the courthouse the ‘Plunder ‘N’ Pillage’. The prices were that way.

juanito - John Davey says:
January 14, 2010 at 5:37 pm

It is my belief, that should a Ban Hammer be required in service to Lileks.com, it should be christened
and infused with sufficient Odinforce as to be felt across the breadth of this land when when employed.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Mikey NTH says:
January 14, 2010 at 5:44 pm

The same attorney went to Cincinnati to argue before the 6th Circuit. His luggage got misplaced. So he had to do an emergency motion to the court permitting him to argue in jeans and sweatshirt (and of course, the other attorneys agreed to it). It was granted.

Good thing he is about one of the calmest men I have ever met – great attorney, and nothing fazes him.

Oh, and he got his luggage back just about when he was checking out of the hotel.

Warren says:
January 14, 2010 at 6:05 pm

“…she likes the “old look” of jaggy graphics…”

This site might be fun for her, though the humor does tend to the adult side more often than not. It's one of my favorite webcomics.

http://www.dieselsweeties.com/

That “911-2″ story idea is extremely compelling, by the way. Any chance we might get an opportunity to see it as well?

Pieter says:
January 14, 2010 at 7:00 pm

RE: black and white world. What the heck is she holding in her hand in the last picture. Just wondering!

Tom in Clareville says:
January 14, 2010 at 8:10 pm

Just curious. In Black and White world, in the last screen grab: What is in the statue's right hand?

Lileks says:
January 14, 2010 at 11:32 pm

Joseph Kell: if there are three people who get your nick, and we're two, and the third is dead, that's okay by me. I spoke to Burgess once, as a caller on the Larry King show, and asked him why he wrote under that name, and he said his publisher told him he was writing too much and had to offload some work under another name. Hadn't thought of that in years.

James Vaughan says:
January 14, 2010 at 11:49 pm

... B&W World and “Big Broadcast of 1938″ – here's the ship!
http://www.flickr.com/photos/x-ray_delta_one/4039013803/in/set-
juanito - John Davey says:
January 15, 2010 at 12:31 am

Lileks
January 14th, 2010 at 11:32 pm

Joseph Kell: if there are three people who get your nick, and we're two, and the third is dead, that's okay by me. I spoke to Burgess once, as a caller on the Larry King show, and asked him why he wrote under that name, and he said his publisher told him he was writing too much and had to offload some work under another name. Hadn't thought of that in years.

Saw the name, and didn't even think of the pen name.

Good eye.

Joseph Kell says:
January 15, 2010 at 1:44 am

Blimey, I've been rumbled. ; )

Ross says:
January 15, 2010 at 1:55 am

I meant to include this in my comment last night, but forgot: no one should be surprised at opera in a thirties revue movie, since much of the era's output consisted of simply filming stage shows. Revues like the "Big Broadcast" series were either filmed versions of Broadway revues themselves, or vaudeville on screen. Very few featured performers in them didn't make their names in vaudeville before moving to film & radio. And in vaudeville, you have something for everyone: "dumb acts" (didn't need sound, like a juggler or animal act, & so good for the start/end of the show, when people were making noise getting in & out), acrobats, opera & classical recitals, various levels of comedians, popular singers/bands--even movies themselves. Variety was the watchword, which is just the opposite of today's entertainment thinking (ha!).

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A few highly recommended friends...

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5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
Lint: the Institute Tumblr

ARCHIVES
All entries, chronologically...

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Worked at home this afternoon, which meant letting the dog in and out and in and out and in and out. At one point I went to the front door to get the mail, and was surprised to see the dog outside, on the doormat, patiently waiting. How the what the hell the? Let him in, went back to work. Later I let him out again, thinking: the order is disturbed. I let him in, then I let him out. It's usually the other way around.

Twenty minutes later I realized I hadn’t heard the usual bark demanding admittance; looked out back, didn't see him. Went out back, and saw the back side door open. Wife had neglected to close it securely when she brought him back from the walk the previous night. Well, damn. Made my customary whistle, the only sound he seems to hear these days. Nothing. Listened in the chilly still air for the tell-tale tinkle of his collar; nothing.

Once upon a time I would have been stricken with panic, convinced he'd wandered off for good, never to return, but now I know he keeps to the neighborhood. I imagine these are times of great pleasure, too – being a dog, there's probably not an immediate comparison with the standard frame of reference, just a cheery sense that it's good to be out and about, sniffing this and that, the spoor and scat, the grot and the rot that make the world such an interesting place even when everything is white and quiet. I put on my shoes, headed down the stairs – and spied him at the end of the block, trotting home, all Mr. Confidence and Dog-About-Town. It's rare nowadays you
encounter a loose dog walking down the sidewalk, and the fact that it's your dog makes it delightfully odd and almost absurd. He may have realized that this was Against the Rules, or perhaps it was just standard Uh-Oh-It's-Alpha reaction, because he lost a bit of his cocky bounce, set tail to side-to-side mode, looked away and did the sorry-boss slink. Couldn’t be mad. Seeing him walk with a young dog’s gait as he perused his terrain made my day. He’ll be 15 in a few months. Fifteen!

It is Friday and this is good news for children and other living things, to paraphrase the old tendentious dorm-room poster. There are days when I suspect I have not earned my keep, but Thursday was not one of them, and I now share with you the fruits of the day's labors. It began with a NewsBreak, where I almost signed off as Haywood Ja – hey, wait a minute, who wrote that on the teleprompter? Then the Strib Blog, with an entry on the death of the inventor of Spaghetti-os.

Then a column at startribune.com – link not live as I post this. Then a rather basic but still lengthy update to Sears 1934 – this sucker will hit 150 pages before it's done, I swear.

The ice-factory video went up here; note how I amuse myself at the expense of the assignment by pretending to be a local TV reporter sent out to do a scare-monger story on sweeps week. At least that was the intention.

There's a new section in the Institute’s “Comic Sins” site: comic book ads of the 1940s. This is the “miscellany” section of the Comic Ads site, and will consist of ten pages a week for the next four months, bringing the Ads site to a total of 300+ pages. I must be out of my fargin’ mind.

A 30-minute Diner launches the next plot arc which will occupy much of 2010. The latest episode is here.

You don't think I gave up on the Diner for good, did you?

Finally: 100 Mysteries is up with some amusing video examples.

If any of these projects tickles your fancy and makes you wish to support this site, here you go – and no, it’s never to late to get a password to BleatPlus. They’ll be mailed out this weekend.

Me? One more news show, one more column, piano, EPIC NAP, then pizza, then hurrah for the weekend . . . although I’m working Sunday, covering the Vikings game. You know what we call this sort of onerous obligation?

Employment. All for it, myself.
WatchWayne says:
January 15, 2010 at 3:16 pm

The bike siren doesn't have an electric motor– its rotating shaft is driven directly by the bike tire. Pulling and releasing the chain gives the rising/falling note as the rotor speeds up and slows. The magnetos mentioned earlier were likewise driven by a tire, but they had a spring-loaded hinge that kept them in contact when you tripped a lever. Yes, it took a lot of extra effort to keep the light burning decently. I used mine (and yes, it was from Sears!) but only when absolutely necessary.

juanito - John Davey says:
January 15, 2010 at 3:28 pm

By Day, A Lovely Swank Tie...

Errrr, isn't Swank a magazine / website that I have my proxy servers and web filters blocking …? However, what makes the Tie sing is the Baby at the end. Nuthin' says class like dropping "Baby" at the end of a comment!

The All-Over Rain-Cover is the seedling of Transparent Aluminum ...

Baby.

hpoulter says:
January 15, 2010 at 3:28 pm

wendy gunther
January 15th, 2010 at 2:57 pm

Under the "Comic Sins" heading, the Aaamazing Glow in the Dark Tie: S.J. Perelman did an entire riff on this same tie, imagining an entire musical based around it. I recall that he said the heroine should have "a mouth that wanders at will over her features, in the manner of Greer Garson".

Absolutely right. It's called “Send no Money Honey" and was first collected in “Perelman's Home Companion". It's pretty funny, but really, the original ad copy is so funny it's impossible to top.

HunkyBobTX says:
January 15, 2010 at 4:06 pm

Pizza Hat?? 😊

Mr. Manager says:
January 15, 2010 at 4:18 pm

The owners of the Diner may want to reconsider Pizza Hat – Sound a little too much like a Certain Pizza chain who's logo looks sort of like a red hat.

John Robinson says:
January 15, 2010 at 4:36 pm

As a kid a buddy of mine had a bike with one of those front-tire-
driven headlights. And given how fatigued they made your legs after only fifteen minutes or so of hard pumping, it was no wonder he said "screw it" and usually just rode around in the dark.

*Di* says:
January 15, 2010 at 4:52 pm

Woman's Overnight Case
Woot!!!!

Kurt says:
January 15, 2010 at 5:02 pm

Another phrase you REALLY don't see every day: "Baby Walrus Grained Split Cowhide Leather." Poor baby walruses. Oh, wait, it's really cowhide. That's OK, then.

*Di* says:
January 15, 2010 at 5:10 pm

Holy Crow!
+

What could be more offensive than UGLY BLACKHEADS!

Oh my . . . it was a different world, wasn't it?

Karen says:
January 15, 2010 at 5:18 pm

I did not see the diner on the itunes anymore as a podcast, is this option not available? Love the diner and the Gunsmoke file, great stuff!

madCanada says:
January 15, 2010 at 5:33 pm

. . . So, there's a movement right now to declare DOLPHINS legally "non-human persons" . . . Anyone who knows/loves a DAWG has something to say about this too.

Limited Civil Rights to our woof-saying friends? Show of hands.

@madcanada: that is the moderate position, the real extremist want humans declared non-cetacean earth parasites.

Then I'm a moderate. I applaud all aquatic mammals who want to burn fossil fuels. Heck, I'd give them medals . . . I'd even let them marry my sister!

madCanada says:
January 15, 2010 at 6:27 pm

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5189
.. Aaaand demote Michael Vick to level of cow or goldfish.

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 15, 2010 at 6:50 pm

Vick should be demoted to squirrel-shaped squeaky toy.

madCanada says:
January 15, 2010 at 6:53 pm

Vastly agreed.

lanczos says:
January 15, 2010 at 7:27 pm

Dam, Dam, Dam-

Why couldn't I have had one of those ties – you know, the ties that read:
Will
You
Kiss
Me
In
The
Dark,
Baby

I could'a been a Playah back in the 60s!

cnyguy says:
January 15, 2010 at 8:10 pm

When I was a kid, there was no such thing as a leash law in our city, so the neighborhood dogs were free to wander around as they pleased. Many of them made our house a regular stop; they somehow discovered that the four humans who lived there were a soft touch when anyone wanted a free dog biscuit, or a quick game of fetch. I'd like to think that there's a place like that where Jasper stops on his rare “dog-about-town” excursions, a place where the old gentleman (gentledog?) is made to feel welcome.

Retread says:
January 15, 2010 at 8:32 pm

My dog felt guilty for the Unacceptable Behavior for exactly as long as it took her to forgive herself, which was just about the same length of time it took me to forgive her.

KBoom says:
January 15, 2010 at 10:00 pm

My dog story of the day:

Took Birdie, my latest foster dog, to the groomer today. Because I had to work late, the rescue rep picked her up. Birdie, who has grown very attached to me, sat mourning at the door, refusing all proffered pats, waiting for me, knowing in her doggie soul that I'd come.

What she doesn’t know is that a family is coming from Houston
tomorrow to adopt her. Gaaah! I feel terrible.

Birdie came here about six months ago after being picked up by the pound as a stray. Since she weighed more than twice what she should, it was hard to believe she strayed anywhere.

She was a mess … she stank like hell and was so fat she could barely walk. I thought that the process of de-blubbering her would be hard and sad. It wasn’t. It’s been one of the most joyful transformations I’ve ever witnessed. And at least where abandoned dogs are concerned, I’ve witnessed a lot.

I remember the first time she ran. Just three strides, but still! The first time she jumped a puddle. The first time she was able to hop in the car on her own. She runs at any opportunity, now … she still seems amazed she can do it.

So when she drives away tomorrow, I will cry like a baby. She’s going to a good home … the 7 y/o daughter actually did research on Australian Shepherds *and* general dog care. She’ll have a good life.

But I’ll miss her.

KPage in Bastrop

wendy gunther says:
January 16, 2010 at 8:40 am

@KPage in Bastrop: I wish I could think of something wonderful to say besides the fact that you just made me cry.

Here's to you and here's to her.

madCanada says:
January 16, 2010 at 7:31 pm

My thoughts & prayers tonight are with the people of Haiti.

GardenStater says:
January 16, 2010 at 10:19 pm

KBoom: The last four dogs I’ve had were adopted via Petfinder.com. Just like I won’t buy a new car anymore, all my dogs from now on are “used.” I can’t understand why folks go out and buy puppies when there are so many great dogs out there available for (almost) free.

Seattle Dave says:
January 17, 2010 at 12:28 pm

Our Host should get a kick out of page U-18 of the Logotype book — it’s all petroleum-company logos of the era.

Speaking of Our Host, can anyone enlighten me as to which old tendentious dorm-room poster he’s referring? I should be old enough to have seen it, but I’m drawing a blank.

D T Nelson says:
January 17, 2010 at 3:12 pm

Mr Speaker, I wish to associate myself with the remarks of
Gibbering Madness on January 15th, 2010 at 9:44 am.

Pam-EL says:
January 17, 2010 at 7:16 pm

I was browsing the kitchen tile in the 30s section and one of the orange and Dalí linoleum patterns made me swallow my gum.

No greater comment …

margaret says:
January 17, 2010 at 11:33 pm

The dorm poster read “war is not healthy for children or other living things.”
http://www.thepeacecompany.com/store/prod_cards_warnotohealthy.php

Seattle Dave says:
January 18, 2010 at 2:18 am

Oh, that one! Thank you. I was trying to think of a poster that said something witty about Fridays. Too literal, I am.

John Robinson says:
January 18, 2010 at 11:16 am

I remember that poster. Also the one with the three sultry lasses, and captioned (regarding draft evasion) “Girls Say Yes to Boys Who Say No.” Kind of in your face, it was …

Dean Wendell says:
January 19, 2010 at 9:23 pm

15 years, my god. I fell in love with Jasper years ago from your pictures of him. He is such a handsome dog, I am glad he is still healthy and active.

I grew up in a rural area where all the neighborhood dogs roamed freely, everyone knew everyone else’s dog, and we shared them around in an large familial way. There was more than one time we would find our neighbor’s labrador or mutt sunning on our porch or sometimes even in our house, asleep on a couch. It was all good natured and made the neighborhood a warmer place.

Dick Hassing says:
January 20, 2010 at 12:13 pm

Ref: The Sleeping Tiger. Did I hear the faint toot of a trouser trumpet just before Alexis Smith says, “I wish I were a man”?

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Visiting our friends?
A few highly recommended friends...
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1: Matchbook Museum

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Saturday we got a hamster, and the woes began. Natalie had done all her homework, and written pages of note about care and feeding; she went through dozens of names, including Zelda, of all things. She said she would love it and pet it and feed it and pay for it all with her own money, and all the other things kids say when they are desperate to leverage every possible reason to sway the stony heart of a parent. But I’d surprised her right away. She’d expected the dreaded “we’ll see,” which means “probably not,” and said I was leaning towards yes, but of course we’d have to check with Mom.

Mom thought it would be a good lesson in responsibility too. So Saturday they came home with an enormous box – the cage – and a tiny box, with the hamster. She named him “Ace,” which met with my hearty approval. Good snappy American moniker, that. Ace. I set about assembling the cage while she watched him scamper around his box.

The cage had more tunnels than the Gaza border. It had a rooftop exercise
wheel accessible by a ramp, which looks super-cool but is ill-suited for acrophobic hamsters. I made sure everything was sealed tight, because if Ace escaped it would be tears and wails, and it would be my fault – hold on, why the tears and the wails?

He bit me, she said. Actually, no wails, but a little bit of moist disappointment. She knew this might happen, but it was still contrary to the imagined sweet hamster-love the YouTube videos seemed to suggest. I told her that puppies bite all the time when you first get them, and kittens try to scratch your eyes out. They always bite. Wouldn't you? Heck, you bit when we got you home.

Ace went into his cage, found the fluffy bedding the clerk had said was a waste of money, and arranged it into a comfy bed. So CUUUTE! He's SO CUUUTE! And I'm thinking, it's a Hot Pocket for predatory birds. Ah well.

He did not go up his ramp. He did not find his wheel. He did not go up the other tunnel to his rooftop deck. He did find his water, which was SO CUUUTE, and he accepted a piece of food from Natalie. This is the big thing: she wants to “bond” with her hamster, which we can define as “not stick its teeth into her flesh at every opportunity.” He bit her once again, and she got skittish: when she tried to give him some hard-boiled egg (research indicated they loved hard-boiled eggs) he twitched, she bumped the cage in anticipation of another nip, and the sound startled Ace. At this point she was gripped by fear that her hamster would hate her, and never bond with her, and whatever narrow window of opportunity existed to form a life-long arrangement had slammed shut and it was OVER. She was heartbroken.

It got better. But she soon learned something else: hamsters sleep a lot. But for the first night she was content to stand in the dark by his cage and look at him, hoping he would get used to her smell.

I know this is a bit of a trial for her, but the problems of childhood between toddler-time and tween-time do seem so sweet.

That was the big news of the weekend. Got up at a silly hour Sunday, headed downtown, shot a video on the tailgaters. Take one reporter who hasn't had enough sleep or coffee, put him up against people who got up early and have been drinking since sunup, and: it's here.

I didn't drink, despite the fact that it looked like I did. Well, I sampled the chocolate-flavored red wine (yes. really.) just to say I had. It's odd, what the job makes you do; in a million years I would not get up on top of a bus and dance like an idiot. It's not that the cameras are rolling; it's because they're our cameras. Dignity is not a factor. If there is something ridiculous in which the host can participate, the host is obliged to jump in. That's just how it works. Otherwise you find yourself explaining to your boss the next day why you didn't get up on the balcony and lift up your sweater as if trolling for beads.

Friday night I watched “GI Joe: Rise of the Franchise,” because I'd put it in my Netflix Q one day after I had been huffing a sack of Testor's glue. It's hard
to criticize a movie for being silly and unrealistic when the phrase “In Association with Hasbro” appears in the opening credits; it's like being disappointed by the intercessional depth of “Hula: Hoop Force Nine” when the credits state it's produced by Wham-O. I'll say this: better than Transformers. If movies like this had been around when I was 14 I don't think I would have left the theater without seeing it four times.

Ace just rolled into my room in his little exercise ball, the Segway of small rodent pet transportation. Gets you around but you feel silly doing it. He must be confused by it, since he can see where he should be able to go – i.e., under the door – but cannot, as though Sue Storm has encased him in a forcefield. Don’t worry, Ace! She can’t keep it up forever! Already – weakening – can’t – keep – it – in – place – for – long – unless – Reed – helps – with – field – amplifier – developed – on – second – page – of – comic – maybe – I – should – stop – talking – and – save – energy

Really, they used to do that in Marvel comics. Dashes indicated stress and difficulty. Elvis! Are you alright in there? Must – pass – fried – peanut – butter – sandwich It’s interesting how we understood these conventions right away; no one ever told me that a puffy cloud-like speech balloon with smoke-signal circles beneath it meant a thought, not speech; somehow we just knew it. (Yes, I know Scott McCloud wrote a book about it, just to save folks the bother in the comments.)

Now to watch “24” with no particular enthusiasm. Missed the Golden Globes, drat the consarned infernal luck. Even though so much of what I heard and saw of “Avatar” set my teeth on edge I’m glad Cameron won, if only because the fellow put so much time into it. I've been reading about it for years. Of the awards shows that occupy the empty cold months of the new year, I have no interest; they're just Christmas Plus for the lipo / botox crowd.

Matchbook around noon! See you soon.

66 RESPONSES TO Monday, Jan. 18

hpoulter says:
January 18, 2010 at 3:37 pm

>>Avatar, schmavatar. Did you see Mariah Carey's dress? All through her red carpet interview, I kept hearing a noise coming from above that dress. I just replayed the clip...turns out she was talking the whole time! Who knew?

Talk about golden globes!

Mikey NTH says:
January 18, 2010 at 3:40 pm
I don’t watch awards shows. Heck, I don’t even like awards banquets when I’m getting an award. I just don’t like the whole thing. The whole forced nature of the event.

Now, a couple of beers in the hotel bar with people I want to be with and talk with – I like that part of the proceeding.

Mikey NTH says:
January 18, 2010 at 3:44 pm

I think part of it is forcing everyone to eat first, which takes a lot of time for the staff to deploy the meals. And then the long speeches by all of the worthies, and then down to the presentations, which goes far beyond what was done to get the award, and then the long acceptance speeches. And then you are stuck there for multiple hours listening to all of this.

Ack. As my dad told me ‘Be brief, be obvious, and be seated.’

Mark E. Hurling says:
January 18, 2010 at 3:47 pm

OK then madCanda, points well taken, and I'm sure all the military involved there would be gratified to hear some favorable international comment. You did remind me though, of some of the criticism the USMC did come in for that could have some justification, the Banana Wars in Central America. I have never clearly resolved in my own mind if any of the criticism was justified or not. At some remove it becomes hard to filter out the good motives from some others that might be less so. Smedley Butler didn't help in this regard either, after his retirement.

Joe Broderick says:
January 18, 2010 at 4:14 pm

Okay, so I saw “Avatar.” As in most of Cameron's movies, the visual aspects are awesome, but jeez, can't the guy spend a little more time and money to find someone who can write decent dialogue?

teach5 says:
January 18, 2010 at 5:25 pm

Thanks, JerseyAmy! I now know that rabbits are lagomorphs and are more closely related to horses than to mice. Who knew! Well, he does eat lots of hay, and will follow us around the house. Maybe a halter is in order…

DensityDuck says:
January 18, 2010 at 5:26 pm

“If movies like [GI Joe and Transformers] had been around when I was 14 I don't think I would have left the theater without seeing [them] four times.”

That's pretty much my exact review of “Transformers”, to wit: “If I were 12 I would have thought that this film was the whole reason God let us make movies in the first place. However, I am 33.”

bgbear: “I think what people are reacting to when they see the “bad guys” in Avatar, they see what looks like typical US troops with WASP command. Not what you would expect from a future Earth
force sent out to help some fat cats conveniently make a profit. Where are the desperate Asian, Indian, Africans, Arab etc. mercenaries?"

Good point! Unless maybe there's some meta-plot happening, where it's the future and the white people really DID kill all the other races and that's why there aren't any black people.

**shesnailie** says:
January 18, 2010 at 5:47 pm

"@_v – in other news... i think they finally shut down 'the buzz' for good..."

**Bob Lipton** says:
January 18, 2010 at 6:05 pm

Why did they call it "Unobtainium"? Would Jay Ward's estate have charged them $3 to call it "Upsydaisium?"

Bob

**DryOwlTacos** says:
January 18, 2010 at 6:55 pm

I kind of liked Ricky Gervais as host of the Golden Globes. He had sort of a Dean Martin vibe—"Yeah, I've had a few, but I'm in control. How did all these people get here?"—especially when he intro'd Mel Gibson. Snarkometer pegged out; odds are good he won't be back.

**lanczos** says:
January 18, 2010 at 6:57 pm

"Ace"?!!? How about "Slick"? Or any other character name that was played by Dan Duryea during the part of his girl-slapping career? Thumbs-Up by lanczos!

**RPD** says:
January 19, 2010 at 1:15 am

I haven't seen Avatar, I don't get out to movies much. Just curious though, If Earth's survival hinges on obtaining "unobtanium", why not just pelt the planet with asteroids, then move in the mining when the opposition is defunct?

Oh well, it'll eventually find it's way to cable.

**jny** says:
January 19, 2010 at 4:23 am

And I thought I was the only one that found movies on the Netflix queue that must have been placed there after huffing Testor's Glue.

**Moishe3rd** says:
January 19, 2010 at 9:16 am

Watched "Avatar" last night. Ehhh...
Nice movie but – so what?
It's a 1/2 billion dollars of simple entertainment. No particular point
to make; no deep thoughts; no “great messages;” nothing but a couple of hours of mindless Five Hundred Million Dollar worth of fun.
What a world we live in...

JP Gibb says:
January 19, 2010 at 12:51 pm

RPD
January 19th, 2010 at 1:15 am
I haven't seen Avatar, I don't get out to movies much. Just curious though, If Earth's survival hinges on obtaining “unobtanium”, why not just pelt the planet with asteroids, then move in the mining when the opposition is defunct?

Indeed. To quote from a better Cameron flick: “Nuke the site from orbit. It's the only way to be sure.”

MDR says:
January 20, 2010 at 10:51 am

Avatar is just a retelling of Pocahontas redressed for today's attention span. I was not impressed. Maybe the IMAX version is more impressive. Meh. Probably not.
WHY A STORK?
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! […]

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Thanks for dropping by!
Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Could I be ANYMORE stupid. I sent out a few hundred emails today with the BleatPlus codes, and forgot the URL. GAH.

It's here. http://lileks.com/bleatpls10

This message will be repeated all week, because I am a MORON. Good thing I didn't go into pharma-spamming.

I don't drink soda with sugar, because it's just a lot of calories I would rather absorb in alternate forms. But I do remember Mountain Dew's AWESOME impact on society, long ago; it tasted like nothing else. It was like they had somehow combined Coke and 7-Up into something utterly unknown to humans heretofore. Alas, they used hillbilly-shills to push the stuff. Perhaps they wanted a Beverly Hillbillies cachet; perhaps they wanted to suggest, with sly winks, that it was a good mixer for your corn 'shine. Because the idea of barefoot rustics with one-holer crapshacks and inaccurate muskets didn't really say “new and improved.”

But now it's old and improved, temporarily – complete with hillbillies.
The stupid part: they used a 70s font for “throwback,” because it’s all retro ‘n’ stuff, and I guess anything prior to 1994 is now considered an undifferentiated pile of retro-mush.

Well, I believe in clear clean lines of demarcation, however artificial they may be. When I do a site on the 30s, by GOD it starts in 1930. One of the additions I’ll be adding over the weeks is a musical playlist, with hits from each year. If you’re curious: here.

Safari Power Saver
Click to Start Flash Plug-in

Huzzah, hurrah: Didn’t have to go to the office today. I had the kind of day I used to have before I was retasked, as the horrid word would have it, to a new job. Holy crow, such multitasking. The scanning and the writing and the cleaning and the deep-down sorting. The house contains any number of ongoing miseries that need arranging or purging, and the opportunity for ruthless triage comes infrequently these days. It’s hard to tell yourself to attack the box of tangled AV cables deep in the basement when you could be scanning; goes double for cleaning a top shelf in the kitchen.

But: if you start each job, then do something else when you get bored, and
rotate among them, you can get it all done. So I am the proud owner of a
drawer of cables tied with wires, placed in labelled bags. And here's the
thing:

I will never need any of them. EVER.

Everything comes with cables, that's the problem. You swap out one cheap
old DVD player for a newer model, you use the old cables. Right? But you
can't throw away the old cables, because they might come in handy in some
theoretical future where you have to set up six DVD players STAT. You can't
throw away old Firewire cables, even if they're as thick as a garter snake,
because the interface might stage a stunning comeback! (Garter snakes, by
the way, were friendly okay snakes that didn't kill you – when you saw one in
the backyard as a kid someone would scream SNAKE and someone else
would pshaw the panic, saying aww, it's just a garter snake. We had no idea
what a garter snake was, but it seemed to be the generic term for such
creatures. Don't see them anymore. Perhaps it was my Fargo neighborhood's
proximity to the end of town, but we had many more snakes and frogs. The
latter was particularly plentiful – I'll never forget jumping off my porch steps
on a fine summer day, full of the joys of youthful freedom, and landing right
on a frog. If you think stepping hard on a ketchup packet makes a mess – oy.
They were squeegeeing that fellow off windshields up and down the block.
He didn't know what hit him, of course; frogs lack a frame of reference for
such things, and I doubt they have an oral tradition passed down for
millennia about the Sudden Judgment of the God Foot. The frog has two basic
states:

Am

Not

But I miss the sound of frogs in the summer. As I said, we were close to the
dge of town, maybe 12, 14 blocks. North Fargo did not wander out and fade
into the fields – it stopped cold as if it hit a wall, then oozed along it on the
river side. The presence of a smelltastic sewage treatment plant may have
had something to do with that, but years later they'd push north and build a
few apartment buildings, so apparently the aromas were not as flesh-flensing
as we'd thought.

For my entire childhood the town just ended. I wonder how this affects the
way you think, how you see the world. In big towns it's just a long slow
smear, and you're twenty miles into the country before you realize you've
finally left the bricks behind. There were signposts and demarcations and
landmarks that said YOU ARE FINISHED AND DONE WITH FARGO and
beyond here be barley.) So I tossed most of those.

The cords, remember? Then there's the plugwarts, the big transformers for
things I cannot remember using, but may possibly need tomorrow . . . or not.
Out. In the end I had a trash bag of useless cords, but had saved innumerable
thin white Apple-product cords, which will come in handy if I ever want to
open a European bondage club for lab mice.
Halfway through the day my daughter came back from a sleepover with three friends, so I got to watch over the giggling trio while I cleaned and polished and sorted. It was a day that seemed to have been lifted whole from a year or two ago, and I relished every lovely minute; I welcomed back every old habit and tradition, felt a small amount of mastery over the cornucopia of Stuff, and . . .

Well. I shouldn’t say anything, because this project looks to be a mid-summer thing, but it’s big. It’s insane. It involves going back to parts of the site that haven’t been updated since 1997. BTW, the first batch of BleatPlus emails went out today, and I hope they work. Everyone will have been notified by the end of the week.

And now to watch “24.” Or not – usually there’s a Monday ep after the Sunday premier, right? Checking . . . ah. Yes. According to the previews, Starbucks is still showing up for work in a cocktail dress, and we do indeed have a low-level plot-flunky we all want dead, soon, painfully. I don’t know why I still watch, because experience has taught me it’ll be a shadowy cabal of fat-necked Amway distributors in Omaha who are behind the Sarin gas attack on the Saudi oilfields. At least we got the “arrest Jack Bauer!” moment out of the way early on; hope that’s the last of that. Really: at some point I fear there will be a moment when the President is asked to consider whether Jack has changed sides, even though his dossier says he has steadfastly pursued the miscreants without a moment’s thought to the cost of his own hide for the last eight cases, and has been accused of doing the rogue thang at least twice during every case. In a sane world they would give him a bag of guns and a million dollars and a fistful of uppers and say “You just go on now and do what you want.”

If someone wants a daunting project: spice together every Jack Bauer “dammit!” into one long sequence.

Later today: Comic Sins, of course, and some stuff over at the StribBlog, and Newsbreak. Heck, just go to startribune.com and hit refresh every ten seconds. Have a grand day!

80 RESPONSES TO tuesday, jan. 19

**Grebmar** says:
January 19, 2010 at 1:37 pm

Never have liked Mountain Dew. Can't stand the stuff. Carbonated Gatorade, it is. Or is Gatorade flat Mountain Dew?

**Kimberly** says:
January 19, 2010 at 1:49 pm

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5209
@JerseyAmy – I swear I live in that town you're mentioning. Two blocks one way and I'm in a gorgeous park with sports fields and ponds. Two blocks the other way (across the Pike) and I'm practically in Camden, even though the zip code is the same.

Mountain Dew will forever be my favorite soft drink. I wish they could make the Diet version taste exactly like the regular – like Coke & Coke zero.

No code here yet, either. Though I can wait – I donated so you'd have more incentive to keep this part up, James… not to have you go nuts creating MORE stuff.

JerseyAmy says:
January 19, 2010 at 2:09 pm

@Kimberly – if not for the mention of the Pike I'd think we were neighbors! I'm talking about Somerville, NJ. It is quite lovely, except for where it's not.

WatchWayne says:
January 19, 2010 at 2:24 pm

Does anyone remember when Mountain Dew had a little bit of pulp, or citrus peel, (or *something*), floating in the bottle? It wasn't widely available in the olden days– I always made sure to git me some when I was traveling and could. YA-HOO! Mountain Dew!

canajuneh says:
January 19, 2010 at 2:41 pm

My dentist has a poster in his office about Mountain Dew. Statistics about how it eats away the enamel on your teeth because of the high acidic content, and the 11 teaspoons of sugar per 12 oz. can. (I) gah. That same can has about 55mg of caffeine, which isn't much less than a dose of No Doze, which contains 95mg of caffeine. Probably not a beverage of choice for brain surgeons, or anything requiring a steady hand!

The dentist claims he can tell immediately whether a patient is “doin’ the Dew”.

bellczar says:
January 19, 2010 at 2:53 pm

This photo of a vintage Mountain Dew ad on Wikipedia is compliments of me:

I contribute to Wikipedia even though I tell my students not to use it; I contributed to the Mtn Dew article even though I quit caffeine in 1993.

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 19, 2010 at 3:06 pm

I seem to recall many programmers I knew stayed awake with Mountain Dew. Dew may be responsible for our ability to comment on it here in this forum.
Pat In Colorado says:
January 19, 2010 at 3:06 pm

We don’t have those type of frog migrations here in Colorado, but many a garter snake has met its maker at the business end of the power mower.

swschrad says:
January 19, 2010 at 3:34 pm

“You get that good ol’ country feelin’
From good ol’ Mountain Dew (repeat twice)
Good ol’ Mountain Dew.

Ya-HOOO! Mountain Dew!”

not much of a jingle, but hillbillies runnin’ around shooting up the shack and hittin’ the jug made the product launch memorable.

and that was just the planning sessions, never mind the animation reviews!

drank a lot of it out of a 400 mL beaker down in the radio room, teasing things into working better, then putting ol’ Sparky on the air for the late-evening 40-meter opening.

browniejr says:
January 19, 2010 at 3:35 pm

@bgbear: Do the Dew or Jolt Cola. (It’s gone now, isn’t it?)

Frogs: My wife was horrified to find our cats playing with a dead frog in our backyard. She called me over to take a look/ get rid of the thing. It seemed too intact to have survived much “play” from the cats- it turned out it was a plastic/rubbery toy frog from the kids next door. One of the boys is a ‘thrower’- he likes to throw stuff over the fence. Nothing malicious or aimed at windows, or anything like that. He just tosses stuff over fences, I guess when he is tired of playing with them. I am always finding balls, hot wheels cars, action figures, etc. in my yard. I usually just toss the stuff back.

Seattle Dave says:
January 19, 2010 at 4:29 pm

@Grebmar – I’m with you. Can’t stand Mountain Dew or Gatorade. My poison of choice (soda-wise) is Mexican Coca-Cola, made with real cane sugar and sold in glass bottles. It’s about a million times better than the U.S. crap made with HFCS.

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
January 19, 2010 at 4:46 pm

Y’all want to stream 1930’s music ’round the clock? Check out BostonPete.com, click through to the radio shows, locate Sound Stage by Bryan Wright, and there ya go. He plays pop music from 1900 to 1950.

madCanada says:
January 19, 2010 at 6:29 pm

If ever up in Canada’s province of Quebec, one beverage I DO NOT recommend is a soda called “Spruce Beer.” It tastes like Mountain
Dew laced with Pine-Sol. I have absolutely no idea who drinks it.

JamesS says:
January 19, 2010 at 6:39 pm

I can't believe no one posted the original Mountain Dew commercial.

And just for fun (and since I'm an alum), here's the West Virginia University Mountaineer Marching Band performing the song that the commercial uses.

JamesS says:
January 19, 2010 at 6:41 pm

Darn the lack of editing ability. I should have said “the West Virginia University Mountaineer Marching Band performing the song (Mountain Dew) that the commercial uses, right after one of the school fight songs.”

Sorry.

loge says:
January 19, 2010 at 7:08 pm

OK, fellow bleatards, this is killing me. I don't want to pester our host, so y'all fill me in …

How much to join bleatplus?
Can he take a credit card?
Is there screedy goodness?

Thanks much.

Seattle Dave says:
January 19, 2010 at 8:08 pm

@loge – My donation was a measly $10, though I intend to up the ante next payday. If you have a PayPal account, you can use a credit card to send a payment. And yes, the first entry was chucklicious.

Tacobob says:
January 19, 2010 at 9:12 pm

Yeah, Seattle Dave “Mexican Coke” in glass bottles, along with the Dublin Dr Pepper can’t be beat! 😊

Ed Singel says:
January 19, 2010 at 9:19 pm

I never much cared for Mountain Dew, although my youngest brother lived on the stuff. I don't see any reason for me to try Throwback Mountain Dew, and I will definitely avoid Brokeback Mountain Dew.

Sorry, I just couldn't resist.
Seattle Dave says:
January 19, 2010 at 11:11 pm

@Tacobob – Gotta try the Dublin Dr Pepper. I've been meaning to do that. But over and above the sugar-vs.-corn-syrup, I honestly think the glass bottles make a difference, too. We know plastic bottles are permeable — they go flat after a couple of years, unlike cans or glass — and I really believe the same product tastes different in plastic.

NeeNee says:
January 19, 2010 at 11:22 pm

Last weekend we encountered a mountainous display of Diet Mountain Dew “Ultraviolet”.

For 99 cents per 12-pack.

Closeout.

99 cents plus 60 cents can deposit. How can you go wrong???

Chilled it, chugged a slug.

Cross between cough syrup & a berry wine cooler.

NeeNee says:
January 19, 2010 at 11:25 pm

Oldest daughter and her non-drinking friends chose Mountain Dew back in the ’80s to get a buzz.

While their alky friends were falling-down drunk, Jen and friends would chug 24 ounces of Mt. Dew.

She said it gave them a high akin to what the booze drinkers were experiencing. Buzz didn’t last long, but then again—there was no hangover.

Tacobob says:
January 20, 2010 at 12:32 am

@Seattle Dave: Yeah, the stuff in glass bottles just seems to taste far more ‘fresh’ than what you can find in the plastic bottles. Just wish they put the ‘Throwback’ stuff in ‘em.

Mike Gebert says:
January 20, 2010 at 12:34 am

“In a sane world they would give him a bag of guns and a million dollars and a fistful of uppers and say “You just go on now and do what you want.””

And you’re saying this is not, basically, what happens in 24 every year? The guy who sawed a head off in a CTU meeting room is not being given enough leeway?

Dave (in MA) says:
January 20, 2010 at 2:32 am

reminds me of a hiking trip we took up in Western Mass. years ago. There was a hatch of the most unusual looking salamanders – brilliant florescent orange – millions of them
The red eft.

Carl Johnson says:
January 20, 2010 at 12:43 pm

Can't say as I agree with your police work on the font. “Throwback” is in Cooper Black, which was designed by Oswald Cooper in 1922. You may be thinking of it as a ’70s font because of its then-ubiquitous use as an iron-on T-shirt font, but it was immensely popular from its release and created a slew of imitators, such as Goudy Heavyface.

cgm says:
January 20, 2010 at 8:51 pm

@Kimberly, @JerseyAmy: I grew up in Haddon Township in South Jersey. There's a nice park around Newton Lake (or “Newton Creek” as we called it), and you'd never know you were near a big city. Four miles west, you're in the center of Camden.

Kimberly says:
January 21, 2010 at 7:47 am

@cgm You win! I walk my dogs around Newton Lake every day!

Cold Fury » “24: The Year of the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group Hug” says:
January 24, 2010 at 5:05 am

[...] Lileks previews this season’s “24”: “...Starbucks is still showing up for work in a cocktail dress, and we do indeed have a low-level plot-flunky we all want dead, soon, painfully. I don’t know why I still watch, because experience has taught me it’ll be a shadowy cabal of fat-necked Amway distributors in Omaha who are behind the Sarin gas attack on the Saudi oilfields. At least we got the “arrest Jack Bauer!” moment out of the way early on; hope that's the last of that. Really: at some point I fear there will be a moment when the President is asked to consider whether Jack has changed sides, even though his dossier says he has steadfastly pursued the miscreants without a moment's thought to the cost of his own hide for the last eight cases, and has been accused of doing the rogue thang at least twice during every case. In a sane world they would give him a bag of guns and a million dollars and a fistful of uppers and say “You just go on now and do what you want.”” [...] 

Jim G says:
January 28, 2010 at 1:57 pm

Cooper Black was in current use during the Sixties and Seventies, including Mountain Dew signage. Thus, it would be appropriate in this usage. You went to throw the viewers back only so far.
Still not finding what you're looking for? Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

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

Thanks for dropping by! Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Made a vindaloo Tuesday night, and it got its aroma into every corner of the ground floor. The dog must be in awe of my ability to conjure such epic smells; it must be like living with a Zeus who periodically creates life or changes the channel on the TV with thunderbolts. A smaller Zeus, granted. He's been quite frisky after supper, demanding walks – when the temps were 20 below, he'd go out, feel his nose freeze, drill a hole in the ice then pad carefully through his ruts to the back steps. Now that we have tropical temps tickling the roof of the 20s, he wants to go out and pee and smell and examine his world after dinner, and woe be those who do not jump and fetch the lease. A year ago he had trouble getting up the stairs at the end of the day; now he lopes up after dinner and stands in the bedroom yelling at us while we change from work clothes to slummy home clothes: TAKE ME OUT. So one of us does.

Reminds me of my grandfather, in a way; he liked to go out and see the crops. On a summer Sunday when we went to the Farm, he'd drive out to see how the crops were doing, a trip that inevitably included the School Land and the Flax and the Barley. The last two are self-explanatory, of course. But the School Land? From what I've learned, they set aside land for schools when they laid out North Dakota, and whether or not a school was actually built on the plot, it was known as the School Land. The only school in the area was to the east of the Farm, across the river, by Harwood proper. My father went there until he had completed 7th grade, and then it was time to go to work, and then to war. I still wonder if today's 7th grade dropouts know enough.
math to run a business and fill the back of a placemat at Perkins with tables of figures calculating what's owed and what's coming in.

Grandpa would invite me, and my cousins, to tour the crops. I had no standard of reference – couldn't tell if they were stunted or average or high as an elephant's eye, but I remember sitting in the back of the car, broiling on the plastic seats, bumping along the county road, Grandpa in the front seat with a fedora on his head and a grasshopper on his shoulder. The hopper only made one appearance, but I never forgot it and have since added it to all memories of Grandpa in rural driving mode. A big green hopper on his shoulder, motionless, along for the ride.

A plain, straightforward man, I think. Always had time to amuse the grandkids. Loved Jack Benny. Smoked Old Golds; had a favorite lighter and a favorite floor-stand ashtray. Stood at the window on Sunday nights and waved goodbye, just as my dad – his son-in-law – stands in the driveway now and waves goodbye when I leave. I suppose there's a time when you turn away before the taillights disappear, and a day when you decide to wait until they're completely out of sight. I don't remember the last time I saw him, but I know where I was when I heard he'd fallen, and died. Had to drive home from college and get a funeral suit. The man who measured me had fitted all the men in the family.

Grandpa was the only man I ever knew who wore a hat.

The dog doesn't, so that's where the analogy falls apart.

Meanwhile, Ace the Hamster has learned how to get into his exercise wheel. Found his way up the ramp, then ran around for a few miles. Interesting creatures: every so often he'd stop to see if his exit route was still open. It was. I know the programming for these critters is rather basic, but he's still smarter than my computer when it comes to threat detection or escape-route maintenance. I walk up to my computer with a rock and shout random gutteral utterances, it does nothing; if it's been 15 minutes, it goes to sleep. A hamster knows to head for the corner of the cave and act like it's dead and rotten and not tasty at all sir.

Otherwise, elsewhere? Good day, although the idea of getting up when it's dark and talking to cameras a few hours later still seems like I woke up in someone else's life. After work I fixed my wife's garage door, took my daughter to choir, went to the grocery store, and did not call 911 to report an elderly lady had fallen backwards. That happened last time. While at the self-checkout I heard some people make a sound that says “something's wrong, and we are uttering phonemes instinctually.” I saw an old lady on the ground. She'd gone down and hit her head; blue around the mouth. There was an instant assumption of duties – another shopper bent down to see if she was okay, I hit 911 because I already had my phone in my hand, the manager got a roll of paper towels to cradle her neck, and a stockboy headed outside to flag the EMT. It rolled before I finished beeping and bagging my stuff and the paramedics were trotting in before I left. She was talking and
smiling and – of course – apologizing for the fuss, dear. I hope she’s okay. Still amazed at the speed of the response; the sirens were drawing near as the light returned to her eyes and the color flowed back to her face.

////

**Otherwise**, the following. First of all: I sent out all the BleatPlus emails Tuesday night. As far as I know, that is. If you contributed and didn’t get one, please email me, and use the subject line **HEY DILLWEED** so I can search for the term and fix the situation.

Second: don’t be expecting too much right away from this BleatPlus thing; it’s not a super-hyper-premium extravaganza with streaming video or invitations to a buffet dinner; it’s just, well, stuff – some of the boundless ephemera destined for a place on the site some day, posted in advance. As I said: at least 35 updates per year, with the content remaining behind the paywall until 2011.

Spent the free time tonight writing a piece for pay, so this naturally suffers. But Wednesday will have a rich assortment of fun – Out of Context Ad Challenge around 10:30, after I’m done with the newscast, and B & W world in the afternoon.

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**39 RESPONSES TO** **wednesday, jan. 20**

**Al Federber** says:
January 20, 2010 at 2:51 am

BleatPlus is just future free stuff that you already have in the pipeline? I guess I'll wait and see it for free, kind of like I do with cable pay-per-view movies.

**GinaLouise** says:
January 20, 2010 at 3:12 am

I was impressed by BleatPlus! Actually, I liked yesterday’s entry so much I felt a bit worried. I thought us folks chipped in to help with all the extra work you’ve been doing … we don’t want to create more work! But thanks all the same.

**Chuck** says:
January 20, 2010 at 6:39 am

Seems to me that anybody that liked Jack Benny would smoke Lucky’s.

**Michael Rittenhouse** says:
January 20, 2010 at 6:57 am

Sorry to change the subject:
Good morning, America.

kc says:
January 20, 2010 at 7:11 am

It IS a good morning, Michael, and rightbackatcha!

We drove through wheat and barley with my grandfather... your memories make me so homesick, James!

kc says:
January 20, 2010 at 7:15 am

BTW... both my grandfathers wore hats, and so did my dad. Cowboy hat or sometimes a gimme-cap later in his life, but he had his share of other headwear, as any man in the 50's & 60's would.

Bob Lipton says:
January 20, 2010 at 7:52 am

I started wearing hats about five years ago, when the stuff atop became so thin it didn't keep me warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Furthermore, I've noticed men's hats stores springing up in Manhattan — two in my neighborhood — and the youn'uns wearing them.

Bob

Bob W. says:
January 20, 2010 at 7:54 am

The school section was usually section 16 of the township. The original idea was for the schools to be centrally located in each township (36 square miles), but often that was ignored or was impractical. The taxes from the school section provided income for the school, wherever it was actually located.

rbj says:
January 20, 2010 at 8:26 am

Got my Bleatplus super decoder ring!

snoopy happy dance

Mom's dad wore a fedora, dad's dad didn't, but he did wear those western string ties. Never understood the point of those (or of ties in general.)

I usually wear a baseball cap, because I like the brim keeping the sun out of my eyes.

Rob says:
January 20, 2010 at 8:32 am

My grandfather had an 8th grade education, and similarly kept a poultry farm afloat in SE Ohio. Considering his youth in rural ND and WI (born in 1903), they taught him well. Still had "indian stories" (his dad was Edy cty ND Sheriff).

Carter says:
January 20, 2010 at 8:50 am
Not to be a leafy spurge, but N.D. school lands weren't necessarily meant to be a site for school buildings, but rather to be leased out to produce revenues to fund the schools. As we learn from this April 1988 issue of “Rangelands.”

RPD says:
January 20, 2010 at 9:01 am

Have you ever seen those 8th grade graduation exams from the turn of the century? Absolutely brutal. Snopes has a copy, and I can see how kids in those days were taught some things they would find practical.


DerKase says:
January 20, 2010 at 9:02 am

My paternal grandfather (b. 1905) went to regular school until 6th grade, then went to sheet metal school until 15 y.o. when he became a working stiff. Worked for the Chicago & Northwestern RR. I know he completed 7th and 8th grades by going to night school, probably in his early 20s. Because he wanted to, not because he had to. He did not like hats, but wore one anyway, at least until they went out of fashion. Smoked unfiltered Pall-Malls.

My maternal grandfather (b. 1897) was an Iowa farmer his entire life. Don’t know his education level, but he sent 2 of his 3 daughters to college in the 40s. He was a happy hat wearer and smoked cigars. I totally identify with James’ description of drives in the country to look at crops. He did the same thing in his Chevy Impala.

teach5 says:
January 20, 2010 at 9:25 am

Jan Murray and I thank you for the BleatPlus! It was fun and appreciated, thanks! Go get ‘em, Jasper!

camillofan says:
January 20, 2010 at 9:41 am

Great Bleating this week, both “free” and “plus.” Special belated thanks for the 30s playlist.

juanito - John Davey says:
January 20, 2010 at 9:44 am

Both my Grandfathers wore hats. Both of them died before I was born, so I never witnessed hat-ti-ness first hand, but I’ve got the old sepia toned photos to prove it.

Lileks

Don’t be expecting too much right away from this BleatPlus thing; it’s not a super-hyper-premium extravaganza with streaming video or invitations to a buffet dinner

Hotdish maybe?
What about a pot luck?
John Robinson says:
January 20, 2010 at 9:48 am

Right up until about the mid-sixties my dad always wore a fedora, and smoked L&Ms. In 1970 he had a cancer scare, and dumped the smokes cold turkey (he’d stopped wearing hats a couple years before).

Now he’s eighty-five with failing health, just another WWII infantry rifleman with a now-and-then twinkle in his eye and war stories he still won’t share.

I’ll miss him when he’s gone; I’ll miss all the Greatest Generation.

Juanito - John Davey says:
January 20, 2010 at 9:48 am

Michael Rittenhouse
January 20th, 2010 at 6:57 am

Sorry to change the subject:

Good morning, America.

Agreed – a good morning. Could be even better, save the fact that we are missing Dean Barnett, who would have made it all the better. Sweet heartache.

Brisko says:
January 20, 2010 at 9:59 am

How much would we have to donate to get an invite to a buffet dinner?

Joanie in Carlsbad says:
January 20, 2010 at 10:46 am

BleatPlus is great, and something to look forward to! I would be glad to give a donation anyway, because we can’t expect James to give away so much time for free, and I’m pleased to cook at home instead of going out to one nice meal to make up the difference… it’s almost like treating James out to dinner! Have another basket of chips and salsa, James, and welcome to San Diego….

Michael Rittenhouse says:
January 20, 2010 at 10:57 am

My uncle drove us kids around his property in the back of a pickup, decades before anyone thought to make bed-riding illegal. His only rule: “Don’t put your fingers between the bed and the cab,” because he’d sometimes hit bumps hard enough to squeeze the two together.

Mark S. says:
January 20, 2010 at 11:00 am

My daughter's had her hamster for over year and it still hasn't figured out the wheel. It sees it as some sort of strangely shaped chair to sit on. We tried going from the plastic wheel to a metal one, but it still has no idea what to do with it.
Richard says:
January 20, 2010 at 11:07 am

BTW, I didn’t contribute so you could have an excuse to work harder and write more. I appreciate being a bleat supporter, but more to the point, thanks and keep up the good work.
ric

rbj says:
January 20, 2010 at 11:08 am

Farmer Jacks might still be around. They were here in Toledo when I arrived in 2003(?) but bailed a couple years later. Dunno if they wound up going belly up or have just retreated to their inner compound.

swschrad says:
January 20, 2010 at 11:25 am

school land. when states were platted prior to statehood, every 16th section was reserved for local school funding. absolutely you could buy that section. and the money went to the initial stake for building and equipping the local school.

the larger Skunk Corners or Henryville was, the more school sections there were, and the larger schools needed were started that way.

if there were replats, the information might be lost from official descriptions of the land. but otherwise, from the original states westward, starting something like the 1800s, you might have a legal plot description reading something like, “the west 96 rods of school section 1, Herkimer Township, Snarl County.”

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 20, 2010 at 11:31 am

“School Land” sounds like one of those stores going out of business in those old depressing Saturday Night Live mall sketches.

Mark E. Hurling says:
January 20, 2010 at 11:34 am

So what then are replats, swschrad? I used to look at the old plat books from my county before I left for college (pretty boring for a kid, huh?). Does that just mean a routine re-issuance every 10 years or so to reflect any property changing hands?

petrushka says:
January 20, 2010 at 11:42 am

Ah, yes. The drive through the wheat and barley. The Red Barn Place, the La Vanway place, and of course, the home piece (not ‘place’ for some reason, but ‘piece’). My dad and grandfather in the front seat discussing everything from equipment (whether the old Gleaner would hold out for another year if we replaced the header), alkaline content in the summer fallow, grain futures, and the ultimate enemy of the farmer, hail.
Warm memories on a dreary January day. Thanks, James.
Kim says:
January 20, 2010 at 12:01 pm

This Bleat was far from “suffering”! Great story about your grandfather.

My Grandfather died last year at age 92 – a third-grade education and the wisest man I ever met. Worked as a plumber and kept my first car running with rubber bands and nylons (or at least it seemed to me). The man could fix anything and everything.

Oh, and get Jasper a hat! : D

Tom in Denver says:
January 20, 2010 at 12:04 pm

Grandfathers in hats checking the crops are part of the collective memories of most of us midwestern farm kids, or those one generation removed from the farm.

I think the school lands were established throughout the Louisiana Purchase. 1 section (sq. mile) per township (36 sq. miles).

Baby M says:
January 20, 2010 at 12:08 pm

There were “school lands” in the Northwest Ordinance of 1797, IIRC.

joexrayguy says:
January 20, 2010 at 1:44 pm

Jughead runs from “Big” Ethel. I noticed at some point in his career Archie became an ersatz Scooby-Doo mag, having “mysteries” to solve. As a kid, my sister read Archie comicx, and I could NEVER understand the cross-hatching on that kids head, what was up wit dat? I always thought the screen door had shut on him.

JohnW says:
January 20, 2010 at 4:33 pm

Hmpf. Not only did I not get a password my heart-rending e-mail to Our Genial Host at his supposed address bounced. I believe I shall now be vexed.

jeischen says:
January 20, 2010 at 5:02 pm

Patrushka mentioned how farms were known by their names. My mom's dad's ranches were called the Poppan Place, the Taylor Place and the Montague, after the original settlers. I remember driving with him over the narrow, two-tire-tracked dirt trails checking cattle. We were ten miles from the nearest town and even that consisted of just a crossroads with a gas station and an old school gym. On those ranches, you could still see the razed foundations and root cellars from turn of the century farmhouses of the original settlers. Those old pioneers were definitely much hardier stock than us.
Vader says:
January 20, 2010 at 5:45 pm

I don’t remember my paternal grandfather. He died of complications of diabetes when I was very small.

My maternal grandfather had this great green Ford truck that I swear still had a gasoline ration sticker on it from the Second World War. He would take us fishing in it. My fishing pole was a bamboo rod with a length of nylon and a hook on the end. Grandpa had a real pole, of course, with a fancy reel and all that, and he caught the river trout while we were pulling perch and catfish out of the muddy water near the banks of the river.

He also took us for root beer floats at the local drug store on Sunday afternoon. Generally a religious man, he made this exception on the grounds that “the ox is in the mire,” whatever that was supposed to mean. The drug store manager, who had known Grandpa forever, served us personally, pulling chilled glasses out of an icebox and scooping in the vanilla ice cream and pouring on the draft root beer. Mmmmmmmmm. Grandpa generally also bought us some candy on the way out; he and sugar got along much better than my other grandpa ever did.

Grandpa was 73 years older than I, so I remember him as a very old but still sprightly man, until he got throat cancer. It was his second bout; the first was before I could remember and left him with a raspy whisper of a voice. He also had false teeth that he liked to pop out to amuse us youngsters. I'm not 100% sure what was amusing about it, but it was Grandpa.

Larry says:
January 20, 2010 at 6:21 pm

Both Grandfathers wore hats. One smoked cigs and lived until he was 90; the other a pipe (Prince Albert in a can! even) and died of lung cancer when he was 68. He was on his death bed through early 1964 in a small town in East Texas. We lived in Dallas and my father would drive us to see him and my Grandmother every other weekend. The Beatles came to America and did shows on three consecutive February Sundays. Our rotation was such that I only got to see the 2nd show. When I told this to my Beatles fan son, who retains all he has read on and seen on wiki and Youtube, asked, “You mean the Miami Beach show where they performed ‘She Loves You’?” I suppose. Need to tell him about the hats.

cnyguy says:
January 20, 2010 at 8:24 pm

Well, now, whenever James mentions his maternal grandfather in future Bleats, I will immediately picture him driving his grandkids around the farm, with that grasshopper sitting on his shoulder—with a pack of Old Golds in his pocket and a hat on his head.

Can't remember either of my grandfathers wearing hats all that often. My maternal grandfather (a Pall Mall smoker) had a jaunty tan golf cap he used to wear (appropriately enough) when he played golf, and when he was cutting the lawn with the riding mower. My dad owned a hat, but it seemed to spend more time on the back seat of the car than on Dad's head. After nearly half a century, I can still remember the logo and brand name imprinted on the inside crown of that hat— a stylized volcano with the name AEtna. What a peculiar-looking word that seemed to me as a kid, and a funny thing to stick in my befuddled mind for all this time.
Bob Lipton says:
January 20, 2010 at 10:23 pm

I never knew my maternal grandfather, but my paternal grandfather wore hats. He was a hatmaker and a union organizer.

He was expert in sitting and looking dignified, but quite a ladies' man. While sitting shiva for his second wife, one of the ladies who came to pay a condolence call told me he was “The Beau Brummel of Brighton Beach” which is a phrase that I will never forget.

Bob

January 21 Morning Roundup « The Heavy Table says:
January 21, 2010 at 5:29 am

[...] menu, how to go from raw pig heads to delicious head cheese, Harmony Valley Farm is hiring, Lileks on crops and vindaloo, deets on the upcoming Schell's Bock Fest, a recap of the Simple, Good, and Tasty meal at [...]
Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
The doorknocker for Jasperwood is a commanding annunciator; even a Girl Scout sounds like the Gestapo. The sound penetrates the dog's old ears and produces mad spasms of canine alarum: someone is here and it is not pizza. (He knows when it's pizza, because the time for eating comes and goes and no preparations are made; when the checkbook is produced and a check laid on the radio by the door, he knows for certain, and paces, whining. At least that's how it used to be; now, like everything else, I pay by plastic. One click on the website, and the quatloos are briskly whisked from my account. If no money seems to change hands these days, it has the overall effect of making it seem like there is no money.) When the door was knocked and the dog barked I was upstairs, listening to my daughter tell a story she'd read in school. It kinda creeped her out.

Basic guy-alone-in-a-place-with-mannequins story. Did – did I just see that one move? AIEEEE! (thump) “He's dead. Looks like . . . a heart attack.” While she told the story I was reminded for a second of the dream I had this morning – a wretched tale with lots of perfidy, but one amusing wrinkle. I’d called directory assistance. The process was now entirely automated; no longer did a human come on for a second, say “here's your number” and toss you to another robot lady. All robots all the time. But this robot was gruff, no-nonsense, like a 1940s cab dispatcher, and halfway through the number he said “hold on, there's some guys here with guns.” Then there was the sound of a struggle, and gunshots; the robot voice came back and gave the last few
numbers and the address in his dying voice. Then the phone went dead.

I thought: brilliant! Directory assistance as entertainment. Is there anything that can’t be turned into entertainment, really? If you try hard enough?

When I opened the door I saw a fellow from TPC. You know, TPC, the most insidious corporation ever:

Yes, TPC. The Phone Company. Overwrought movie, but the end sequence is clever, ad Pat Harrington’s quite fine.

Anyway, when I saw him, I thought: I’ll take the upgraded plot-driven directory assistance. But he said he was here to ask if I was interested in upgraded to fiber-optic.

“Do you use the internet a lot?” he said.

Hell yes, I’ve been downloading a torrent of Avatar all day – 260GB in Imax form. Sure could use a speed bump! Wish I’d said that, just to get a reaction, but I said I had occasion to use the internets from time to time and yes, sign me up.

It took a while, what with all the Federal regulations put in place when TPC was split and competition roiled the land, and people were slammed from one carrier to the other: a third party had to verify that I was who I was and I was doing this of my own free will. He called someone, somewhere, who read back my customer info (after asking permission to access it, of course), then said the salesperson did not have access to my personal data, and should not have mentioned it or asked for my social security number or credit card information, and had he done any of those things?
“Hell yes,” I said, “and he hit me up for fifty bucks.”

The salesman practically did a spit take, but it was laughter. The fellow on the other end of the line, who’d been repeating the same script all day, seemed to grab on to this moment of rare, dangerous levity like a galley slave who glimpses a patch of sun through the roof of the ship. But THIS CALL MAY BE MONITORED FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE, so we were back to business. While waiting for the order to take, I chatted with the sales guy: he was new here. Four months. Hated it: cold. His house had been broken into, over in West St. Paul. People were smiley up-front but it wasn’t genuine. (He was originally from Long Island.) I said I preferred insincere civility to honest jerkhood. Then we argued about pizza. New Yorkers and their pizza. Honestly. Give it up. You have the best of so many things; pizza is not one of them.

So now I have to wait a week, then it’s blazingly fast internet! That’s the new standard: blazing! It’s like any piece of software that has a nice design: it’s stunning! Yes, this interface is so nice you will be momentarily unable to access data from your various senses.

Ordinary day – did the NewsBreak, which is starting to get nice ratings. Blogged. Wrote. Now to write a column. While I’m busy, here’s the opening credits for The President’s Analyst – notable for a few reasons. One, the music: it’s Lalo Schifffren. He’s always cool but this is the sort of music that gives me hives; it’s so very, very sixties in its orchestration, it winky with-it mod WOW flavor. The flutes. Always with the flutes. the daba-daba voices, the harpsichord. In a way this is more typical of Sixties culture than a long bleary psychedelic album; few listened to that, but millions heard this style in movies, TV, commercials. It’s every style of the era in one opening sequence – goes from something like the Jonny Quest theme to an “Odd Couple” riff to fuzzed guitar in 20 seconds.

Two: the white building in the background says ALLIED CHEMICAL, and I wonder how many people under, say, 20, might know what it was. And is. It might be the largest, most famous empty building in New York.
Back. Damn: column blew up halfway through when I got a different idea. Well, we're all the better for it. This week's Black and White World is posted below. Technically it was posted on the day I said it would be posted, so LAY OFF. Also, because I forgot to call attention to it, some additions to the 1930s site, here: magazine covers. The World's Fair site is in the pipeline and ready for its February unfurling. I've laid out the 1930s magazine ad site, and it rambles on for 50 pages, so that pushes back the 20s and 70s sites to mid year.

**60 RESPONSES TO *thursday, jan. 21***

**GardenStater says:**

January 21, 2010 at 5:04 pm

@Will: “NY style pizza is gadawful no matter which way you slice it.”

Well, maybe New York “style” pizza isn’t to your liking. But real New York pizza is the best in the world. (Especially from the original John’s, on Bleecker Street, done in a coal-fired oven—yum!)

I attribute James’ slight to New York pizza to simple jealousy: He can’t have it, so he puts it down. Sour grapes, sez I.

**swschrad says:**

January 21, 2010 at 5:31 pm

EmGee, your level of satisfaction moves along with the speed of broadband you can get. I tried to get on the first technical trials,
failed. It wasn’t until 5 years later and a road throw that I finally got 256 kbit. Moved across the hall in the apartments and I could get 640 kbit.

It seemed like heaven for a year or so when I bought the house in the north ’burbs and got a whopping (yes, I heard it at night, it did whop) 1.5 megabit.

These days, that looks like dialup. 3–7 meg is keeping up with the Joneses. As soon as you have two or three different downloaders or video viewers, 7 meg is just adequate.

I like the fact that TPC in our 14 states is selling up to 40 meg down, up to 5 or 20 meg up depending on home or business, and I’d really like it at home. You won’t see that much, as browsers, IP stacks, and stuff won’t let you run much faster than 3 to 5 meg per thread. But it’s great if you have multiple streams of data going.

Which I can’t get, despite the fact that I turn the stuff up.

**Kevin** says:
January 21, 2010 at 7:02 pm

I agree with THX-1138. If, indeed, it is Uverse service you got (and I have my suspicions that it isn’t, aren’y you served by whatever Qwest morphed into? Perhaps Verizon is making an entry into the area), you will be very happy. Although, I can’t quite understand how they plan to run fiber to your house. AT&T (who I work for) is only putting fiber into new neighborhoods, not retrofitting older ones. Last I heard, Verizon was doing fiber to the premises. I dunno. Anyway, yes, Uverse is awesome since it is what the industry calls IPTV and the internet speeds are nearly guaranteed to be what they say you are getting, within 1.5 mbps or so. I don’t know about FioS, which is Verizon’s offering, but it is a similar service.

**JamesS** says:
January 21, 2010 at 7:03 pm

*JerseyAmy*

January 21st, 2010 at 1:58 pm

@JamesS: I believe I know the very pizza place of which you speak in Seaside Heights. My family has always tended to go to the beach at “Sleaze-side,” and I always get the pizza on the boardwalk. Pure heaven. If I’m not mistaken, it’s still there.

If I could remember more about where exactly it was on the boardwalk I’d try to nail it down for you, but alas, the memory is vague except for the pizza itself. I do pity those who bemoan NY style pies as “thin, greasy and underseasoned.” After all, good cheese gives off its fat when baked and “seasoning”, i.e. oregano, to a Midwesterner, is the cowbell of Italian food: more is not always better.

**Liman** says:
January 21, 2010 at 8:00 pm

I grew up in THAT New York. Everything in the street scenes was completely routine 7th Avenue in the 60’s. Down to the REA truck, then soon to be a goner. Including the garment district messengers.

Your average pizza in any of the 5 boros of NYC is without question
better than the best most cities can offer. Minneapolis?
Fuggedaboudit.

**John Robinson** says:
January 21, 2010 at 8:27 pm

Nuts. I was hoping for a cover featuring Hedy (“that’s Hedley!”) Lamarr.

**mediumwave** says:
January 21, 2010 at 10:18 pm

Joan Crawford and the Three Stooges as you’ve never seen them before! 😄

**Ross** says:
January 22, 2010 at 4:39 am

Re pizza: I don’t really have a dog in this fight, except to remind the NYers in the crowd that just because they grew up with something a certain way (and therefore like it best that way), does not make it superior to anything else. For your information, the Neapolitans of my acquaintance (you know, the INVENTORS of pizza) think NYers are full of – well, sauce, when it comes to their opinion on what constitutes a proper pie. You wanna argue with them, be my guest; just don’t expect me to take your views all that seriously.

**shesnailie** says:
January 22, 2010 at 12:05 pm

_@_v – some interesting looks at new york…

[http://citynoise.org/article/10155](http://citynoise.org/article/10155)

‘times square in old and relatively new photos’ – featuring 1 times sq newly sheathed in ez-stane marble

and…

[http://citynoise.org/article/9661](http://citynoise.org/article/9661)

ew york in the 1970s

**D T Nelson** says:
January 23, 2010 at 1:19 am


I miss Godfrey Cambridge.
can take care of it!

4: Sears 1934
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
Screedblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

March 2013
February 2013
January 2013
December 2012
November 2012
October 2012
September 2012
August 2012

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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?
Every parent likes to brag, now and then; you never share with others the times that make you rend your garments and yank out your hair. Daughter forgot to bring home her cello sheet music last week. Big conversation on the importance of remembering things. Lesson solemnly absorbed. Today I pick her up. Do you have your music?

Oh right and she runs back to get it. Gah. You get a little peeved, you know? But then a few hours later she wants to show me a drawing for a competition she did, part of a YouTube community of artists devoted to anime cats. (Don’t ask.) It’s pretty good. What’s more:

It has a watermark.

“It has a watermark,” I said.

“Well yeah,” says the nine year old. It even has the copyright mark.

“How did you do that? A layer or opacity setting?”

“A layer.”

Impressive. Since she had no school the next day, she spent the night on an animation, with particular attention paid to syncing the lips to a song. When it was done we crunched it down and uploaded it: the flash version on YouTube ruined the sync. I HATE FLASH, she said. You’re not alone, kid. We...
tried a few more compression programs, and finally uploaded the entire .mov and let YouTube convert. It worked: frames synced perfectly. While we were waiting she looked at my active-programs pane (I use DragThing) and wanted to know what each and every program was, and what it did. “(What’s the cone?” “That’s VLC.” “Why is it a cone?” “No one knows.”) She sounded so grown-up. She may forget her music and come to tears over math sometimes, but what a neat kid.

It’s late right now, and she’s still up: no school tomorrow. No office work for me, although I’ll be columnizing and blogging. Mommy’s at Bunco. We’re hanging out in the kitchen, making things.

Flurry of work due this weekend; big BIG things coming to the site. Big changes. This template is nice, but I never intended it to be permanent; I’ve been learning CSS behind the scenes, figuring out how to make a site that’s mine ALL MINE, and bloggifying other areas of lileks.com. Come Monday you’ll see why things have been a bit spare here the last two weeks.

**Thursdays** can be quite productive. Got up, drove to work listening to the 70s channel with the usual horrified fascination – what exactly was going on at that party Momma told him not to attend, anyway? Inadequate ventilation? Frightening cigarettes? – then did a NewsBreak video. Rating are up; doubled our audience in the last few months, it seems. Then off to do a video on a fellow whose mission in life is to erect a large metal statue commemorating the Pirogi. Really. His studio was in the old Northrup King seed company building.
Turn around, you see this:
Which prompted me to shout a long loud oration of Cleesian abuse towards imaginary Britons below, seeking the Grail. What an edifice! The Northrup King complex itself is mostly deserted, except for the rehabbed spaces used for artists – I worked there in the summer of ’79 as a young man, fresh off the road from my job selling seeds in the South. If someone had gone back in time, told me I’d be coming back here 31 years later not only as a representative of The Newspaper, but to shoot Television, I would have been a happy young man. Fun fact: while working at NK that summer I read the “I, Claudius” novels – and I just finished watching the TV version, again, last night.

Where we shot:
That's Shari-G, ace cameraperson, who — get this! — was a Bleat reader before we started working together, and has known Jasper, from afar, for years. So we get along fine. She has that virtue common to all great camerapeople: prescience and invisibility. After we shot the studio sequence, we took a small model of the Perogi Monument to a nearby Ukrainian Deli, to get the reaction of staff and customers. I interviewed a young woman from Poland who worked the cafeteria line, gave her the statue, asked for a reaction; God bless her, she thought I was giving her an award. The video will be up later today, and I'll post a link here or tweet it.

So! Friday pile-up. The column is here.

Elsewhere at lileks.com: Sears 1934, Musical Instruments Edition. (Plus car batteries.)

Also: 100 Mysteries, with a crackling good video of an unjustly obscure boogie-woogie piano player.

Have a grand weekend; see you Monday here, and Twitter throughout the day.

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55 RESPONSES TO Friday! Jan 22

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
January 23, 2010 at 9:26 am
@george: Thanks for the well written explanation. I found it fascinating. I'm surprised how user-unfriendly those sets must have been — yet, compared to what came before, they were a big improvement. (Tip o' the hat to MichaelsDaddy and swschrad, too.)

Patrick says:
January 23, 2010 at 4:12 pm

@ Archer
You're welcome. The one thing I like about VLC is that it will play every video and audio format known to man, and several known to monkeys. If you go to a site that says you need X or Y player in order to play their files, with the exception of Flash, there's a 99% chance that VLC will be able to play said files for you, with no problem whatsoever.

Mark Harrison says:
January 23, 2010 at 6:20 pm

Well this has certainly been an educational thread regarding batteries!

Wikipedia has some nice pics of these sizes:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battery_%28vacuum_tube%29

SCOTTtheBADGER says:
January 23, 2010 at 8:20 pm

I have the entire run of Allen Chapman's Radio Boys series from the 1920's. They were quite pleased with AC radios, as they no longer had to charge their batteries.

Bigcountry says:
January 25, 2010 at 2:09 pm

A bit late, but did anyone notice the sheet music endorsed by Marion Davies? She was the singer married to William Randolph Hearst, and, supposedly, the inspiration for the term “Rosebud” in Citizen Kane.
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! […]

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?
Everything was off-kilter this weekend. Pizza – on a Saturday! It just got worse from there. The naps were off. I had no modern movie to watch after labors were done. Didn’t have Taco Bell with the Giant Swede, but something else entirely. What’s more, Saturday errands did not stop at Walgreens, which meant I didn’t pick up the Totally Natural Urville Hackenbacher (compare to Orville Reddenbacher!) microwaved popcorn supply for the week. Of course, I already have enough stockpiled, but the point of having a stockpile is not to use the stockpile. So it was with great relief I had a reason to head to Walgreens Saturday night in the rain, listening to the most beautiful piece of music ever written. But we’ll get to that, too.

Why the drugstore? Because there was goop on the track in which Ace’s hamster wheel rests. He had the runs while, well, running, which meant that he was flinging it hither and yon. But the fact that he had the runs was DIRE, since this meant wet-tail. As I said in a tweet, all webpages about hamster ailments should just play a midi file of Chopin’s Funeral March when they load. Wet-tail is apparently caused by stress, and you might wonder what sort of stress a hamster has, aside from being taken away in a box and put in a cage tended by giants. There’s a medicine called “Dri-Tail,” and half the websites say it works and have the websites say it don’t. What is it? Xanax? A few sites said the dehydrating effects of blurtage were the contributing factor to hamster demise, so pedialyte would be good. That’s why I got in the car at 8:30 PM to go to Walgreens. Bought the house brand (Compare to Orville Reddenbacher!) and drove home. Lethargy, they said, was a bad sign.
Ace was not lethargic; he was running all over, and he greatly enjoyed the fruit-flavored nectar. If he makes it two days, then he's in the clear. They say.

**Enjoyed** this bit of boingboingery on the culture of the past and the maroons who don't care about the same things I care about. That's not an entirely fair summation, but it often comes down to that.

There's always something to disagree with, some line that seems a tad too . . . humid for the topic, and it's this:

> It isn't their fault that they're ignorant of the cultural riches of the 20th century. Big media has kept them in the dark so they can spoon feed them "pre-packaged, pasteurized entertainment product".

Now, now.

Everyone has a bete noire they can shove, bleating, into this pen. It's racism! Poor education! Politics! The Hippies! And so on. (For the record, I don't blame racism. On the other hand, I blame Hippies for everything.) (Just kidding, but some days, yes.) In this case it's Big Media Establishments – but obviously these works were put out by Big Media as well. In the days when the studios owned the movie houses you couldn't get any more monolithic, and it's not like the pop-culture magazines of the day were paragons of incisive cogitation.

But it is their fault; nothing keeps people from being curious. The past is never more than a click away nowadays.

This weekend I watched another 30s musical, “Hollywood Hotel” – details later in Black and White World, natch – and the final sequence had an orchestra playing a real orchestra number, not one of those “hey, let's make the longhair stuff really swing” routines.

Many of the commenters get hung up making any sort of artistic distinction, as if it's all good – except for the stuff they don't like – and it's deeply unfair to post-punk thrash-core Christian Crunk to say Benny Goodman was “better” than Sid Vicious. But fans of this stuff at the time weren't equally respectful of the records of the early 20s, which sounded as timid and lame to their ears as Victorian music sounded to the ears of the Flappers. Here's my theory:

Every musical genre moves towards complexity, requiring greater skill and talent to compose and perform, reaches an apogee of power, grace, and beauty and then it falls apart. Three guys with a lute and a saxebut morph over time into a Mahlerian symphony; then it's atonality and serial music and the rest of the unlistenable shrieks of the early 20th century. (Yes, I'm being judgmental, but not one person in a thousand wants to listen to that stuff.)

Jazz: same thing, although here I step into murkier terrain; lots of smart jazz “buffs” who are “in the know” and would love to go back in time so they could sit in dim clubs wearing shades and smoking cigarettes while a talented heroin addict pushes his jagged psyche through a metal instrument,
well, they find great aesthetic pleasure in the hard post-swing jazz forms. I
don't. I'll admit it: part of the pleasure of art, for me, is inseparable from its
pursuit of beauty. This doesn't mean sweetness and light: some of the best of
Bruckner or any other Romantic composer comes from its most despairing,
terrible moments. (Often with hellish dissonance.)

Anyway. So I'm driving to Wallgreens to get juice for an illin' hamster, and
turn on the radio. It's playing . . . The Blue Danube. Now. You may think:
hardcore American jazz you don't like, but the ultimate bucket of schmaltz,
you do? Says it all. I understand. I see your point. But we hear this piece
today and think of “2001,” or we just think of the first part, which has become
a cliche. But listen again, and note how it keeps changing, how every new
section fits perfectly with the last, and seems inevitable. Keep in mind it's also
dance music. I can't hear it without imagining some fin de siecle ball full of
Austrian royalty, spinning around a mirrored ballroom, a social order at its
height, utterly doomed.

But then there's this.

As for why there's “pop culture amnesia,” I blame the Boomers. Every
generation thinks they're stuff is the new stuff and hence the best (and
sometimes they're right) and everything else is Herbert and L-7, but the
Boomers' boundless capacity for narcissism and self-aggrandizement,
coupled with their eventual control of the reins of popular culture, added up
to the idea that history began when they started to grow underarm hair and
the Beatles formed. On the other hand, no one was expected to be literate on
all these things before; it's as if the availability of an easily-accessible archive
of past pop-culture creates an obligation to be informed. It doesn't. But it's a
lost opportunity if you don't.

Anyway. Later: Monday Matchbook. Tomorrow: more website tweaking; still
working on this template, which is Mine ALL MINE. Question: what's the old-
style pop-cult thing you think people should know about?
121 RESPONSES TO *hamster; dance*

**hpoulter** says:
January 25, 2010 at 3:28 pm

The Goon Show? Now you’re talking.
Ying tong-iddle-i-poh! (good!)

**hpoulter** says:
January 25, 2010 at 3:39 pm

The Goodies
The Rutles
Bonzo Dog Doo-dah Band.
I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again (radio program)

**metaphizzle** says:
January 25, 2010 at 3:42 pm

“I liked that Boing Boing discussion, because I could see everyone’s points. When someone says there's a Louis Armstrong of Electronica out there, I smile, knowing that in 100 years, only jazz will still have a Louis Armstrong and Electronica will be something only heard on movie soundtracks (where it often works very well),”

What exactly do they mean by a Louis Armstrong of Electronica? If we're talking in terms of influence, there's Kraftwerk, whose influence on pop, rock, and electronica is probably second only to The Beatles'. But if you want someone more recent, then any Louis Armstrong figure of the 00's or the 10's is not going to be in a well-entrenched genre (which most electronica was by the 00's)–they'll be someone wildly creative, who the rest of us won't know how to classify properly, and they'll inspire hoards of imitators which will eventually be codified as a new genre.

If you’re talking in terms of the quality or longevity of their work, well… Just try to find any of Louis Armstrong's Hot Five or Hot Seven recordings at Walmart or Best Buy. The man practically invented swing music, yet for some reason he's mostly remembered for late-career pop songs like “Mack the Knife” and “What a Wonderful World”. Which is a crying shame.

“the Irish drinking songs of 2110 (which is to say, a once hugely popular genre that has basically been dropped in history's lake with cement overshoes).”

Ever heard of Celtic punk? The Pogues, Flogging Molly, the Dropkick Murphys. Irish music didn’t disappear, it morphed into something else.

**Borderman** says:
January 25, 2010 at 3:48 pm

*What's the old-style pop-cult thing you think people should know about?*
People should know what it's like to have three television channels
only, each served by one of only three major networks. If it's not on them, it's not. These three are all the TV there is and there is nothing more, here or anywhere else in the United States (and in fact many areas have much less, two or one or *gulp!* no TV stations). Nothing is commercial-free, nothing is recordable (unless you want audio only and can leave a tape recorder running in front of the TV speaker). The stations are available only by direct-broadcast (through-the-air) because cable hasn't been invented yet or isn't in your area yet. If there's bad weather, it may ruin the broadcast signal and there literally may be nothing on TV. If there is it may waver and dance with bad reception, and is therefore not really watchable, and all the tin (nee aluminum) foil in the world twisted around the rabbit ears won't help until the weather improves. Movies are shown by the local stations, and only on late night after the news or on weekend afternoons, except on NBC, which has recently started showing ten-year old movies in prime time on Saturday night (a.k.a. *Saturday Night at the Movies*). The late (local) movie is high-quality but old stuff from the major studios, usually a minor classic or undiscovered gem or at least solid workmanship, but always from the 1930s or 40s, unless it was an independent production to begin with in which case it might be from the late 50s and just a couple years old.

When *that* scenario is yours and the rest of the nation's primary pop-culture source, filled incrementally with bits and pieces of *TV Guide*, items from the entertainment section in *TIME* magazine, maybe just maybe a tidbit here and there from the local paper if you're not too far away from a major metro area and the paper actually pays someone to cover the nascent “entertainment” beat (ha!), along with occasional dollops of *MAD* magazine, and to some extent the completely unreliable so-called “fan magazines,” (a.k.a. studio propaganda), when you're up against it like that (“Coach,” he said) you really appreciate what you have these days.

I know this sounds like “we walked six miles through the snow to school and were glad to do it,” but by golly that's how it was. And hard to explain today. Just think of it, a guy like the affable former newspaper columnist Ed Sullivan who somehow managed to get himself a variety show on CBS on Sunday night and turn it into a cultural institution of its era was the gatekeeper for all popular culture. Whether or not people got to see jugglers from the Moscow Circus spin plates on long sticks *ad infinitum* or Senor Wences and his hand puppets <“*Sallright!*”> and whether or not the Beatles or Stones or Byrds were going to even get noticed let alone have a shot at posterity, plus all other entertainment in between—was up to Ed. *It was all up to Ed!* I kid you not (although that punch line belonged to Jack Paar, the second-ever host of the Tonight Show who was a big guy with lots of guests but that's not important right now).

**Patrick McClure:**

*January 25, 2010 at 7:43 am*

“Does anyone else believe, as I do, that the Beatles are the most overrated quartet in history? I am extremely tired of them and their music. ... For pure, joyous pop music, listen to Pet Sounds. Then again, I have a tin ear and just have always been put off by John, Paul, George and Ringo. So I am a bit biased.”

You just impeached yourself as expert witness with the tin ear comment. And the Beatles told me to tell you that they are tired of you too. And your whining. And don't ever tell me what to listen to for joyous pop. It's rude and only annoys the geezers. Like me.
madCanada says:
January 25, 2010 at 4:11 pm

Yes, not (at least) appreciating The Beatles is like saying you don't like water, sunshine or air. ie. I don't believe you, and you're clearly just trying to be a b*st*rd.

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 25, 2010 at 4:15 pm

I liked most Beatles tunes until they started showing up in commercials.

I have nothing against big biz and sometimes they revive a song and use it well. However, some Mad Men can really wreck a song. Current example: The Blackberry “Do what you love” campaign using “All you need is love” ugh. I am indifferent to everyone in the commercials and do not want to be like them, however, I am doomed and already own a Crackberry.

madCanada says:
January 25, 2010 at 4:26 pm

Yes, I too accept that Big Biz is a fact of life, etc etc. But I really do think “All You Need is Love” is utterly defiled in the context of a Blackberry ad. It saddens me very much.

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 25, 2010 at 4:35 pm

@madcanada: it is really just a bad ad campaign when you break it down.

Must be a conspiracy against this bright star from Canada.

GardenStater says:
January 25, 2010 at 4:45 pm

@Borderman:
“People should know what it's like to have three television channels only...”

I guess I was lucky, growing up in the NY Metro area. We had seven-count 'em–seven channels!

The only reason my dad agreed to get cable TV was so he could watch the NY Rangers play.

Borderman says:
January 25, 2010 at 5:00 pm

@GardenStater:
I guess I was lucky, growing up in the NY Metro area. We had seven-count 'em–seven channels!

By my standards of growing up, where you grew up was beyond lucky, you were in Heaven for all matters media. Heaven's only rival, in the context of my neighborhood, would have been Los Angeles.
If we'd had through-the-air, my dad would have let hell freeze over before he got cable.

So yes, I agree, you were lucky. And in Heaven.

**Borderman** says:
January 25, 2010 at 5:03 pm

Make that “If we'd had seven through-the-air,” instead of “If we'd had through-the-air.”

**D Palmer** says:
January 25, 2010 at 5:34 pm

Like Garden Stater, I was lucky enough to grow up in a major metro area (Chicago). We had seven: the 3 networks, a PBS (WTTW), WGN, and a couple of good UHF channels. If you were close to Indiana you might have had an extra PBS thrown in.

**StephenB** says:
January 25, 2010 at 6:39 pm

Going out to the drugstore in winter to save a hamster is making a heroic effort. You're the best dad “evar”.

**Pam-EL** says:
January 25, 2010 at 6:46 pm

Maybe it's the flexeril kicking in, but this is a mighty convoluted thread.

Just sayin’.

**madCanada** says:
January 25, 2010 at 7:05 pm

To actually (ahem) answer your question, Mr Lileks:

Let me give a shoutout re 1920s/30s jazz singer Annette Hanshaw.

Though contemporary with Ruth Etting and the Boswells, Hanshaw made them all sound like a bunch of geese. This little lady could sing & swing like no other white gal of the era. She was shamefully forgotten but many hip cats are rediscovering her. Here's a link to start you off. Surf YouTube for much more. You're welcome.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRgEn7b0YRA

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRgEn7b0YRA

**Doug Collins** says:
January 25, 2010 at 8:25 pm

Regarding your sick hamster-

Many of the larger young herbivores – foals, calves, kids – tend to get a similar ailment. It's called scours or shipping fever and it comes from stress, like your hamster. Keeping them hydrated is critical. If you have a feed store somewhere nearby you can get some antibiotics that help a lot. We use neomycin for our goats and it usually clears it up in a day or so – if the animal survives that long.
(again: hydration). I would assume that the effectiveness of the antibiotic indicates some opportunistic gut bacteria has taken advantage of the stressed animal.

You would only need a few drops in the water – the smallest bottle you could get would be a lifetime supply for a dozen hamsters.

Perhaps someone with better credentials than I have (none other than some experience) could give you a more exact idea of dosage and type of antibiotic to use.

Good luck

Mike Gebert says:
January 25, 2010 at 8:58 pm

“What exactly do they mean by a Louis Armstrong of Electronica?”

Beats me, but I guess it means a figure of that stature (and not, as you say, someone who invented a genre out of his own protean imagination and virtuosity, all of which is just so alien to the idea of electronica to begin with). That said, I have new respect for Kraftwerk after listening to Sound Opinions’ show on prog-rock a few weeks back; their point was that Kraftwerk was the point where prog-rock ends and punk/new wave begins, or something, which seemed an interesting argument to me– that Kraftwerk is half Yes synthesizers, half Ramones three-minute-pop-song sensibility, I guess.

Still, that's not Louis Armstrong!

As far as Best Buy goes, I think the inventory at major retailers has actually gotten less varied with the rise of Amazon and things like that; if I want the latest silent movie from Kino, I don't go to Best Buy to go get myself frustrated, I just go online, and they know that and don't stock the more obscure things. That said, I'm amazed sometimes at what does turn up– I mean, the Murnau/Borzage box set was at Costco, for pete's sake. Which incidentally means... that old school Irish singing, in the form of John McCormack's only film (Song O’ My Heart), was at Costco too, so what the hell do I know about anything.

Ms. Jess says:
January 26, 2010 at 9:48 am

Boy howdy, you really got ‘em hot over on the BB boards! Love your posts there, I've been a fan ever since you posted the Western Swing love... one of my all time favorite genres of music. YES – most people of my generation have no clue about history/entertainment/etc... I'm 25. I just happened to be raised by a family who cares quite a lot about music/film/history/etc – I'm one of the lucky ones in my generation, not blinded by the newest Auto-Tuned pop phenom shoved to the forefront by their record label.

metaphizzle says:
January 26, 2010 at 4:51 pm

Forgot to mention (better late than never, I hope), for another answer to our host's question: Yma Sumac. Lady singer from the Andes, part of that whole Exotica craze of the 50's and 60's. Never would have heard of her, but for her album Mambo! catching my eye in the local shop's used music rack. Gave it a listen in the store and holy carp that woman could sing. She's like an opera singer.
Singing mambo (and other South American music).

**efurman** says:
January 26, 2010 at 11:18 pm

I thought of your blog today, James, when I read this.
Oh, and to join in “Only what I like is good. Everything you like
sucks!” 😜

[http://www.theonion.com/content/news_briefs/man_who_enjoys_thing](http://www.theonion.com/content/news_briefs/man_who_enjoys_thing)

**Fred** says:
February 12, 2010 at 6:06 pm

Apropos of ‘old time’ radio broadcasts, I once won a triva prize from
a local radio station at about the age of 12 or so (so around 1977 or
so maybe a few years later). So I got a ride down there from my
mom and picked up a 3 disc recording of... that week's episode of
Casey Casem’s “America's Top 40”. Before this I had always assumed
the program was broadcast coast to coast. I was a little disappointed
find out that they merely shipped the records out to the local
stations to be played on the record player...
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Productive day, but in a gab-yap sense. Did the morning news, did the headlines, then off downtown in the cold to interview people about the Vikings game. It's here. Interviewed a sweet old lady with unnervingly active teeth; couldn't have been dentures, unless she bought the SnaggleTooth model down at the Wal-Mart. She was named Ethel. Also interviewed some really tall guys who make me look really short, as opposed to just . . . short. So: by one PM I'd done three videos, or rather talked for three videos; the editing and titling fell to our crew of crack technicians. I had a pathetic lunch and went off to write other stuff.

Really, no excuse for a pathetic lunch; I passed many delicious places on the way to the interview, but I knew a sad sack of stuff was waiting in the office fridge. As much as I love the StarTribune building, I sorta kinda wish the Vikings had won, and would have gone on to win the Superbowl. Because then they might have knocked down my workplace to build a new stadium, and we would have moved to new digs, and the entry point for the skyway system wouldn't be three blocks away. Trust me: on a raw day that's a disincentive, and I'm not an hour-for-lunch kind of fellow anyway. But oy, the choices. And the people! The goil-watching! The architecture. I love downtown in the skyways at noon, its main thoroughfares, its eddys and backwaters. I remember how grown-up I felt when I first came here. The Big City. Bridges of steel across the street, emptying into the grand plazas. Tall thrusting towers thrusting tall into the sky! Ten, twenty stories! Still peeved we didn't get a good skyscraper out of the last boom. We got condos, which
filled everything out and rehabbed the dead hulks, but there was one big tower that would have stamped the Boom of the Oughts on the skyline, and it was cancelled. (It was a condo.)

I walked around with my little camera, disguising it from suspicious security people by putting it up to my ear now and then, and talking. Because no one talks into a movie camera, right? I hate this paranoia, and I hate the top-down iron-clad rules that just say “no filming” and leave it at that, because it covers all bases and they don’t have to worry that a security guard exercised his own judgment and let a couple of kids from rural Minnesota film themselves in the big thrilling town. Sorry, policy. I don’t make the rules, I just enforce them with a quiet sense of satisfaction.

Nevertheless, I managed to get something. Non-Minneapolisites may find it interesting – yes, we have double-decker skyways and reasonably tall buildings, including the Rand Tower. Locals are welcome to name, in order, all the places I go. To explain the end: the enormous GOVERNMENT CENTER, where GOVERNING is done, has a subterranean tunnel that leads to a sealed circular enclosure – a waterfall in the summer, a view of the old City Hall in the winter. Beyond that, a tunnel under the street takes you to the City Hall, and thence to the magnificent interior of that gobsmackingly incredible structure.

Here it is.

Later today: Comic Sins, and the start of a new project. Below you will find an entire entry about something else. I broke the Bleat up into two portions, because sometimes they just need to stand alone. Ask the Cheese. He’ll explain.

No, I never understood why the Cheese stood alone, unless it was one of those extrovertedly stinky kinds.
33 RESPONSES TO downtown in winter

Non-Minneapoliran says:
January 26, 2010 at 3:37 am

Was that a Sunday? Where are the people? Governing?

Don says:
January 26, 2010 at 8:04 am

Anyone know the name and artist of the song in the video?

MikeH says:
January 26, 2010 at 8:28 am

I'm glad you were able to get away with videoing in there, almost a “up yours” to the paranoid security people there. I think that's my favourite part of the video, that you got away with it. But it also brings me back to when I went to my only visit of the Twin Cities in 1997. Wish Portland ME had skyways, but then our tallest buildings are only one quarter the size of your average height buildings there.

RPD says:
January 26, 2010 at 8:42 am

Aha! That vid was all I needed to complete my nefarious plans!

I like to imagine that someday we'll have cybernetic-prosthetic eyes with a record function available. What will over officious security types do then, huh?

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
January 26, 2010 at 9:14 am

Seriously, am I _really_ the only person in Lileksland that finds the vertical scrolling of the New Bleat to be slower than Brie in a Minnesota January?

Jennifer says:
January 26, 2010 at 9:31 am

Nice video–beautiful building. At first I thought the music was “We're havin' a heat wave” a song my friends and I would sing through clenched teeth while running laps during the winter track season (in Long Island, NY). What is the song credit, by the way? I liked it.

Wagner–I don't have any troubles. I use Safari.

juanito - John Davey says:
January 26, 2010 at 9:41 am

Am I the only person who started counting the days to spring as soon as it was officially winter?

And I live in sunny California – where we've had a good soaking rain for oh, the past NINE days.

Only 53 more days...
Lars Walker says:
January 26, 2010 at 9:42 am

I think I just decided never to move here. But it's too late for that.

Frypan says:
January 26, 2010 at 9:43 am

Great Vid! Love all the skyway shots.
Frypan

Brisko says:
January 26, 2010 at 9:58 am

Ow. New format hurts my eyes.

rbj says:
January 26, 2010 at 10:02 am

Wagner, I don't have a problem with the vertical scrolling slowness.
I wouldn't mind having the comments numbered, so I can know where to pick up a thread (hint, hint)

*Di* says:
January 26, 2010 at 10:08 am

I thought it was Tropical Heat Wave, too. Well, it's a variation of sorts.

John Cheese stands alone because he's taller than everyone else.

browniejr says:
January 26, 2010 at 10:09 am

@RPD: “someday we'll have cybernetic-prosthetic eyes with a record function available.” – this was how a bad sci-fi film started once, IIRC-it was a Roy Thinness (sp?) movie, and he went to the far side of the Sun in a rocket to discover a twin Earth.

Interesting how the film showed some very beautiful architecture inside. I guess if it is cold and bleak outside, you need that to stay centered.

madCanada says:
January 26, 2010 at 10:29 am

BTW, James: NO SNOW on the ground here at my Canadian location, nor has there been since Yuletide. But then, my berg is actually further south than yours.

Mark E. Hurling says:
January 26, 2010 at 11:12 am

Ah, Minnesotal Diane Ford in one of her 80's stand-up comedy bits waxed rhapsodic about the place. I think it went something like, “Just imagine the immigrants, leaving the old world, coming here to the new world, to the upper midwest, the one place on earth where the climate was just as bad as the place they left.”
I've been to Minnesota a number of times, it was a great place to canoe. Never been there in the winter. Illinois winters were hard enough. I hesitate to go where even more wooly mammoths lumber around in the snow.

Al Federber says:
January 26, 2010 at 11:34 am

Thanks for the tour, James. It's a wonder you weren't Tased.

minneapolis in winter « andrew.mogendorff.com says:
January 26, 2010 at 11:53 am

 [...] nice video from local writer James Lileks' blog today, a montage of downtown Minneapolis on a winter's day. Lots of skyways and office [...] 

Charlie Young says:
January 26, 2010 at 11:58 am

Y'all need to grow a coastline and a huge ocean off the west side of Minnesota. That way you can get an El Nino winter like we're having here in Washington State. 40 to 50 degrees and all the rain is moving to Cali.

*Di* says:
January 26, 2010 at 12:00 pm

" It's a wonder you weren't Tased. "
He probably will be next time – now that he's on their list of dangerous persons 😜

Nice little film, btw. I'd be tickled to work in such a building (I've always worked in semi-dumps).

Charlie Young says:
January 26, 2010 at 12:01 pm

BTW, the link to the interview in the first paragraph is not functioning.

Dan Holway says:
January 26, 2010 at 12:29 pm

At about 1:28 of the video, the singer sings:
“But in the winter, just like the groundhog, I'll turn into an.....”

A what? An ‘endosporn’?

Okay... I googled it. Never mind.

Martyn W. says:
January 26, 2010 at 12:31 pm

The mistake is trying to film with a tiny little camera. Looks suspicious. The key is a big, honking movie camera, its housing chipped and worn, carried around by someone with a cap and a shirt with some kind of TV-station-related logo on it. Preferably fictional.
Nobody in security looks twice at someone who seems to be an “official” filming person. Of course, you don’t get a lot of candid footage that way either.

Margaret says:
January 26, 2010 at 1:07 pm

Be careful what you wish for James, they’ll bulldoze the Strib building for a stadium and relocate you to the Strib production facilities in North Minneapolis, across the street from semi-vacant warehouse loft-condos.

swschrad says:
January 26, 2010 at 1:46 pm

the story now is that the Howling Wilves don’t want downtown, they want back in the suburbs again. someplace where a kindly government is willing to give them all the land they want and five or six pallets of slightly used 20s to spend as they wish, hopefully on a new stadium for the VileQueens.

that would be in the suburbs of Ghangtzu, China, between the melamine plant and the cadmium smelter. it ain’t going down in Minnesota.

and while there are advantages to having the Minnesota Vikings in Minnesota, the state is five billion in the hole, and as local governments are concerned, Hennepin County Medical Center is desperate enough to maintain their teaching and welfare hospital that they’ve gone begging to nearby counties for cash. got none.

none to get.

so the Strib building is safe, no idling bulldozers waiting for the ink to dry.

RKN says:
January 26, 2010 at 2:14 pm

I hadn’t considered the Butterfly Effect of Vikings as world champions – new stadium, new digs, goil watching. Whew. All the more reason Favre should have run instead of succumbing to Hamartia (http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/page2/story?page=easterbrook/100126&sportCat=nfl).

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 26, 2010 at 2:26 pm

For a news guy who is forced to cover sports Lileks is still slow to make the connection that NFC Playoff + Fox = No 24 (see Twitter).

bgbear (roger h) says:
January 26, 2010 at 2:54 pm

sorry, did 24 move to Monday night? It looks like it was on.

Basil Seal says:
January 26, 2010 at 3:23 pm

“It’s here. Interviewed a sweet old lady with unnervingly active teeth; couldn’t have been dentures, unless she bought the
SnaggleTooth model down at the Wal-Mart. She was named Ethel.”

Every so often you hit a sour note in the Bleat along the lines of the above making some innocent that crossed your path into a punchline. It’s probably not smart to make fun of or even speculate about your interviewees teeth on your blog.

Don Tuite says:
January 26, 2010 at 3:39 pm

Might want to change the title of the Video. If “10-25-10″ is a date, it suggests a certain prescience and a potentially cold Halloween.

Dan Holway says:
January 26, 2010 at 4:26 pm

I think that 10-25-10 is how they do it in Europe.

DensityDuck says:
January 26, 2010 at 7:46 pm

Yes, it’s because that puts it in “big-endian” order; Year/Month/Day, biggest unit of time down to smallest unit. The other way (day/month/year) is “little-endian”.

The typical American practice (month/day/year) is like saying that the time is “34:12:2″ to mean the 2nd hour, 34th minute, 12th second.

MikeH says:
January 26, 2010 at 10:43 pm

I wondered about 10-25-10, I guess our author has the ability to time travel. Yeah it will be a crappy halloween in the twin cities.

Ross says:
January 27, 2010 at 3:31 am

Walter:
I have the same scrolling problem.

bgbear(roger h):
“24″ has always been on Mondays. They just can’t help annoying you by premiering the season on Sunday(so it’s two nights in a row, to start). And this year, they did two two-hour episodes back-to-back, to start—I very seriously considered not bothering this season.
It's a scattershot Bleat day - somewhat jagged day, and a night that had one quick duty after the other. I wonder: who are these people who manage to watch 40 hours of TV a week? The idea of coming home and eating and sitting in front of the TV until you go to bed seems horrifying, but on the other hand, somewhat familiar . . . dimly, yes, dimly I see myself doing that. Saturday night, junior high, the can't-miss CBS lineup. Oh that Archie Bunker – will he say "stifle yourself" this time? Bet he will!

The only part of lonely junior high Saturday nights I regard with affection was watching a late-night sci-if movie, or an Alfred Hitchcock, one of those remnants from the impossibly distant fifties or sixties. But then came high school, and the TV habit fell away. The last time I sat pasted to the sofa and clicked for hours on end was when I had pneumonia. Before that, the days after 9/11. Watching TV makes me itchy and nervous if I'm not in control.

Finished the brilliant "I, Claudius" the other night. The disks include a documentary called "The Epic That Never Was," a 1967 study of the 1937 attempt to film the book. Remarkable. Apparently Laughton couldn't find the character, and the movie foundered – but not before they'd built some astonishing sets. Whoa:
Laughton gives a fine performance, and you want to go back in time, find him slumped in his dressing room wreathed with gloom, and tell him to go out there and kiss Messalina, for criminey's sake. Chuck! Look at me! You're married to Elsa Lancaster! I'm sure she's a nice girl and all but you're an actor and you get paid coin of the realm to kiss girls, and do you know who's standing on her mark right now waiting for the marriage scene? Do you?

Merle Oberon was Messalina. Startling bonus in the documentary:
Robert Graves.

Would it have been good? Judge for yourself. That’s Caligula eating the apple.

Coming up soon: Out of Context Ad Challenge around 10 AM; Bleat Plus is already up (a few more Dillweed replies to send out – note to the fellow who wrote me at the StarTribune address – a reply with your membership letter bounced back twice) and a big honking Black and White World around noon as well. A few things below, as well. See you soon!
53 RESPONSES TO **wednesday morn: get it while you can**

**browniejr** says:
January 28, 2010 at 11:14 am

@*DI*: The way Canadians tell the Roman story: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zv1j9erks2Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zv1j9erks2Y) (Not controversial to me- one of my favorite SCTV bits… also a big “5 Neat Guys” fan)

**Gary** says:
January 28, 2010 at 12:47 pm

That's Robert Graves in 1937? He already looks ancient but he lived to be 90 and died in 1985. Behold the effects of trench warfare.

**buzz** says:
January 28, 2010 at 3:02 pm

For those looking for a serious answer as to whether our civilization is more Greco-Roman or Judeo-Christian, I recommend the books of historian Rodney Stark.

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- 2: Comic Covers
- 3: Black & White World
- 4: Sears 1934
- 5: Comic ads
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- Lint: the Institute Tumblr
- PopCrush
- Screedblog
- Shorpy.com
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July 2013
June 2013
May 2013
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March 2013
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September 2012
August 2012

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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?
From Stephen Foster to “Brockman, to the ants submits,” or, How the Brain Works

Looking at today’s news stories, talking about headlines, said: Election fills the seat once held by Dick Day. I heard it as music, Camptown-Races meter: election fills the seat once held! Dick Day! Dick Day! (Every time we do a story on Dick Day I want to mention his daughters, Sunny and Yester, but that would be lying.) Having thought that, I couldn’t get Camptown Races out of my head. After a while I heard Yosemite Sam singing it. Then I heard Sylvester Cat schinging it, possibly while he held a trash can lid in one hand while picking out garbage from the bins with the other.

Then another piece of information inserted itself: a couple of guys looking at each other with instant recognition of something that had to be done, finally, then walking almost with exaggerated precision to do it, while singing “Camptown Races.” My brain scrambled for images to fit that nebulous thought, and came up with Lou Grant and Murray doing something to Ted Baxter. Dunking him in water? Then I realized it wasn’t Yosemite Sam I was thinking of; it was Foghorn Leghorn. He’d sung that, or whistled it, while...
setting up some trap for the Dawg, or perhaps dunking him in water or pummeling his backside with a plank of wood.

But the Lou + Murray having a moment of mental sync, then doing something with exaggerated motions, stuck. Couldn't be any other TV show; I don't know any TV show well enough. Didn't seem right. Couldn't recall. Damn. Senile. Everything in the head all a-meltin' together -

No! Got it! I was thinking of the moment in “Singin’ in the Rain!” When they all realize it's time to pull the curtain and reveal the hateful star for the fraud she is, they smile and march and yank the ropes and justice is done.

Whew!

What the hell did this have to do with “Camptown Races”?

Nothing. But it did make me wonder: what did people daydream about before popular culture? History? Religion? Geneology? Was I suffering from some sort of condition exacerbated by the internet culture of link and remix? (God help me, just writing that made me think of a Lincoln Remix – say, take that funny video of the Lincoln robot slumping over, set it to Elvis Costello's “I Can't Stand Up” – which you would think would be a natural for an America's Funniest Home Video sequence, right? But I’ll bet they've never used it. One of their writers is an old Mystery Science guy. I follow three funny MST guys on Twitter. Hello! Can I have a cookie? I am in the sixth grade! I have a doggie!

This would be the point where you'd hear a needle scratching across a record, a sound that no longer means what it originally did – someone bumped the record player – but means a sharp break with the content and intention of what you'd heard before.) Oh, it's possible. I'd worry if I wasn't able to retrace all these thoughts back to their original position.

All of which makes me think again of that Star Trek episode where Picard's stranded with an alien who speaks only in allusions to his species' mythology. Darmak at Viagra, when the walls fell! Cool episode, but such a thing would be impossible. Never mind the technical difficulties – I always assume they had another language for science, perhaps nothing but numbers – the meaning of an allusion would change over time. Like the sound of a scratching needle. The other day I almost tweeted (and there's a new standard for inconsequentiality) that “I, for one, welcome the day when people no longer say “I, for one welcome.” Because it's old. It has to do with the Homer on the Space Shuttle ep of the Simpsons; anchorman Ken Brockman believes ants have taken over the shuttle, and says “I, for one, welcome our new insect overlords.” So a culture that speaks only in allusions could say “Brockman, to the ants submits,” and mean “rote, cowardly, reflexive submission to authority;” OR it could mean someone drawing all the wrong conclusions from scant evidence. To the hip kids steeped in sarcasm it could mean a written meme long past its expiration date.

I had fun attempting to sift through the mental junk-trunk; artificial
intelligence could possibly repeat the process, but it would be a matter of matching stored objects against each other, without the imperfections memory inflicts on the original. IF object = Lou & Murray AND IF object contains “Camptown Races” AND motion [subset synchronized] then return value

Value = 0

This operation took .004 seconds

The computer certainly wouldn't wonder why the Camptown Ladies sang doo-dah, anyway. If they did walk around singing that, the 19th century was much more peculiar than we know.

**Oh, the iPad?** Want. I have more to say, but it's for a paying column on the Hughniverse, and I'll be on Newsbreak talking about it tomorrow. My video predicting what it would be is here. That's it for today; no updates, but tomorrow will have the usual glee-spree with 100 Mysteries, Comic Ads, and Sears 1934.

Finally, re: that Singin' in the Rain scene: why did someone do this? WHY?

![A Further Misappropriation Of “Singin' In The R...](http://www.lileks.com/bleat/myvids/0138.mp4)

Oh, and: this. 1:38. So I was right. Whew.
Oh, and this:

And.
Bottom line: in 5 minutes I can find video annotations for a bunch of stuff that ran through my head during a cigar break. I love the modern world.

110 RESPONSES TO how the brain works. or doesn’t

browniejr says:
January 28, 2010 at 6:26 pm

@fizzbin: The future is now, my friend:
(interesting how it has been updated to reference the iPad…)
If I buy an iPADD, do I get my own Starship? (or at least a shuttlecraft)

@matt: “Kiteo, his eyes closed”

browniejr says:
January 28, 2010 at 6:38 pm

Mr. Lileks: the code attached to “Newer Entries” and “Older Entries” is reversed (clicking on Older entries takes you forward in time, clicking on Newer Entries takes you backwards… unless this is how your brain works, I think it is wrong.

Joe Broderick says:
January 28, 2010 at 7:05 pm

“… the code attached to “Newer Entries” and “Older Entries” is reversed…”

The OLD is always NEW again at lileks.com!
Nancy says:
January 28, 2010 at 10:02 pm

@Borderman
“I think Foghorn Leghorn (by way of Mel Blanc) sounds more like he is from Virginia or the Carolinas than Texas. Senator Claghorn on the radio show was from South Carolina.”
I say it is for sure a “low country” accent.

“Brockman, to the Ants Submits” - from Noise Is Information says:
January 29, 2010 at 11:17 am

[...]
Read it and laugh and smile and shake your head. Posted in brains, funny, media, odd | No Comments »[...]

DensityDuck says:
January 29, 2010 at 1:40 pm

“But it did make me wonder: what did people daydream about before popular culture?”

My buddy and I were talking about this on our podcast; we were wondering how people envisioned excitement and action before there were explosions.

JamesS says:
January 29, 2010 at 7:41 pm

@browniejr:

I'm thinking of the game console add where the kid is complaining about his grandma always hogging the device to watch movies, and the game console guy tells him that when she was his age, she got to play “with a hoop and a stick.” - The kid keeps whining, and the game console guy keeps repeating “with a stick!”

Brownie, do you really believe that was the extent of fun for kids back in “grandma”'s day? What kids do is not “popular culture” — or at least it wasn't back in the day. Did the exposition about the popularity of opera and theater among the “common people” not register?

When the time comes that we accept commercials as actual documented history, we have entered the world of “Idiocrasy.” (Which, BTW, is the most horrific vision of dystopia I've ever witnessed on the big screen, and that includes “Soylent Green,” “1984,” and “Brave New World.”)

browniejr says:
January 29, 2010 at 8:26 pm

@JamesS: I got your point about opera and chamber music/theater and how it was ‘common,’ then became more high brow/elite or “classical” over time. Whether it is kids playing with hoops or Joe the Blacksmith throwing tomatoes at the Shakespeare play, it is ALL part of the culture of the time—whether a specific aspect of people's lives endures/goes on to fit in the “popular” culture category or in the “classical” culture is an interesting phenomenon worth study.
Kids had fun doing a lot of different things (they always have.)

I find it ironic that both of us invoked movies/commercials/media in our posts— I think that this is a reflection of OUR culture— time will tell if it is “popular,” “classical” or otherwise.

**A couple of random quotes... « The TrogloPundit says:**

[...] Everyone thinks I just step aside for a second or two, grunt, blink, and work pops out of my forehea... [...]

**Fred says:**

February 12, 2010 at 6:58 pm

Am I the only one not seeing the pictures?
So. I’m on the phone for the weekly radio interview on the Hewitt show, and crrrrsssh! (that's the sound that says you've gone live) he introduces me and asks and question, and just as I open my trap to say something THE ALARMS GO OFF and the phone goes dead. Well. The reason for the alarm was obvious; the system's main sensors are in the coldest part of the house, and when the temp gets below 49, off it goes. I didn’t know it also cut the phones. Probably does this when there's a break-in, too.

Oh, don’t bother your pretty little head dialing 911; so many numbers! We’ll take care of it.

Took me a few minutes to kill the system. Got back on the air in time to say something or other. That sort of day; that sort of week. Earlier in the afternoon I went to daughter's orchestra concert, the usual vague sawing conducted with knitted brows and palpable concentration. Delightful. Afterwards we went to the grocery store, a jaunt that’s made her roll her eyes for half a decade. Me, I remember the compliant years when every outing with Daddy was fun, but she’s no longer in a cart and has that damnable thing experts call “a mind of her own” and the attendant sense of sarcasm that infects American children at a preternatural age. But still: fun. I love how she gives me the mock big pleading eyes in a parody of a child making the genuine big pleading eyes.

We had an argument on the way home, and I told her she had made a logically inconsistent assertion.
“Oh like you don’t.” Pause. “What does that mean?”

“Never mind. But don’t try to slip one past me. I will see through your arguments for years to come until I am old and slow and dim, and then you’ll get no satisfaction when you fool me, because you will dealing with pity and sadness.”

We really do have conversations like this. I mimed a toothless old man sounding confused, then said “your mommy is a lawyer and your daddy uses words for a living too, so you had better bring your best game. That’s all I’m saying.”

“Oh, you’re a writer, but what do you do? Blah blah blah on the TV.”

Zing! ZING! It’s all in good fun. But I do wonder what sort of example I’ve set by always being there when the bus shows up, or the concert starts, or it’s time for the annual Fun Run or the Readathon event at school. Daddy can’t be too busy. This is my curse: Everyone thinks I just step aside for a second or two, grunt, blink, and work pops out of my forehead fully-formed. Writers who type a lot aren’t seen as working. It’s the ones who sit alone and stare at the paper and pace and make notes, endless notes, and produce a book every 14 years – that’s work.

Everyone else’s job either looks incredibly easy or boring, unless it involves lots of math, or anesthesia.

One thing I don’t do: get my ads from Google’s Popular Science archives. A) It spoils things, because I like to have possession of the items in the great Closet of Mysteries, and B) I’d forgotten all about it. Spent some time there tonight, and while I’d love to use some ads for the 30s site, no.

But that doesn’t stop me from doing something here with full credit. This ad caught my eye:
It’s the end of the 30s, and the style is late Moderne – not as hard and fascistic as Depression Moderne could be. Rounded, vaguely nautical, futuristic, romantic.

Say there: An address. You don’t suppose . . . yes.
This being Friday, it's a triple-shot of updates. The Sears 1934 has some great stuff, including a tiny mention of a book that advises young girls how to deal with Boys and Life and That Body Thing; by some miracle the book is on the google, and I saw the board of directors who endorsed the tome. Imagine this crew telling you about the dangers of letting a boy kiss you on the fourteenth date:

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

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

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is HERE!
Sears1934 is here.

Comic Ads from the 40s is here.

100 Mysteries – a disappointing entry – is here.

The Friday column is here.

Three more news videos, one more column, piano practice – and then I am done. Forgive me for the things I haven’t gotten around to this week; that’s what the weekend is for. Have a grand weekend!
Pass it along, if you wish

65 RESPONSES TO friday, jan. 29

Mark E. Hurling says:
January 29, 2010 at 5:21 pm

No I didn’t, and thank you ever so much for the link. I have an actual LP of the Bonzos. My daughter grew up hearing me sing “Tigers” along with “Werewolves of London” and my repertoire of Mr. Blanc. I’ll send her this link also. Be advised, that seismic event you may hear of in Oregon will be her massive eye roll.

madCanada says:
January 29, 2010 at 6:48 pm

It would be interesting to do a forensic economic study of WW2, and see if the War really was won by War Bonds or not.

Jan says:
January 29, 2010 at 8:43 pm

“You have a right to enjoy all the advantages gained by sparkling, lovely hair.”

Its content lifted from the Nora Lee ad for longer looking hair, the proposal was ratified by 3/4 of the States and is now known as the Biden Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Grebmar says:
January 29, 2010 at 8:50 pm

Mineral oil is NOT a laxative. Repeat. NOT a laxative. Just a lubricant for effective elimination. They sure got their point across.

Jan says:
January 29, 2010 at 8:58 pm

Sears could have saved a bit of ink if they put the books on sex under “Handy Information for the Handy Man,” a dual-purpose heading if ever there was one.

madCanada says:
January 29, 2010 at 9:14 pm

THE PRESIDENT gave the Republicans a great education today. I’m sure they learned nothing.


RJ says:
January 29, 2010 at 11:29 pm

“My daughter grew up hearing me sing “Tigers” along with
“Werewolves of London” ...

How's this for a stretched-to-the-max connection. You mention Warren Zevon in a post headed by a picture from Alvarado St. in LA, which reminded me of his song “Carmelita”, which includes the lyrics:

Well, I pawned my Smith Corona
And I went to meet my man
He hangs out down on Alvarado Street
By the Pioneer chicken stand

What a great, bleak song. Rock noir, if you will.

RJ says:
January 29, 2010 at 11:30 pm

madCanada: we have plenty of other places to read about politics.

Russell says:
January 30, 2010 at 10:17 am

The picture of Frances Willard took me back to my days at Northwestern University (where there is a dormitory named in her honour), when Evanston, IL was dry and was home to the national headquarters for the esteemed Women's Christian Temperance Union.
My dormitory was situated on the plot of land in back of that modest brick monument to sobriety, so naturally our dorm t-shirts, emblazoned with Ms Willard's likeness, boldly proclaimed “We're Behind The WCTU!”

*Di* says:
January 30, 2010 at 3:32 pm

@RJ-
“Rock noir“ I love it.
And I love that the building is still there in almost its original form.

And can I say that it's a bit easier to be a female today than back when . . . all that creepy equipment, and restraint garments,etc.

Wendy Hill says:
February 1, 2010 at 5:12 am

You comment on the Sears catalogue that rubber hot water bottles are no longer seen. This is England, they are available at every High Street Chemist (Pharmacy), and I have two in my bed as we speak because without them it's COLD. (They are not sold with the vaginal douche attachment though).

St. Chris says:
February 1, 2010 at 12:04 pm

That's not Frances E. Willard — it's Dr. Eldon Tyrell!

Emily says:
February 1, 2010 at 6:49 pm

That is some heavy duty respectability. They don't even have necks—just faces.
hpoulter says:
February 1, 2010 at 7:35 pm

Wendy Hill:
February 1, 2010 at 5:12 am
You comment on the Sears catalogue that rubber hot water bottles are no longer seen. This is England, they are available at every High Street Chemist (Pharmacy), and I have two in my bed as we speak because without them it's COLD. (They are not sold with the vaginal douch attachment though).

And P.G. Wodehouse fans know the best use of a hot water bottle is to furtively puncture it with a darning needle on a stick whilst the hwb user is abed.

hpoulter says:
February 1, 2010 at 7:36 pm

Dang – effed the closing tag again.
default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?