Daughter comes home from school, and says the same thing she says every day:

“Guess what?”

I love hearing that; you never know where it's going. And you certainly can't guess.

“What?”

“Today after gym we got . . .” she makes scare quotes. “THE TALK.”

“The birds and the bees?”

“No, periods and stuff.”

So now we know: the birds are periods, and the bees are stuff. There was great debate when I was in grade school over SEX ED, as the dreaded topic was called, but it never amounted to anything, and was left in the hands of the parents. I still remember The Talk: I was walking with my dad on the beach at Detroit Lakes, and he said:

“Doctor Christu says I should tell you the facts of life.”

“Uh huh,” I said.

And that was the end of the conversation.
Usually I write these things at night – unless you believe I get up at 5 AM and bang out thoughts accumulated the previous day and stored overnight so they and ripen nicely. So this is small, because I was up doing election stuff. Writing or talking. The most “modern” part of the day was doing a radio interview while I watched the host in a small browser window on the ancillary screen. In ten years these will all be replaced by holographic projections, you know. They will be chunky and look like late-80s or early 90s computer graphics, which means people will laugh at them twenty years later.

But you know what? At the time we were pret-ty damned impressed with them, because they were the start of the New World of Computers. No one had one, but we’d all have one soon. (Actually, I had one, starting in 1982, but that’s another story.) (TI/99, if you must) This was the third wave of the Computer in the popular imagination: first you had the 50s notion of the Iron Brain, full of tubes, making implacable calculations; then the 60s idea of the all-powerful IBMs whirring away in sleek black skyscrapers, compiling data on spinning magnetic tape spools; they weren’t malevolent or omnipotent, but tools in the hands of the Establishment.

Then we got our own and everything changed.

You know what summed up the future of computers in the early 80s? The GRID. I’ve written about this before, I know, but because they could generate grids, and make them pitch up and down, this was used all over the place to indicate the future. Such as:
Great theme, too – grandeur and ominous and madness.

Anyway. More tomorrow. Part of the problem here: I wrote all day. Filed eight pieces. So at the end of the day, no. Off to finish the new Sherlock Holmes episode; apologies, and I’ll see you tomorrow.

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76 RESPONSES TO this, and little more

**xrayguy** says:
November 3, 2010 at 12:42 pm

@ Stan Smith
I recall National Lampoon dong a bit in the magazine about “The Talk” at a school-the boys exit the classroom to see a film (“I am Joes prostate?”) while the girls all ask the female teachers highly advanced gynecological and anatomy questions that she answers in equally advanced medical terms. You’re right, no wonder boys don’t have a clue.

**HelloBall** says:
November 3, 2010 at 1:08 pm

My little brother and I must have been under-curious because my parents were able to evade The Talk until the fateful year (’67) I hit 7th grade. We all got a one-week reprieve from PE to attend a sex-ed class that was conducted by the Home Ec teacher, boys and girls both in attendance.

We watched a film strip (remember those?) with cartoon drawings of a boy and girl as they grew from age 11 to age 16 or so. When the first slide came up where they were naked, including close-ups of the really interesting parts, it was silent enough in the classroom to hear the moisture evaporating off our unblinking eyeballs.
The truly sadistic part of the whole affair was getting called on to stand at our desks and read aloud from the handouts. It was much harder for us boys than it was for the girls, nudge nudge say no more wink wink.

25 years later, I had The Talk with my son when he was 11. He thanked me and hugged me for a long while afterwards, and I like to think he wasn't biting his cheek to keep from laughing.

*bgbear (roger h)* says:
November 3, 2010 at 1:12 pm

well son, you have a floppy drive which will then become a hard drive. . .

*swschrad* says:
November 3, 2010 at 1:16 pm

@bgbear: more like a core dump 😃
sorry.

no, I'm not. The Monitor is always running underneath, you see. it's a recurrent basic routine.

*Wramblin' Wreck* says:
November 3, 2010 at 1:16 pm

My first introduction to computers was the mainframe PDP-4 at the Colorado School of Mines, in 1972. We used punch cards programmed in Fortran. This was a required freshman course. Later, in upper level courses, we were allowed to use the teletype terminals to program. If I remember correctly, the entire school had 20 terminals. At night we would use all our computer time playing ELIZA.

My first home computer was a MITS 8008; it was essentially a breadboard kit. It had 1k of memory and could only be programmed in machine language using the switches on the front panel. Essentially an expensive toy but it sparked my interest in assembly language and later, ladder logic.

The first “real” computer was a TI99/4A. My wife and I would play a dungeon and dragons type game (loaded onto the computer from a cassette drive) into the wee hours of the morning.

I tried my best to stay abreast of the technology. This worked until about 1990. Now the technology is so far beyond me it all seems unreal. The computer I now use for 3dCAD work has a GPU that is more powerful than my first five work computers combined! Where will it end?

*Troy Z* says:
November 3, 2010 at 1:23 pm

While on the topic of early home computers: if the Kids Today want a sample of what was formerly available as a gaming console, try this ZX Spectrum emulator, which plays titles all the way back to 1982: [http://www.zxspecrum.net/](http://www.zxspecrum.net/). This is what you pull up when your kids complain their Xboxes get all laggy. You little whippersnappers, we had 8 bits of processing and we were HAPPY. No, seriously, 1984’s “Lode Runner” is still as addictive as ever. (Surprisingly, the 1985 entry for “Blade Runner” is completely...
transfixing me just from the title screen alone. Hit the space bar once to hear the chiptune version of the Vangelis score.)

Wramblin’ Wreck says:
November 3, 2010 at 1:29 pm

@juanito – John Davey
6 and 9-year old daughters! I predict that in about 3-4 years your life will get really interesting! Menarche is a very interesting experience for girls. About ten years of surging, fizzing hormones that takes away their minds. Just take solace in the fact that eventually they get over it and become real people.

The best solution for you when the hormones hit is to get in a heavy wooden box in your basement, nail the lid on and cover it with a heavy blanket and hope that the storm passes over you.

Knowing first hand what teenage boys go through, I thought that raising a girl couldn’t be nearly as bad (“sugar and spice and everything nice.”) Well, I was wrong. They are so cute when they are little and so nice as adults. It’s just the interim that gets a little stormy.

SeanF says:
November 3, 2010 at 2:01 pm

A couple of people have mentioned Commodore 64s, but my first computer was a Commodore PET. Model 4016, I think. Still got it, sitting in the core floor, but I don’t know if it will still boot up or not.

I’m not worried about giving “The Talk” to my kids.

“You want to know where babies come from? China. We had to fly over there and bring you home.”

JerseyAmy says:
November 3, 2010 at 2:04 pm

My mom got me Are You There God? It’s Me Margaret when I was 9 or so. I don’t think it was supposed to replace the Talk or anything, but because I loved Judy Blume. (I don’t think she even knew the subject matter – not that she would have cared.) It definitely helped me know the basics. Later that same year our Girl Scout troop (with parental permission I assume) showed a video and gave out pamphlets about “Growing Up and Liking It.” (Because isn’t puberty enjoyable?) I think at some point later she attempted to have a puberty talk with me while we were doing a sewing project together, but by then I knew the basics and wanted to be spared the embarrassment so I kept changing the subject back to sewing. Eventually she got the hint. We never had a sex talk, but I think she knew I was a good kid so she didn’t worry.

Uncle Joe says:
November 3, 2010 at 2:09 pm

Your old friend, the brass lantern, is at your feet.

>}

Ben says:
November 3, 2010 at 2:09 pm
I never got “the talk” from any parents… School took care of it, and I think everybody was ok with that. The parents didn't really want to talk about it, and the school was liberal enough to be honest and factual about it. The extent of “talking” I got from my parents was “If any man ever asks to touch your parts, run away.” It never came up, fortunately.

The first computer I remember having in our house, when I was a kid, was an IBM 8088 (aka the “PC”). I think we probably had another computer before that, but I was too young to remember. I know we also had a Commodore 64, but I’m not sure which we got first… My dad wouldn’t let us touch the PC, so he bought us a a PC Jr. Pointless, but at least it was early exposure to DOS. Computers didn’t really get interesting to me until the awe-inspiring 386 came out, and my dad dropped $5000 to get one of the earliest models. Wasn't really allowed to touch that one either, but you know I wanted to.

Ben says:
November 3, 2010 at 2:21 pm

Ross:
Oh. My. Lord. I just did the Google Maps Japan-to-China directions...

Ha, that is pretty funny… But it used to be funnier. A couple years ago, if you looked for directions from California to Hawaii, you would be instructed to swim. I'm guessing their legal department put a quick stop to that, and that must be why they say “Jet ski across the Pacific Ocean” to get to China. At least that might be possible to do without dying, as long as you have enough fuel.

Kevin says:
November 3, 2010 at 2:37 pm

I suspect that, in parts of the Bay Area here, the socket-plug analogy is replaced by an allusion to dueling Light Sabers.

On a less perverse note, though I never saw the film, I was pleased here to see the “Black Hole” video, because Jeb Rosebrook was our neighbor when I was growing up. He also wrote “Junior Bonner,” which I believe was more favorably received.

bgbear (roger h) says:
November 3, 2010 at 2:47 pm

you can get direction from “Here” to “There” and also from “hell ” and “back”.

Ed Singel says:
November 3, 2010 at 3:48 pm

Since I’m an engineer (was with Hughes Aircraft Space & Comm) my first computer was a homebrew, made from circuit card kits from a place called Jade Computer, along with a wire-wrapped motherboard and a front panel I designed and built from piece parts.

A good friend of mine at Hughes developed an interesting investment strategy. Every time I would buy a new computer, he
bought stock in the company that made it. Thirty years later, he has a house in Palos Verdes and a condo on Maui, and I have a garage full of old computers.

**swschrad says:**
November 3, 2010 at 3:56 pm

@Ed Singal: ahh, Jade. they and Godbout had interesting little catalogs, to be sure. I was able to talk Godbout of out one of the S100 6-slot compact backplanes when they decided not to mass-produce them, but between newsman's pay and the changing state of the art, I never got it populated with anything.

but I made a temporarily-working CMOS terminal before I got the Atari. lots and lots of 22/44 pin cards to segment the circuitry onto.

I suspect rampant noise and crosstalk is why it didn't get skins on the angle-iron frame and last a while. had a nice old Data 100 keyboard for it, too. ah, well.

**lanczos says:**
November 3, 2010 at 4:15 pm

First computer to USE in 1966: IBM 1620-D [Punch card input and output; Fortran II; 20,000 “character” memory; IBM typewriter printing (not a Selectric, just a typewriter)]

First computer to OWN: Original Mac (the BIG one, with 256K, not the original 128K!)

An aside: Bought a new Mac G4/350MHz in 2000, and used it until a Mac-mini retired it a couple of years ago. Recently installed Debian on it and discovered some great scientific apps. Also discovered that the ATLAS-BLAS-LAPACK libs support the PPC AltiVec engine. My tests show that the little 350MHz G4 can get as much as 780MFlops with the optimized BLAS libs! That was World-class performance for mid-80s mainframes! Not bad for a machine that sells for about $40 now…

**steveH says:**
November 3, 2010 at 4:33 pm

My first computer experience was college programming classes around 1975 in machine language (HP 3000, pushing front panel buttons to input instructions, later graduated to paper tape), BASIC (HP3000, punched cards) and Fortran 66 (some CDC ironmongery in a back room we were never allowed to enter, lots of batches of punched cards).

Then I built and helped program a Cromemco S-100 system to run some aircraft subsystem simulator gadgets at a flight school that trained Japan Airlines pilots up through the mid-70s.

First personally owned computer was an Apple//e, because Apple employees got a discount on one system (or two?) per year. (My last finished project there was the Apple//c Reference manual. The //c got all of five seconds screen time near the beginning of the movie “2010”, with an experimental flat-panel display. Shortly after, I was laid off along with 1500 others.) Nowadays, it’s MacBook Pro/Air and some iMacs around the house.

The Talk? It’s been a while… I think by the time my dad got around to bringing it up, I’d picked up the rough idea from the encyclopedia and various physiology texts from the library. He seemed relieved to
not have to lecture.

**Pencilpal** says:  
November 3, 2010 at 4:34 pm

I like the graphic photo slide show at the top of the page, foliage is much prettier than those disturbing Charles Schwab commercials.  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPXXHTLYmCw

**Patrick** says:  
November 3, 2010 at 4:43 pm

@bgbear

Or would that be firmware?

Nudgenudgewinkwinksaynomoresaynomore

“Well, son, when you have a USB flash drive and wish to insert it into a USB port, you must make sure one is compatible with the other. Also, it is wise to make sure your flash drive is write-protected, so that you don’t end up downloading a virus. While that computer seems fast and sleek, it may very well contain a virus.

Some computers may come with a fire(arm)wall, so you want to be very careful. Some fire(arm)walls will stop at nothing to prevent your USB flash drive from harming the computer they protect, or other computers out there...”

**juanito - John Davey** says:  
November 3, 2010 at 5:54 pm

**Wramblin' Wreck** says:  
November 3, 2010 at 1:29 pm

@juanito – John Davey

6 and 9-year old daughters! I predict that in about 3-4 years your life will get really interesting! ....

_The best solution for you when the hormones hit is to get in a heavy wooden box in your basement, nail the lid on and cover it with a heavy blanket and hope that the storm passes over you._

Oh, they'll be at the Convent well before that.....

**DNJAX** says:  
November 3, 2010 at 6:11 pm

Wow ! Compared to the talk I got you had the full unabridged version.

**swschrad** says:  
November 3, 2010 at 8:08 pm

_time for an old one, I guess…

_practice Safe Hex. put a condom over your floppies before use._
browniejr says:
November 3, 2010 at 8:31 pm

@Gene Dillenburg: “murple your gormplatz to a nickety framistan”
would be a great name for a rock band…
Or a good euphemism to use during “The Talk”

Surprised no one else picked up on it.

Benzin Bruder says:
November 3, 2010 at 9:10 pm

Back when computer screens were not more than black background w/ green letters I remember a tech support guy telling the following:

A secretary was trying to retrieve a data file from a disk. (Symphony, no doubt) After many fruitless attempts she summoned tech support for assistance.

The guy tried his best to get the data but to no avail. Disgustedly, she snatched the disk from his hand. “what good are you?” she snapped.

She then turned to place the floppy in its usual storage location – held to the side of a file cabinet by a magnet.

Seattle Dave says:
November 7, 2010 at 2:34 am

In middle and high school I learned BASIC on some sort of mainframe. The maker’s name will probably come to me at some point, most likely just seconds after I post this.

My parents never gave me “the talk.” They bought me a book called _Where Did I Come From?_ with cartoon illustrations. I remember being amused that one of the authors was named Peter Mayle. Many years later I was reading _A Year in Provence_ and realized it was by the same guy.

My first computer was an AT&T PC6300 I bought from a fraternity brother. I used it for a couple months and then bought one of these new Apple Macintosh Classics everyone said were so easy to use. A Mac PowerBook was next, then a Performa, then a clamshell iBook, and I’m now using a MacBook Pro. (I still have all the Macs and they all still work.)
This, and little more | The Bleat.

PopCrush
Screedblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

October 2012
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A few years ago, as part of my Customize Every Aspect of Life plan, I got a clock radio that would play an iPod. I would be awakened first by the wake-up call from the Andromeda Strain, and if I wasn’t jogged to consciousness by the voice of the lady from Des Moines who made her living recording messages for secret underground facilities, a song would follow: Wake up and Sing, a 30s ditty that provides a spry and merry start to any day. This worked well for years. Last week, before leaving for Florida, I tried to find a light timer, and unplugged what I thought was a timer behind the radio; unplugged the radio instead. Didn’t plug it back in.

Returned home, plugged it in. The battery power kept my settings – but it believed that the time was now 1 hour ahead, as though the device missed me and synced to Florida time. I tried to change the time. It would not permit any argument to the contrary. I tried to change the alarm settings, which had somehow become 5:45 AM. No good. Well. The only way to wipe it would be a removal of its backup battery, right? Find the battery hatch . . . ah. It’s covered with a door held in place with a tiny screw. A screw. Because the forces of nature regularly sweep through the average American bedroom, and rip out batteries nestled within an electronic device. The screw was so minute I had to use an eyeglasses screwdriver, and even then I couldn’t get it open. So I said to hell with it and unplugged it and used my iPhone as an alarm.

5:45 AM: BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
I got up, looked at the clock radio: nothing was displayed on the front. No power. Yet it beeped. It was dead, but still it sang. I hit OFF.

5:46 AM: BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

I picked it up and put it in another room and put a pillow over it. Around six it gave up.

Tonight I tried again to wipe its brain. This time I used a pliers to turn the eyeglass screwdriver, and withdrew a 2/3rd inch long screw. Opened the hatch. Inside was a button battery wedged so tight it had to be dug out with a screwdriver. So glad it was held in place so securely; otherwise it might have just flung itself out the bottom of the unit, pushed the alarm clock a foot in the air, ricocheted off the bureau, pinged off the roof and embedded itself in my eyeball.

It consented to being reset, so all is well.

**All is well** more or less elsewhere; the shearing of the trees continues, with the wind picking off more and more leaves. A few trees still hold on to their full compliment, but they’re the anomaly. Driving home from work today I was paused at a light – looked up to see late afternoon sun, that weak wan washed-out light, and a skyline of empty branches. It felt normal. That's how it always works. Everything becomes normal, because it's in the background and you're thinking about dinner and sleep and what you have to do tomorrow. When you don't work outside the seasons are a theater set.

The standard shot from the stoop, today:
While I was on the trip I read a book. Or, if you like, I read a book while I was on the trip. Either works. It was “The Reversal” by Michael Connolly, one of my favorite mystery writers. I think we had a drink about 20 years ago, not that he’d remember. I hope the book was a set-up for a sequel, because when it ended I was certain that the electronic version had omitted the final chapter. It felt like running off a cliff and hitting a brick wall face-first about 10 feet into the fall. Unexpected, and not in a good way. I got the ebook version because A) that’s how I read all books nowadays, because I’m just that modern a guy, and B) it was an Enhanced version. It had short videos throughout, acting out some of the scenes. Most of them were greeny night-vision shots of the bad guy walking around with the sort of vigorous purpose you usually associate with the end credits of Buckaroo Banzai.

You know, this. The only end credits in the history of the movies where the main characters just walk around to a tune that wasn’t in the rest of the movie. (If memory serves.) This was the 80s, right here:
Anyway. The enhanced extras weren't technically impressive, but they weren't intended as such. Usually I would resist literal interruptions of this sort, because you like to conjure the world of the book in your own way. It would be interesting to develop some sort of brain-scan that downloaded people's visual conception of a book, how the characters looked, how the rooms were laid out. It would be as varied as the number of readers. There is no there there. Sometimes when I'm reading a book I stop, think about the room where the action takes place, freeze it, remove the characters and the descriptions of the environment, and trace it back to some archetypical room I inhabited once. (It's surprising how many books take place in my grandparents' house.) It's a mistake to provide literal clues, but there's nothing wrong with a little documentary at the end that tells you what the author was thinking.

I mention all this because I'm doing the same for the ebook of “Falling Up the Stairs.” I will have to write and talk and appear in the videos, of course. This will be expected of authors in the future, and woe to those who can't rise to the task. It's not enough to write it. It's not enough to promote it. You have to be a personality, don't you know. Eventually this means books become episodes in a personal channel, and you'll be expected to do something between books to satisfy the audience. The next Hemingway will be obliged to kill himself on a webcam feed.

As a product, the “Enhanced Edition” of the book was rather basic and thin, but in a few years it will look like those early Edison films shot on paper stock and displayed on bedsheets. This is not a new art form, but a new version of an old one – and once we become accustomed to expecting Enhancement, the limitations of the Kindle will be apparent. It should take no more than five years before the basic Kindle is the equivalent of the printed book, preferred by people who like the old familiar experience without needless technological enhancements.

Well. A column night, which I've tapped out between dipping into the Bleat. Also watching “The Walking Dead,” which is certainly better than its predecessor, “The Jogging Dead.” I'm not a big zombie fan, because they became pointlessly, inexplicably hip, and the funny-zombie movie genre...
doubled back on itself rather quickly, but the first half of “24 Days Later” was one of the more harrowing things I’ve seen, and this TV version is good so far.

“Wake up and Sing” would be a great title for a zombie movie, by the way. At least it belongs on the soundtrack.

–

Updates et al return next week, but there will be Bleatplus tomorrow and some other things. Thursday already? Thursday already. Enjoy!

54 RESPONSES TO wake up and sing

xrayguy says:
November 7, 2010 at 11:13 pm

Rawhide/Clancy Brown, now the voice of Mr. Krabs on Spongebob Squarepants. “Ahoy there, yer fired”.

xrayguy says:
November 7, 2010 at 11:14 pm

Also, I kept thinking Perfect Tommy was Randolph Mantooth from “Emergency”.

Soozcat says:
November 9, 2010 at 4:33 am

“Sometimes when I’m reading a book I stop, think about the room where the action takes place, freeze it, remove the characters and the descriptions of the environment, and trace it back to some archetypical room I inhabited once.”

Yes. This. I just re-read “We Have Always Lived in The Castle” by Shirley Jackson, and while reading I realized that my perception of the Blackwood house floor plan is almost entirely modeled on that of my grandparents’ house. Almost all good books have that particular quality: a well-defined sense of place given by the text, but overlaid on the layout of a house or building I already know well.

Vader says:
November 9, 2010 at 5:38 pm

There never was a next adventure of Buckaroo Banzai, was there?

Pity.

← Older Comments
Need some new sweats — or, as the Brits call them, “trainers.” Even though 99.7% of the people who wear them aren't training for anything, except perhaps an additional assault on the concepts of public decorum. I actually sweat in my sweats, since every night I do aerobics while watching some TV show I wouldn't watch if I was required to pay complete attention.

“Spartacus: Blood and Sand and Nipples,” for example. I love things Roman, and this is Roman enough, but it’s old-line Roman, where society consists entirely of Brit-accented upperclass twits and their wives (cracker-dry old schemers or ripe red-haired voluptuaries, nothing in between) and buff glistening gladiators. The twain intersect at dimly-lit parties where the slaves are either serving lark-brains-on-crackers or performing slo-mo theatrical sex acts. Yes. Of course. That’s exactly what Rome was like. One of those shows where people don’t have conversations, they have SPEECHES. Everyone talks in portentous SPEECHES. And then there’s the slo-mo splatter of combat. Somehow it takes you out of the moment when the blood drips on the camera lens. Makes me nostalgic for HBO’s “Rome,” which reveled in the quotidian details of life in the lesser districts. Makes you realize that in 2000 years they’ll make movies about our era, and everyone will be half-naked and sweaty while they commit mortgage fraud.

Anyway, sweats: I have but one request. Elastic ankles. These are rare; they have fallen out of fashion. Apparently I am supposed to enjoy the feel of
ankle-fabric untrammeled by cinches, flowing around like the hems of a pasha’s garment. I don’t. But I may have to accept this, if there are no other alternatives; the elastic on my “trainers” is as loose as a UN resolution. I took out the garbage tonight with one hand holding up my pants.

This week fled on wings of mercury, no?

No? Galloped on hooves of quicksilver? Bugged out on heels of WD-40? No? Fine. Either you don’t have the appropriate figure of speech, or the week moved slowly. Mine snapped past at a frightening pace, which is always a sign that things are busy and reasonably satisfying. Perhaps it’s the week after a vacation that sluices by like minnow in a brook – but no, that’s utterly counterintuitive. Wouldn’t you be slogged down by the return to grim duty? It wasn’t that long a vacation, though. So perhaps it’s a combination of post-vacation depression alleviated by the brevity of the vacation and the pleasures of the work to which I returned, plus some work-at-home days, and OH WHO CARES.

I had to be home, because school’s out. Again. It’s parent-teacher conference week. This afternoon I went to school to see how she was doing; she is doing fine. As I tweeted earlier, the metrics are frustrating – they’re numerical, complex, and speak a language of an educational system that’s developed a vocabulary impenetrable to parents. So the range is 216 to 222, and she’s 219. Great. Meaning? Put it in oldthink terms, brother. A B C D F. Or do those cold letters have too much of the cold tang of JUDGMENT?

When we were done I went down the hall to see another teacher who’d told my daughter “I know your dad,” and she told me and said his name, and I was like LOL WHUT? as the kids say. I had no idea. He’s the brother of a college-era roommate of the female persuasion. Which required some tricky locution, lest daughter things you LIVED WITH A GIRL BEFORE MOMMY. Nothing like that – it was a house chopped up into rooms, and since this was the swingin’ 80s, guys and gals alike would live in such quarters, at least until they tired of being an unofficial citizen in Slobovia. As it turned out his sister was one of my favorite friends in those days. You know those people in your life with whom you share a few key banal catch-phrases that mean nothing to anyone else, but refer back to some event forged in tears and recollected with amusement? Like that. You can repeat those phrases 20 years later, and you both get it, and laugh.

It’s infuriating how people fade away or sink into the deep, and there’s nothing you can do. There was a Great Divergence many years ago, and the social order forced in the basement of the Valli Pub fractured. Now. You may well think it’s preposterous to assume these things wouldn’t happen, since life consists of such fissures: grade school friends are lost to middle school, high school friends lost in the great new wave of college, college roommates forgotten when the workplace and the post-college clique of 20s-somethings takes over, and then this batch abandoned when kids and the Real Job and all the other anchors of adulthood are draped around your neck.
But this is the Midwest, where people stay in one place and things last. When I get together with the Giant Swede we talk about things that happened this morning, and things that happened 32 years ago. In a few days when I shoot the video for the “Falling up the Stairs” ebook, it will be in front of an apartment building where the Giant Swede lived as well, and I took over an apartment from the Crazy Uke's girlfriend, and Wes the Filmmaker lived downstairs, and Sam the Poet lived upstairs, and eventually he ended up living with the sister of the math teacher who told my daughter to say hello to your dad.

I drive past that apartment building once a month, at least.

So it's all here all the time. Which makes the fact that some people turn into ghosts all the more frustrating. Worse: ghosts who haunt only by their absence.

And that's what happened at the parent-teacher conference. You can imagine the chains of Marley that drape across every other intersection in my life.

Hey, here's the Out of Context Ad Challenge for the week, as I slowly return to the ruined schedule of updates:


75 RESPONSES TO return of out of context ad challenge
Sydney Brillo Duodenum says:
November 5, 2010 at 1:02 pm

Well, it's fairly obvious.
This is the tale of a man named Tink
His mouth exuded quite a stink
Before the mirror he vented spleen
'til the day he discovered Listerine

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
November 5, 2010 at 1:11 pm

I believe Mr. Ripley has nailed it. BELIEVE IT OR NOT!

bgbear (roger h) says:
November 5, 2010 at 1:24 pm

how talented that Mr. Ripley is.

JimK says:
November 5, 2010 at 1:37 pm

Walmart. Fruit-of-the-Loom sweats. Usually $7, sometimes $5,
online 2-for-$12. Elastic waist and ankle. Can't beat 'em for the $$.

GardenStater says:
November 5, 2010 at 1:56 pm

Of course, it could be referring to this guy:

bgbear (roger h) says:
November 5, 2010 at 2:07 pm

This is the tale of a man named Tink,
They thought him to be the missing link,
he grew an opposable thumb,
and now not so dumb,
to bad he can't get rid of his stink.

Kevin says:
November 5, 2010 at 2:24 pm

@maryjo meyer

Nice to see another fan of the “Dick van Dyke” show here. I believe that was one of the best-written shows ever, and without intending to, I learned a LOT about being funny, from watching that show. (My brothers and I still occasionally call each other “Berford.”)

Stewart says:
November 5, 2010 at 3:09 pm

I do believe that the ad is for Lava Soap, that gets those hands sparkling clean!
(Sorry, can't think of any Lava ad slogans or jingles.)
GardenStater says:
November 5, 2010 at 4:02 pm

Maybe it's the sequel to the book “Black Like Me.”

swschrad says:
November 5, 2010 at 4:31 pm

@Stewart: LAVA. burns the dirt off. and kills ya, so you don’t worry about it. step in some today.

that soap scrubbed you clean like a wire brush.

Mark E. Hurling says:
November 5, 2010 at 4:54 pm

LAVA not just for your hands. Good for teaching foul mouthed kids not to be so in future.

GardenStater says:
November 5, 2010 at 5:26 pm

I can’t believe I used to shower with LAVA. What was I, nuts?

Ryan Waddell says:
November 5, 2010 at 9:24 pm

Parent teacher conference WEEK? Holy moly. When I was in school, parent teacher conferences happened after school hours (still do, as far as I know). MN teachers must have a fantastic union.

alvo says:
November 6, 2010 at 12:42 am

Trainers are the British term for athletic shoes, not sweats.

Ross says:
November 6, 2010 at 8:30 am

Glad someone above posted about FotL sweats for you,Genial Host, as I was going to say I see classic, elastic-cuffed sweats all over the place.

Mark E. Hurling says:
“...thinking she was of the lebanese persuasion. Not that there's anything wrong with that.”
According to the hilarious Brit all-girl(as Ferguson says, I look forward to your letters) sketch comedy group, Smack the Pony, the correct term is “Lesbyterian”.

Karen in PA says:
November 6, 2010 at 5:48 pm

“Trainers” are sneakers, not sweats, or so the context always seems to suggest.

pfsm says:
November 6, 2010 at 7:56 pm
Washington's got that kind of a teachers' union too, with week-long early days for “teacher conferences”. That fine organization was one of the main funders of the tax-the-rich income tax initiative that was defeated Tuesday.

**PatchtheBun** says:
November 6, 2010 at 8:39 pm

The british call tennis shoes (or running shoes) trainers. Not sweats, as in exercise clothes.

**GardenStater** says:
November 7, 2010 at 8:19 pm

OK, so where's the solution? I feel like we're all waiting for a Lance Lawson answer....

**shesnailie** says:
November 8, 2010 at 9:48 am

 @_v – blaxatives?

**Ex-Brit** says:
November 8, 2010 at 11:13 am

22+ years ago, when I left the UK trainers were tennis shoes. I think the work you are searching for was Tracksuit. Obvious right, when you go to the track...you wear your tracksuit.

**swschrad** says:
November 8, 2010 at 12:01 pm

Emma Smith's Knockout Drops. for those difficult days. ask any husband.

(ducking)

**Trick Rider** says:
November 8, 2010 at 9:02 pm

Probably some sort of mood elevator. Though I can't say I blame Shadowtink for his bad mood. Looks like he got hit in the mouth with a basketball.

**Steve Ripley** says:
November 8, 2010 at 9:58 pm

I think James is miffed that so many of us corrected his use of “trainers”. Please, James, forgive us and provide the answer.

**Steve Ripley** says:
November 8, 2010 at 9:59 pm

“I can’t believe I used to shower with LAVA. What was I, nuts?”

No, but probably thin-skinned.
Return of Out of Context Ad Challenge | The Bleat.

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I DO NOT WANT THE STICKER

Not to sound like a total font dork, but I almost switched car washes because they dumped a cool logo for the worst variety of Copperplate I’d ever seen. Yes, nothing says “modern technology” like fargin’ Copperplate with so many serif hooks it shreds women’s nylons if they look at it. Seriously: they had a great “HotShine” logo, then they added Copperplate and some sort of 50s script font. It’s a chain, too. They should know better. The logo on the left is not what I mean, but it shows you how odd their branding has become. MISTER (carwash). Seems an odd word to emphasize.

But I stayed with them, because it was part of the weekend ritual. The errands. Target. Cub Foods. The Likkahstow. (Sorry; ancient reference to a bad Prince movie. But I repeat myself.) (Why didn't Prince make more movies after “Purple Rain?” Watch “Graffiti Bridge.” All will be clear.) Every week I go there, and every other week I remember that the motel across the street was once a Howard Johnson – and the first bed where I laid my head in Minneapolis as a child. Sometimes I want to roll down the window and say to the fellow operating the sprayer: hey, you see that motel? It was a HoJo once. They were famous for fried clams. My first trip here to the cities as a kid we
stayed there, and I went to Southdale, which I thought was the most amazing thing in the world, and I got a stuffed animal with a music box inside that played “Some Enchanted Evening,” although I didn’t know the name of the tune at the time. Only in retrospect are these things clear. I have an absolutely ancient memory of falling asleep with that stuffed dog, listening to the song, and thinking of walking into church with Mom and Dad, holding their hands. Isn’t it odd what you remember? Years later when I came down to go to college we stayed there again, and I had the clams. I went to see a friend that night and came back to the room and threw up the clams, and my parents thought I’d done drunks or something. They tore down the signature orange lobby-building in the early Oughts, and I drove over and watched the machines claw it to death, and took pictures. Yeah, I’ll take the carnuba wax.”

I would, but they’re busy and they have earplugs.

I pulled up in the EXPRESS lane and whipped out my card. I pay a small monthly fee for unlimited washes. Did the math, and it beats the rote wash at the corner gas station. A fellow in a Mr. Carwash coat came over, all smiles, and said Hello Sir, and I said Hello Sir back. “Let me help you there,” he said, and he took my card.

Well, that’s service, but hardly necessary. Then he explained: they’re making changes to the Express line. I won’t need a card anymore. An RFID sticker on my windshield will whisk me through.

Hmm.

“Where does the sticker go?” I asked.

“Right here.” He tapped an area at the bottom of the windshield we could safely define as the Very Definition of One's Peripheral Vision.

Hmmm.

“How big is it?” I asked. He produced a thick piece of paper imprinted with barcodes, folded it in half, and placed it where it would go.

Hm.

“I don’t want a sticker on my windshield,” I said. I’m strange that way. I don’t want an oil-change sticker up in the corner of the windshield, either. I just want . . . glass.

He seemed somewhat plussed. He explained that they were converting all the Express Lanes to RFID. If I didn’t get the sticker, then I would have to go through the regular lanes, and they would use my license plate to enter the discount. You have to have the sticker on your car. Why don’t you want a sticker on your car? This is the way things are for the Express Lane now. TAKE THE STICKER.

I thought about this for a second, and said “That’s too bad. I’ll have to cancel, then.” Because there are other car washes, closer, and I can just drive right in. I’m here because the Giant Swede goes here and gave the place a good
I do not want the sticker | The Bleat.

recommendation, but he's in for the full boat, has the hand-detailing and vacuuming, and he goes inside and has popcorn and sits outside and waits. That's a different experience. Me, I just ride with it. I sit in the car and judge your typeface choices. It might be next to the Hojo where I came as a kid, across the street from the massive suburban hotel where my parents came every spring for the Petroleum Jobbers convention – oh, you don't know that? Really? Every April. It was like the first sign that spring was nigh. Dad would call, and say they'd be at the Radisson, and I'd go to meet them. Mom was never thrilled about it, because it was all oil guys, and she never had fellow-feel for the business. I don't know why she didn't take the car and go to Southdale to shop or sit in a cafe and have a cup of coffee, but she didn't; sometimes it seemed like her life was defined by the things she willfully did not do, and that makes me mad, sometimes, even after all these years, on her behalf. But I would show up and we'd have lunch or dinner and I'd watch my Dad chat with the other menfolk in the oil and gas business. One year he was elected to the board of directors. He hated that, but, well, when the call comes, you answer.

Say, you see that hotel? Over there? Of course; it's the biggest thing around. For years I was convinced that the architects of Fargo's tallest building cribbed it. Same style: white service cores flanking a glass expanse. Ultra early seventies. You see that Dairy Queen over there? Sure, the one where you have lunch. The guy who lives across the street was the architect. Seriously, that was his job. Last time we talked he was no longer with DQ, but he was consulting. He was cheerful enough and I think he's doing okay. Anyway, what were we talking about?

“Well, I can cancel your account now if you want to come inside,” he said.

I said I didn't want to go inside. I just wanted a car wash. Could I have the RFID sticker, and just wave it when I passed through?

He said no, because then anyone could give it to someone else and get a free wash.

Which of course I would never do. But apparently enough people have used the card to do just that, even though it's embedded with my vehicle's information.

Could I put it on my sun visor?

No.

Well, I'll have to cancel.

“That's your decision,” he said. We had reached an impasse.

“So,” I said. “What do we do now?”

“I can let you through,” he said, “but I'm taking cards today.” He punched in some numbers and the gate went up and he walked away with my card, because he was taking cards today.
The washes always end the same: the crew chief looks over the work, gives a thumbs-up. I give a two-finger salute. Which I did. Hail and farewell. Won't be back, because your sticker will be right below my field of vision and I have no idea if it will come off without leaving residue and there are other places whose locales don't carry nineteen tons of personal luggage that make me feel old and sad and astonished at the things that come and go, and seem inestimably precious in recollection.

Also, your typefaces suck.

–

Today at Jasperwood: the great diminution continues.

Namesake dog is on patrol:
Links today: Matchbook, and the penultimate LA Dining 1962. See you around.

70 RESPONSES TO i do not want the sticker

Charlie Young says:
November 8, 2010 at 1:53 pm

Anybody with a cell phone is already traceable to within 100 meters or so in a major population area. Even closer if you allow the GPS chip to send a general signal. The biggest reason not to want a chip with your personal info available is that they are probably hackable and ID theft can ensue. I don't think the gov't will ever need to make implantable tracking mandatory since our whereabouts are pretty easy to track right now.

RLR says:
November 8, 2010 at 1:55 pm

Re: Matchbook.

I originally hail from Philippe's neck of the woods. My old man hates the place with a passion, and has ever since some family friends took him there for dinner circa 1948.

He got food poisoning. Apparently, the ride back home to Highland Park was quite unpleasant.

Charlie Young says:
November 8, 2010 at 1:56 pm

...oh, and aren't they already implanting chips in us now with mandatory vaccination programs? (Yes, this is a sarcastic remark.)
xrayguy says:
November 8, 2010 at 2:02 pm

Years ago when I made my living as a photographer in Lincoln Ne, I had to shoot a party where they name a part of one of the streets “Gordon McRae Lane” or some such and so I had to do lots of pix of the singer. The years had not been kind.

GardenStater says:
November 8, 2010 at 2:16 pm

@hpoulter: LOL.

RWH says:
November 8, 2010 at 2:19 pm

A pretty grumpy attitude about RFID from a guy who also thinks anybody who reads a paper book is out of tune with the modern era.
And don't get me started on guys who use the automatic car wash instead going over to the “manual” side....

swschrad says:
November 8, 2010 at 2:31 pm

@metaphizzle: my sister had a good one last week, referring to some folks as “so old their tattoos are all sagged like Salvatore Dali art.”

this is why ve Germans are not mit der Tattoos any more... ve vill use der Chip, ja.

pfsm says:
November 8, 2010 at 2:56 pm

The government installation where I worked had a regulation that the parking pass had to hang from the mirror, like fuzzy dice or something. Since I am of the opinion that only adolescents or fuzzy-dice people hang any object from the mirror, I always laid it on the dash. This seemed to work okay.

Terry Fitz says:
November 8, 2010 at 2:58 pm

I want to make it clear that I don’t stay up nights worrying about things like RFID and other tracking & recognition stuff. But it's important to remember that it was originally intended to recognize and track objects. Now, what about objects that are carried with people, or objects, like a car, that carry people? It's not unreasonable to step back and ask whether we're all comfortable with the ramifications of that.

Brisko says:
November 8, 2010 at 3:16 pm

@ MikeH
If you have an antique registration for your car, you can only drive it a specific number of days in specific months of the year.
Won't work for year-round usage. I know this because my father's 1969 Mustang was mine for a bit. I registered it as an antique and went “Oh...REALLY? Crap.” I no longer own it, needless to say.

browniejr says:
November 8, 2010 at 3:56 pm

re-RFID: Resistance Is Futile. You Will Be Assimilated…
What would happen if the Borg assimilated a race of beings with as strong feelings about fonts as Mr. Lileks? Would their car/ spacecraft washing stations suddenly be reconfigured with the older “better” logo? Or would their core functions just freeze up since they couldn't reconcile how one part of the collective felt about it with the other parts?

http://www.realconspiracytheories.com/category/rfid/

Mark E. Hurling says:
November 8, 2010 at 4:20 pm

If assimilation still included palling around with Barbie Borg, I could think of worse prospects.

Stickers, they bugged me no end on vehicle stops. At least the bonzos who had the Fraternal Order of Police stickers in their rear windows who thought it was a get out jail free token. Slugs.

RexV says:
November 8, 2010 at 4:24 pm

Imagining that our host would not be a fan of this website:

http://ilovecopperplategothicbold.com/

Sheila Mc Rae…yowsa!

chrisbcritter says:
November 8, 2010 at 5:58 pm

Anyone else getting little red X marks on the Key page with the McCraes?

Re: Fairchild's Restaurant – Ernie Borgnine, Henry Fonda and Eli Wallach singing? I need a time machine and a digital recorder, STAT! Only thing I can imagine Ernie singing is “Lazy Mary”; Henry might get away with “Tom Dooley” but Eli singing anything is beyond my comprehension…

JeffdeCal says:
November 8, 2010 at 10:01 pm

James, you're right: it's your car, you get to decide, and if it's not worth it to you, it's not worth it. You get to make the call, and it's for no one to judge but you.

I'm with you all the way.

Nexibus says:
November 9, 2010 at 1:12 am

Vale, Mr. Lileks! I totally agree with you- or at least I think I do. You
are being kind to claim to forgo the sticker on behalf of your window glass- it's really about these companies making decisions “in your interest” that are really in theirs without giving you much by way of option. Sounds like Mr Wash got too big for it's britches or something and forgets who keeps em in the soap. Despite what logic may suggest, judgments made on updated logos or commercials are usually correct in my opinion- I mean, they put a lot of thought into how they present themselves. If it looks bad, it's a good indication of where the company is going. The typeface change and the unyielding iron sticker rule go hand in hand, I say. Meantime, good blogs- and the 140 or less shines too, uve induced me to twit myself. Huzzah!

Ross says:
November 10, 2010 at 7:37 am

Two things, Good Mine Host: I didn't slog all through the comments for the last entry to see if someone else mentioned it, but why can't I see/hear the embedded video/music in the LA Guide? All I get is the usual placeholder box w/an “x” in the upper corner. I'm at home now, w/the latest version of Flash, so I thought I was done missing out on such things in The Bleat.

Second, are you saying you don't like Booker T & the MGs? The coolest organ music ever? or even Greg Allman, or the guy Snatana used to have on organ(his name escapes me for the moment)? Pshaw.

Scott says:
November 10, 2010 at 9:03 am

Oh, Mr. Lileks. How long as the Bleat been published? Over 10 years? And in 2010 you write, “Not to sound like a total font dork....”

Noooooo. Perish the thought......

Most of us have been around for a while; we know better than that.....

Emily says:
November 11, 2010 at 5:40 pm

Don't move to Louisiana. Every year, you have to get an inspection sticker in the corner of your windshield.

Mr.Copperplate says:
November 17, 2010 at 9:01 pm

I'm so glad someone brought it up! Copperplate truly is the greatest font of all time. I believe the author and I both agree on vandalization of property with stickers should be avoided. This act of terror is most likely because the designer who came up with the logo for Mister bastardized the most beautiful font in the world. This clearly led to the owner losing touch with all things holy and twisted a good marketing idea of giving stickers out to leaving his indelible mark and residue on the cars they claim to wash. Moral of the story: leave Copperplate as is or bad things will happen.
I do not want the sticker | The Bleat.

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A few highly recommended friends...

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2: Comic Covers
3: Black & White World
4: Sears 1934
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
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Shorpy.com
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A few notes. One: thank you all for telling me that “Trainers” is UK slang for the shoes, not the sweats. Odd how one can hear the reference over and over and not get it.

Two: Bucket Boy, in the comments about the car wash RFID imbroglio, said

You pedantic lazy sod. Why don’t you just get a bucket, sponge, and hose and wash the thing yourself? Then you’ll have no reason to complain.

Anonymous and rude: persuasion’s winning combo! Well, my friend, our civic leaders discourage us from washing cars in our driveway, because the runoff goes right into the lake. The car wash recycles the water. Why do you hate the planet? Also we have something here called “winter,” which makes driveway washes somewhat untenable, because the water freezes a few inches from the hose and punches holes in the side of the car, and locks the doors shut with a carapace of ice. But thanks for stopping by.

I think I’m done with microfiche for a while. And that may be the most pathetic sentence I’ve written in some time, because it suggests there was an era when I was gosh-darn downright enthused about microfiche. But I was. I loved looking through the old papers, picking out details, stories, styles, ads. Today I threaded a spool from 1964 into Bessie, the Microfiche Reader, and it all felt heavy. As noted yesterday: the weight of accumulated things, the
crates and boxes we drag behind, invisible but no less substantial. Enough! I shall live for the moment! But first, let’s print off a few pages.

This one struck me, for several reasons. The logo for the suburb of Robbinsdale. The style of the bank building. The ever-so-incorrect headline: Families? WELL THAT’S EXCLUSIONARY NOW don’t you think.

Oh, the days when a branch opening was a cause for a party. Stop in and get a windshield scraper and a pocket calendar. Of all the things that seem likely to have been blown away by the rise of the counterculture, there's this:
Don Lee at the Organ. I grew up during the last days of the Organ, when families of good breeding had an enormous multi-key organ in the living room, ready to bang out show tunes and hymns in those strenous, nuance-free tones. The Organ has always been one of my least favorite instruments, even when played by guys with such exceptional names as E. Power Biggs. (Always wanted to hear him cut a disk with Big Tiny Little.) The only organ tunes I can take are Toccata and Fugue, which has unfortunately become Evil Mad Scientist Lab in a Castle music, and Milt Bruckner’s “The Beast,” which is so fargin’ swank I can’t stand it.
And it works because it has piano. Anyway. I looked to see if the bank was still there. The sign's gone, but the building is still there, and it's a bank. Has the suburb changed?

Yes, it's changed.

Right now I'm sitting outside in the gazebo in the dark, playing “The Beast,” enjoying wine from a box. Yes. A box. It was recommended. As long as it's not sweet I'm okay with it.

I watched “Iron Man 2” the other day. I loved the first one. The second one was just annoying. Weightless noisy empty drivel. There were some fine points, though; Roger Sterling as Tony Stark's dad was perfect casting, although the idea (SPOILER!) that dad embedded secret clues to the composition of an undiscovered element in the layout of Flushing Meadows seemed a bit far-fetched, as did the idea that Tony could reconstruct it from a 1974 balsa-wood model he drove home in a convertible, and OH who cares. I don't know what's the matter with these people sometimes. Hey, wouldn't it be hilarious if Tony puts on the Iron Man costume and gets drunk and spins...
records at a birthday party? It'll, like, show he's outta control, and needs the stern hand of Don Cheadle to give him balance. Fine. Thanks for that.

That was my first Redbox purchase, by the way. It's such a modern thing to do! If it's 1987 and also Japan. But the idea of tapping a touchscreen, sliding your card, getting the disk – O how preferable to the rote drab crap you'd go through at the movie store. Would you like extra protection for a quarter? No. Would you like to sign up for our special Hollywood Extras Member Plan? No. Really? You can rent games for up to nine years and there's a ten percent discount on Movie Theater Butter Popcorn in the ten-pack. No. I just want the movie. Would you like to sign up for our new Special Preferred Streaming Service? No. Wait – you have streaming movies? Sort of; if you call a special number we'll put you in contact with someone who's watching the movie, and they'll describe it. No. It's a toll-free number. No. Okay, that's six dollars, and it's due back in five days, and thank you for choosing a dying medium-distribution nexus.

To be honest, I feel archaic renting DVDs, but the future always arrives piecemeal.

If you're wondering whether I've found any TV to replace the shows that have ended, well, thanks for caring! Sort of. Watching “The Walking Dead,” which is good enough to redeem the tired premises. Oh, the end of the world and zombies? Brilliant! I bought a season pass on ITunes so A) I can get it in HD, and B) hasten the day when I have completely cut myself off psychologically from cable. I noted that my DVR has not recorded any additional episodes of “The Event,” which means it either went on a nine-week hiatus after three episodes, or the DVR entered Mercy Mode and spared me the need to see anything more. I am fine with that.

So: an ordinary Monday, really. Except for the pasta. Because I have a child who balks at deviation from the hallowed menu, Monday is Pasta night. I'm allowed to improvise. Tonight it was Butoni lobster-and-shrimp ravioli in a garlic butter sauce and fresh-baked bread with a mixed-green salad: oy. My wife gave a raviolo to the dog. I protested: for Crom's sake, lobster? Lobster for the dog? She pointed out that it was the rav I'd set aside because it was an empty suit, and she was right. At some point in the cooking process one of the ravs birthed its content into the roiling waters. Or it was never filled to begin with. Whatever it was, the dog liked it, but the dog likes everything; it's one of their more endearing characteristics. When you have a kid who complains about delicious food that's SLIGHTLY SOMEWHAT STRANGE and a dog who couldn't care less if the curry makes his mouth feel like he ate a poisonous frog that was also on fire, you thank the dog for his support.

Today: Four more looks at small-town NoDak via Google street view. I suspect this will be an 80-page site before I'm done. One of those sites that has to keep someone clicking when they stumble across it during the lunch hour, and discover it plucks some chord. I hope your chords are plucked. So to speak.

See you around.
PS: Final note. Watching the 3rd “Sherlock” tonight. Watson picks up some athletic shoes, is challenged by Holmes to deduce what he can from their condition. He says “Well. Shoes. Trainers.”

You're all way ahead of me.

---

84 RESPONSES TO don lee at the organ

Shev says:
November 9, 2010 at 12:20 pm

Oh! Sad about the iPod!!!! 😞

metaphizzle says:
November 9, 2010 at 12:21 pm

I bet Mr. Tink had a long chat with Irritable Bear and realized that he really didn’t have that much to complain about (getting razzed about Doris isn’t so bad in the grand scheme of things), so that’s why he looks so much calmer in the “after” picture.

shesnailie says:
November 9, 2010 at 12:28 pm

_@_.v – soylent green is made from the best stuff on earth people!

and now mint flavoured!

JamesS says:
November 9, 2010 at 12:31 pm

Another word for Netflix: it’s now advertising itself as a movie streaming service that, for a couple dollars more, will rent you DVDs. So, for $7.99/month you get to watch as much (high-quality, but not all HD) video as you want, from a multitude of devices: your computer, Wii, XBox360, PS3 and many others. For $9.99/month you get the streaming video plus DVDs, one at a time. In my area it takes about one day to get a DVD and another to return it, so it would be easy for me to watch a couple of DVDs a week. You can also pay more to get more DVDs at a time.

No, I don’t work for Netflix or get kickbacks from them, but I too am trying to wean myself from cable. Once I can get all my sports that way, I’ll be done. ESPN3 is getting close to that, but not quite yet.

Mr.Manager says:
November 9, 2010 at 12:36 pm

JamesS is right, Netflix is the best, I canceled my cable, got a little faster connection and haven’t looked back once. My only regret is all the dvds I bought 5 years ago.
LS says:
November 9, 2010 at 12:42 pm

As a kid I remember watching “The Larry Ferrari Show” on Sundays on Channel 6 in Philly. Just 30 minutes of him playing a big old Lowry organ.

grs says:
November 9, 2010 at 12:42 pm

Surely everybody likes Time is Tight?

Joe Broderick says:
November 9, 2010 at 1:26 pm

Martin Freeman–great choice for Bilbo!–played Tim Canterbury on the British version of “The Office.” Available, streaming-wise, on Netflix.

jaallman says:
November 9, 2010 at 1:34 pm

I used to hate the organ, and I’m still not overly fond of it. Too often it sounds like an elephant sucking cold porridge through leaky pipes.

But, FWIW, as one organ-skeptic to another, I have to share. There is one Bach interpreter at least who I think can make it work: Christopher Herrick, once of Westminster Abbey. He mostly avoids the teeth-rattling approach, and plays with a startling degree of brio, clarity, and subtlety–delicacy, even, which is not a word I’d ever associated with the organ. I can find only one of his recordings on YouTube, unfortunately: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPJrPDmNSV4

Related: Bach’s preludes and toccatas and fugues can be pretty heavy going. You might sample the trio sonatas (versions of which are all over YT).

Larry says:
November 9, 2010 at 1:47 pm

I am also looking for a new DVD series to watch with my wife in our newly entered phase of life: Empty Nesters. Mad Men did great with us, but she doesn’t really like violence and that rules out Dexter and Sopranos. I think I will give Weeds a try. I really liked Battlestar Gallectia but not sure if she could get past the sci-fi theme for the terrific stories and major characters getting bumped off. I would enjoy seeing it again.

Any suggestions from the Bleat community would be appreciated.

bgbear (roger h) says:
November 9, 2010 at 1:55 pm

@larry “6 feet Under”? or “Larry David”?

martin freeman is good, let hope “the hobbit” is better than movie version of “hitchhikers guide to the galaxy” Freeman was good choice for Arthur Dent in one of the worst adaptations of all time. It would have killed Douglas Adams if he wasn’t already dead.
Andre says:
November 9, 2010 at 2:20 pm

That's funny, I'm done with mimeograph machines for a while.

chrisbcritter says:
November 9, 2010 at 2:36 pm

re: Milt Buckner – If I were the owner of that blue MGB-GT I would be having a coronary over that lady dancing on the hood in spiked heels...

browniejr says:
November 9, 2010 at 2:47 pm

@ggrs- GREAT driving music... Also “Green Onions” by Booker T and the MGs

bgbear (roger h) says:
November 9, 2010 at 2:59 pm

hood denter!

Brisko says:
November 9, 2010 at 3:07 pm

@ Larry

If your wife doesn't mind some vulgarity, and some brilliantly stupid characters, “It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia" is a great show that has 4 of its 5 seasons out on DVD.

John Robinson says:
November 9, 2010 at 3:19 pm

Many moons ago I owned the album “Virgil Fox Live at the Filmore East” (circa late 60's/early 70s; much of that era is fuzzy in my memory). At any rate, that old man taught a lot of hippies about LOUD MUSIC that night (and from their huzzahs they loved him for it). If there was ever a record to play at MAX VLM, that was it.

hpoulter says:
November 9, 2010 at 3:39 pm

@bgbear – Arrgh. I just found the DVD of Hitchhikers Guide in my DVD library when I was reorganizing, and threw it in the “donate” box (what a dirty trick on some donee). I felt like using tongs to handle it. I love the cheesy old TV version, but I really liked the radio version best. The movie was heartbreaking.

JohnW says:
November 9, 2010 at 3:42 pm

Now, THAT'S an organ!
http://www.organstoppizza.com/welcome.htm
bgbear (roger h) says:
November 9, 2010 at 3:50 pm

Disney needs to make an animated version of “Hitchhiker’s” using Pooh characters for all the parts. Adams never fully admitted the influence. Maybe it is just stock British characters.

Pooh = Arthur
Rabbit = Ford
Tigger = Zaphod
Kanga = Trillian
Eyeore = Marvin
Piglet = ?
Owl = Slartibartfast or maybe computer on “Heart of Gold”

Joe Broderick says:
November 9, 2010 at 4:04 pm

Disney in the same sentence with “Hitchhiker’s”? Blasphemy!

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
November 9, 2010 at 4:33 pm

Since Pooh and Piglet are BFFs, Piglet would be have to be Ford. Rabbit would be good as Captain of the Vogons.

I love the Pizza Organ (WBANFARB)! A long time ago I worked for a guy who was, in his spare time, president of the American Theater Organ Society. Very interesting stuff for the first hundred or so organs.

John Powell says:
November 9, 2010 at 4:55 pm

The “Organ” Symphony by that foppiest-sounding Frenchie, Camille Saint-Saens, contains that wonderful melody that “Babe” drove into the ground.

bgbear (roger h) says:
November 9, 2010 at 6:18 pm

murophobia

swschrad says:
November 9, 2010 at 10:26 pm

at channel 6 in Fargo, you knew when the weather was, ah, dogbreath, and the network was gone, and two cars full of engineers and spare parts were hopscotching the countryside looking for the trouble.

Keyboard Kapers with Pat Kelly to the rescue! a white 3-rank Conn, two cameras, the title was supered over video every 10 minutes, and you could fade to black whenever the microwave was back in action.

in the old days, live… the page “Pat Kelly to studio, please… Pat to
the studio* meant don't get in the way between master control and the engineering/service lab in the basement. the guy with the paychecks would be trampled.

in the fancy-Dan days, they made I think three different videotape sessions, two half-hours and one full hour.

in retirement, the timing worked out... the Fargo Theater's Wurlitzer got rebuilt for historical purposes, and Pat was one of the main organists for silent movie days and intros to new releases.

and then one night, he got whaled on, hard, by some thugs in the alley behind the theater, and that was it for the music career.

FuzzyChef says:
November 9, 2010 at 10:59 pm

Lileks,

Several times in the bleat you've mentioned that hamburgers are not correct for a 1950's diner. What *would* period food at a 1950's diner have been?

FuzzyChef says:
November 9, 2010 at 11:19 pm

Also: (re LA 1962) Bimbo's 365 is still in operation in San Francisco as a bar and theater. I've been there a couple times. They've moved from their original location at 365 Market to their present one on Columbus Street.

These days they mostly do popular music and Jazz, and the lady in the fishbowl is now just a logo and a statue. Pictures show that Bimbo's was quite the notorious titty bar in the 1940s, though.

Website: http://www.bimbos365club.com

Larry says:
November 10, 2010 at 10:44 am

I might sample a "Sunny in Philly." Thanks for the suggestion. Seen Larry David, didn’t like 6' under.

Fuzzy: I would say a blue plate special of meat loaf with veg would be typical. Fried fish on fridays, grilled cheese that sort of stuff. Born in 52, I've been to diners in the early 60s, which should still ring true. I recall the glass domes of cherry pie and donuts sitting on the counters, there may have been hamburgers, but recall my Dad primarily eating plate lunches. We would typically get burgers at non-chain burger joints, often eating in the car.

Carol says:
November 10, 2010 at 12:59 pm

"Today I threaded a spool from 1964 into Bessie, the Microfiche Reader."

You mean the microFILM reader. Fiche are small sheets not rolls.

Rustifer says:
November 10, 2010 at 2:33 pm
We had a pizza parlor in town that somehow adopted the famous Wurlitzer organ from Dodger Stadium and installed it right in the middle of the restaurant. Upon the appointed hour each night, it would rise up from beneath the floorboards in an enormous show of lights and popular tunes. The pizza was highly mediocre, but the music was fine.

Johanna says:
November 10, 2010 at 5:07 pm

That organ music is hilarious.

Susan says:
November 17, 2010 at 12:40 am

I ran the microfiche forward very quickly today while researching a project for work. I felt sick to my stomach. I think I am done with microfiche also.

jee says:
November 17, 2010 at 11:17 am

An interesting organ fun fact for you: the Sydney Opera House was built with a pipe organ suspended center stage. And it is still there!!! Check out the link for a photo. When we were there in October 2010 we were told it is rarely used. How times have changed.


docweasel says:
November 18, 2010 at 1:43 pm

My dad was a professional jazz organist my entire childhood, and he emulated the Unpredictable Jimmy Smith's sound and style.

Check out some Jimmy Smith, The Cat is a good one, with a big band backing, but his trio/quartet stuff (as long as it's without any annoying horns!) is very good as well.

He was always best with a guitar, drums and bass, and his stuff with Wes Montgomery is sublime (Baby It's Cold Outside).

I am a musician myself and my dad always amazed me: he had a trio with just guitar, organ and drums, the organ playing the bass lines on the pedals, vamping chords with the left hand and playing lead with the right.

My Dad was an Italian accordion player who was turned on to Art Van Damme, fell in love with jazz and recognizing the limitations of jazz accordion moved over to organ in his early 20's. I remember him practicing just bass lines in his stocking feet in our living room.

Anyway, Smith could make you re-evaluate the organ (although sometimes he went for a very reedy tone which is annoying, but when he used the drawbars for a big, fat, mellow sound the organ is probably the most powerful instrument in jazz or rock, Jon Lord knew that).
Did some actual home repair, and of course this is so special and unique I must tell the world about it and preen like I’m the first guy who ever replaced a pneumatic door closer. Except that the first guy probably didn’t “preen.” Just did it. But this was no ordinary replacement, you see. Back up a few weeks: we had gale-force winds that picked up the gazebo and set it five feet in another location, bent trees sideways, made the skies darken with errant shingles, and so on. At one point my daughter came up to tell me that the back door was open, and I said “thanks. Could you close it? That’s a dear.”

“No I think you better see this.”

So I saw that. The door was open all right. The wind had hit the back glass door so hard it pulled the closer right out of the frame. It was hanging on the door, screws looking as exposed in a horrible way, like the propellors of a sinking ship. The door did not close any more. While the wind howled I tried to fit the door back in the frame, screwing screws tighter, wishing I was tied to the mast, or something.

The closer had to be replaced; the rod – you know, that rod part – was bent. Wind is cruel like that. So I bought a new one, got down on the floor, and put the first screw into the old hole, hoping there was some wood left so it would have purchase. The screw wouldn’t go in. Oh: two of the screws had snapped off. That’s right: rock beats scissors, wind beats metal. Sheared them clean. So there was no way to put the closer-screws into the same holes. Well, let’s put
Got up on a chair, discovered four old holes, two of which had screws in them, sheared off. Remembered that this had happened before.

So, basically, I had to drill four new holes. That's the end of the story. Whew! How about that. Job well done, chap.

Ordinary day, I suppose, but extraordinarily warm. Did the usual blogging; at PopCrush I did a piece on the video that's making the rounds: a woman solves the puzzle on Wheel of Fortune after one letter. After it had been up for a while, I realized that no one had asked Pat Sajak what he thought of it, and since we're new BFF thanks to Ricochet, I dropped him a line, and he called me back, and we had a chat. So that was fun. I ran it as an EXCLUSIVE, which I suppose it was.

Today I came into possession of some old Mad Magazines – the run of issues I read as a kid, probably when I was my daughter's age. Wonder if my parents approved. They're unnervingly familiar. It's strange to see something you haven't seen in decades, but it's familiar. I'm looking for one panel in particular, because it stuck in my brain for no reason I can possibly recall. The gag was “Movie Cliches We'd Like to See,” or something like that. The cliche was the artist who ruined his career with drink; the fractured, wacky, crrrrazy Mad take consisted of a guy plinking away at the piano, with a worried pal saying “Sure, Hal, ‘Love in a Balloon’ was a hit, but you wrote it before you stopped drinking!” Har. Or words to that effect. I want to know the precise quote, but I know it's “Love in a Balloon.” It's such a perfect vapid early-mid 60s song title, sub-David / Bacharach, with soft trumpets and maybe some harpsichord for that “mod” touch. I've been trying for years to find a way to work it into a book. I'd like to make a key plot point revolve around it somehow. Back in a bit.

LATER Haven't found it yet. My memory of the issues seems to fade out around the time I turned 12, which is interesting; wasn't that the point at which one started to get interested in brave, crazy, parent-defying nihilistic publications like Mad? It's amusing to note how . . . . unamusing most of it is, but the art's great. For me the prime talent was Mort Drucker, who did the movie /TV satires; he was the best caricaturist of his time, and just about everyone you see drawing silly big-head pictures at the Fair or the mall owes something to him. Fun fact: he did the back cover for an Anthrax album.

Memory is so damned peculiar – why, even the fold-ins are familiar. Would you believe I can look at this and know what it is?
Finished the BBC / Masterpiece Theater Sherlock last night – it’s been years since I watched Masterpiece Theater, but was amused to see they still have the Gorey animation. But now there’s a clever fellow with a charming accent and suspenders introducing the show, and he was talking about Sherlock’s sexual orientation. “Is he straight? Gai? Bi? Who knows?” Well, there’s the matter of Irene Adler, which suggests he was asexual but probably impelled towards a feminine counterpart. This being a modern version, though, Moriarity minced a bit, but it was fake menacing playacting mincing. The entire Moriarity scene was utterly unnerving, and a perfect cap to the series – and by “series” I mean three shows. They get winded quickly over there, it seems.

For reasons I cannot explain I also watched, the first episode of “The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin.” It’s a 1976 British comedy I recall watching in college, when the local PBS station would trot out BBC comedies on Sunday night. Python, Perrin, “Butterflies.” Only remembered the name, nothing more; turns out it’s one of those “establishment men has a mid-life crisis, seeks to sunder the bonds of duty that tie him to his banal existence.” In clumsy hands it’s tendentious hippie-flavored drivel, but the show was deft and broad, and well-acted. Made me realize something interesting:

If I see a show where an office desk has only a telephone and a typewriter, it seems normal, if old. If I see a show where a desk has an ENORMOUS COMPUTER MONITOR, it seems laughable and dated. Think quick: Miami Vice, computers or no? Hmm?

91 RESPONSES TO fershlugginer
bgbear (roger h) says:
November 10, 2010 at 1:03 pm

"That wasn't flying! That was... falling with style!" -Woody Pride to Buzz Lightyear

hpoulter says:
November 10, 2010 at 1:43 pm

@bgbear – you shouldn't quote Toy Story while using the Lotsa gravatar. Creeps me out. Just watched the Blu-Ray.

"Where's your kid now, Sheriff?"

I was glad to see him tied to the grill and eating bugs.

Was anyone else reminded of Chief Wiggum as Edward G Robinson saying “Where's your messiah now?” (I know its not a real movie quote)

bgbear (roger h) says:
November 10, 2010 at 1:52 pm

hey, there were millions of Lots o' Huggin' bears produce, maybe my gravatar is one of the ones who did not go a little funny in the head.

That's it, my gravatar is the replacement they got for Daisy.

- I'm a hugger

Ryan says:
November 10, 2010 at 1:55 pm

It's so frustrating that each “series” of a show in the UK ends up being like 8 episodes. We're totally spoiled here with our 20+ episode seasons.

Incidentally, why do the English insist on calling each season of a show a “series”? Whenever I was over there and they'd talk about the “series finale” I'd say “Hey, I don't remember hearing about the show being canceled” – but no, it's just the end of the season.

Rustifer says:
November 10, 2010 at 2:13 pm

Was it my TV or did the Sherlock / Masterpiece Theater audio sound like dialog being spoken through a phone filled with tapioca? I've noticed this on other PBS Masterpiece Mystery series. As a result of generally watching these things in bed at night, my wife makes me turn the volume way up as if that will eradicate the issue. Upon switching channels at the end, the amped up sound immediately caroms out of room and echoes down the hallway and, I imagine, freely out into the street before I hastily turn it down. Most annoying.

Philip Scott Thomas says:
November 10, 2010 at 2:22 pm

why do the English insist on calling each season of a show a “series”?

It's partly just a different language and partly because of the way British shows are written. Most British shows don't have a team of
writers to write the show. They tend to be written by one or maybe two writers. Eight episodes is generally considered to be about the limit one writer can come up with at a time.

**xrayguy** says:
November 10, 2010 at 2:29 pm

Our local PBS ran Python and then “Good Neighbors”-which I watched mainly for the toothsome Felicity Kendall.

**hpoultar** says:
November 10, 2010 at 2:30 pm

Lazy bastids. Fawlty Towers, Blackadder, The IT Crowd, Absolutely Fabulous, the Office – all just 6 episodes a season, and then you wait a year for 6 more.

Simon Pegg’s brilliant “Spaced” had 7 shows a year for 2 years – 14 in toto. At least he gave 116%.

Is it a union rule? Can they only make TV shows when the weather is nice? (6 weeks a year sounds about right ;-;)

**ElizaJane** says:
November 10, 2010 at 2:38 pm

Mary Tailor Made. I had no idea what that meant back then, but always remembered the Mary Tailor Made issue of Mad magazine.

**rivlax** says:
November 10, 2010 at 2:43 pm

WHAT! That was the last episode of “Sherlock”? Talk about an ending that leaves you hanging.

Re Mad Magazine, saw my first one in the ’50s. Dick and Pat Nixon, of course, were made fun of in that edition, as I recall.

My favorite movie spoof was “For the Birds,” a takeoff of Hitchcock’s “The Birds.” In the scene where Tippi Hedren sits outside the school as birds gather on the jungle jim, Hedren gets up and runs into the school shouting, “The birds is coming, the birds is coming.” Suzanne Pleshette says, “How dare you burst in here using bad grammar in front of these kids.” Hedren says, “But look outside.” Pleshette looks out the window and says, “You’re right, the birds IS coming!” That kind of humor used to convulse me at 11 years old. A much later spoof had the best title: “The Poopside Down Adventure.”

As for the artists, Don Martin’s Fester Bestertester and Karbuncle stick with me to this day.

**nixmom** says:
November 10, 2010 at 2:52 pm

I haven’t heard anyone else use the word “ferschuggener” since my dad passed away. (even if we spell it differently). Dad usually used it as an adjective in place of others not suited to children’s ears. (as in “what a ferschuggener mess”) Thanks for the smile.

And the artwork in the blog today? Looks like Peanuts characters on acid to me.
browniejr says:
November 10, 2010 at 3:39 pm

@swschrad, other handy door hangers:
Unless the inner door and the storm door are hung the same way, the storm door will be beaten off its hinges by people getting annoyed as the enter and exit. Agree that the storm door shouldn’t be openable by the wind, so BOTH doors should be reversed. With my luck, the interior closet would then be on the wrong side, resulting in yet another project… (“but dear, those guys on This Old House can do it in less than a half hour- why can’t you?”)

Lars Walker says:
November 10, 2010 at 3:44 pm

Rivlax: According to Wikipedia, there will be a second season of “Sherlock.” Three whole episodes.

RobertB says:
November 10, 2010 at 3:55 pm

I think the reason the Brits say “series” when we would say “season” is because each British TV series really is a separate thing. In the US, a TV series is usually conceived as an open-ended thing that goes on indefinitely, but is divided into seasons. On the BBC, though, a series is a finite thing: they’ll commission six episodes (or whatever) and that’s it, no expectation that it will continue beyond that point.

If a series does well, then the BBC might order *another* series of the same show, or they might not. And if they do, it might be years later.

I've always thought it was a much better system than ours. The presumption that a show will go on forever rarely leads to good results: you either get a show that gets canceled before it can resolve its storyline (e.g. “Jericho”), or you get a show that goes on long past the point where it should have ended (e.g. “Twin Peaks”). TV is better when it’s conceived with a beginning, middle, and end.

Petronius says:
November 10, 2010 at 4:03 pm

The producers of the new Sherlock series are entirely plugged into the continuum of Holmesian media. For instance, the Czech hitman is another version of the Hoxton Creeper, a character from the Rathbone movies of the 40s, played by Rondo Hatton, the only film monster who didn’t need makeup. They also owe a bit to the Jeremy Brett series of the 1980s, which were the first to show that Holmes was, periodically, just plain nuts. I wonder if this series will deal with the coke addiction?

GardenStater says:
November 10, 2010 at 4:14 pm

…And we STILL don’t have the solution to the Out-Of-Context Ad.

Paging Lance Lawson! Lance Lawson to the white courtesy phone!

Terry Fitz says:
November 10, 2010 at 4:23 pm
@swschrad – If my screen could swing THAT way, it wouldn't need the WD40! Swear to God, that was a lot more funny in my head, where it should have stayed. Signing off now.

bfwebster says:
November 10, 2010 at 4:33 pm

“did some actual home repair” — cue one of my all-time favorite comic strips, which pretty much sums up my reaction when I do that: http://wondermark.com/523/

bgbear (roger h) says:
November 10, 2010 at 4:50 pm

last night's heroics was repairing a striped out antennae socket thingie on my wife's car. Tap new threads, used larger stud/adapter. ta da!

You can measure my engineering mad skillz by my use of jargon like “thingie”.

Patrick says:
November 10, 2010 at 4:54 pm

My mom actually got me onto MAD Magazine, and a couple of times my grandmother bought an issue for me. Not only had I read issues published when I was a pre-teen or teen, sold for about $1.95 (Cheap!), but I had on a few occasions bought some of the Reader’s Choice issues, or other collections, featuring reprints of older articles. That's when I discovered Don Martin and Mort Drucker. Some of my favorites includer those two, along with “Duck” Edwing, Antonio Prohias (original artist of “Spy vs. Spy”), Al Jaffee, and Sergio Aragones.

Is it me, or does this picture look like Jaffee's work? I didn't see a signature anywhere, but the way the woman is drawn has made me suspicious for years.

Beeble says:
November 10, 2010 at 5:08 pm

The best Mad artist — at least the best cover artist — IMO was Frank Kelly Freas, who later became a major sci-fi illustrator. Unfortunately, he stopped drawing for Mad in 1962 (according to Wikipedia). As I recall, he was replaced by Norman Mingo, who was much worse.

metaphizzle says:
November 10, 2010 at 5:20 pm

“Fawlty Towers, Blackadder, The IT Crowd, Absolutely Fabulous, the Office”

The first series of Look Around You was also brilliant.

Last I checked, all the episodes can be found on youtube, as long as you're willing to look around you. Just look around you.

swschrad says:
November 10, 2010 at 5:25 pm
@browniejr: the back entrance to my breezeway is an example of why it doesn't always work out. you will find hinges all on the same side everywhere else.

but.

if you hinge-all left, then the door opens into the hallway inside, partially blocking it, although the screen opens to the lower deck side smack against the house, leaving that grand entrance to the lower deck wide open.

if you hinge-all right, the interior door is fine against the wall by the workbench in the garage, but the screen door funnels you smack into the meter head on the side of the house.

and you know, hinge-right inside and hinge-left outside works well enough. hold the screen with the left hand, and open the interior door with the right.

the alternative is two doormen, or a doorman and a butler, and I don't have enough residual print or TV income for that. matter of fact, only residual is my continuing bailout of faltering banks, one month at a time.

swschrad says:
November 10, 2010 at 5:26 pm

damn good thing the banks have me to keep them alive, too.

Dave in California says:
November 10, 2010 at 5:41 pm

I'm trying to do the fold-in, but the monitor is just too stiff. Maybe the vice will help …

Brad Johnston says:
November 10, 2010 at 6:00 pm

James:

Been a long time, but I am still a great fan of your site. Love the MAD Fold-In of Charlie Brown, Lucy and Snoopy. I have loved MAD since time immemorial, that is to say about 1963 or 4, but to me it STOPPED being funny when I was a teen-ager. If you don't want those MADs, I'll take them off your hands . . .

Dead right about that organ business. My aunt, a real Minnesota gal, bought a $2,500 Conn organ for her sons, none of whom ever played it. It sat in their living-room until she went to that great prayer-meeting in the sky.

By the way, a question: when you speak of microfiche, don't you really mean microFILM?? “Fiche” is the French word for “card,” and microfiche was a card-shaped version of microfilm pages, each about 5 or 6 inches square. They took a special reader, for which one would pull out a drawer with two glass plates, stick the card in, and shove the drawer under the lens. But you spoke of “spooling” it, so I think you really meant a MicroFILM REEL, especially since that's how all the old newspapers were preserved. It was called “film” because really it was just a monochrome version of a spool of movie film.

Anyway, keep up the good work. We all love ya!

El Gordo
Brad Johnston says:
November 10, 2010 at 6:01 pm

That's VISE, David.

Brad Johnston says:
November 10, 2010 at 6:04 pm

Patrick:

You're right, it was Al Jaffee, Alfred E. Neuman's right-hand man . . .
And MAD for $1.95?? You young whipper-snapper! I remember
when it was 35 cents, and when it went up to 50 cents, MAD said it
was no laughing matter.

browniejr says:
November 10, 2010 at 8:02 pm

@swschrad: How about a sliding glass door with an electric eye or
pressure mat, like the grocery store? (Temple Grandin had some
issues, though...)

@Dave in CA: be sure to pad the vice... Don't want to leave marks on
your monitor

swschrad says:
November 10, 2010 at 9:10 pm

@browniejr: somebody does make a less-than-commercial sliding
door package, I've seen it on TV. (no, not an infomercial. “Try The
Sliding Door! It's an entrance! It's an EXIT! It's a tasty meal!! Order in
the next 5 minutes, we send you Mount Kilimanjaro free, just pay for
shipping and handling!”)

it's still several grand, though.

best to install them in pairs, with a sound chip doing the whoosh!
from Star Trek.

DryOwlTacos says:
November 10, 2010 at 10:30 pm

There are only 50 actors and actresses in all of Britain. And at some
point, they all end up on Doctor Who.

shoeless says:
November 10, 2010 at 10:46 pm

It was Python and then the Prisoner on Sunday nights for me.
Couldn't end the week without them.

And in Mad Magazine, Al Jaffee's Snappy Answers to Stupid
Question's were good as well. You even got to write in your own.

Seattle Dave says:
November 11, 2010 at 1:11 am

@Dave in California – The vice will probably help, but the vise might
work even better.
Stewart says:  
November 11, 2010 at 2:20 am

juanito – John Davey, I think 7-8 years is the planned lifespan for HVAC controller cards. Ours has gone out twice, now, at that age of service, and was $500something both times; so thanks for the tip on ordering online!

re: Mad Magazine. I remember “Star Blech” and the crew of the “Starship Boobyprise”. “Mad” is a cultural artifact designed to hit that young audience with all the absence of culture possible. “Tacky” was the term my parents used.

We were fortunate in the '80s to live with a PBS station with a British Saturday night lineup. Good Neighbors, To The Manor Born, Butterflies, Faulty Towers, Blackadder, Python, Benny Hill and for a finale a Dr Who “movie”, up to six of the 23 minute episodes of a story. Somewhere in there they ran Reggie Perrin–it was Great! Super! — and Rossiter had the face to play Reggie perfectly. Charlie X said it for me too, I didn’t get where I am today without watching Reginald Perrin! (We should mention the supporting cast has lots of great lines!)

Patrick says:  
November 11, 2010 at 6:27 am

I remember watching Python, Black Adder, Red Dwarf (think of Star Trek meets Monty Python meets Babylon 5 meets Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy) and All Creatures Great and Small on PBS back in the late 80s/early 90s.

rivlax says:  
November 11, 2010 at 1:33 pm

I really feel old. MAD was 25 cents, cheap, when I was a kid.

rivlax says:  
November 11, 2010 at 1:34 pm

That was a lot of money. Regular comics were a dime and Classic Comics were 12 cents. I guess they felt that culture was worth an extra 2 cents.

Patrick says:  
November 11, 2010 at 5:53 pm

I remember when MAD started republishing the first few years of the magazine, back when it was a satire/parody of Bill Gaines’ medium, the comic book. They published 3 issues into one volume, and the only issue I bought was the first one, which had “Hoo-Hah!”, a satire of horror comics, and “BLOBS!”, a satirical but almost accurate look at the future.

In “BLOBS!”, we are shown the year 1 Million A.D., when people move around on flying chairs, and only have to use their brains to communicate their thoughts and demands. The comic centered around two such “blobs”, where one was telling the other about how they’ve got it made, how in the past technology had helped man to the point where they had to do little for themselves. The narrating Blob was telling his friend about his concern if the machine that controlled all the robots and machines that cater to them broke.
When I went to see the movie Wall-E a couple of years ago, I was so reminded of that comic. I remember reading a blog where someone else had mentioned it, and I commented that it always reminded me of the comic, and they had stated that the comic was actually based on an old science fiction novel called “The Machine Breaks”.

SeanF says:
November 11, 2010 at 5:57 pm

RobertB, your statement, “TV is better when it's conceived with a beginning, middle, and end,” is not without merit, but it can’t reasonably be applied to the particular series in question.

“Sherlock” most assuredly did not have an “end.” 😄

Dave in California says:
November 11, 2010 at 8:12 pm

Sigh. Stupid spelling error on the internet:
A moment on the fingers, for eternity it lingers.

Anita says:
November 13, 2010 at 12:36 am

At a glance, I see Charlie Brown, Lucy and Snoopy. Am I missing something? 😘 And have you tried Googling for the quote? It's often faster. 😊
WHY A STORK?
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! […]

MORE
Thanks for dropping by! Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Ten million things to do, and I spend fifteen minutes on a Disney Resorts online survey. I had to. They NEED TO KNOW about the logistical problems in the breakfast line. Oh, who am I kidding? They know. They’ve had guys with stopwatches and hidden cameras studying the place for years, and probably have a grand plan to rejigger the line so it moves 12% faster – no point in redoing it, since studies show that the longer people pause in front of the case with the sample items, there’s a 19% uptick in purchase of more expensive items. I also needed to tell them about the humorless concierge, who seemed to believe the job was training for the Gestapo. It’s not the fact that he couldn’t help that bothers me. It was the sense that I had done a very, very wrong thing when I didn’t get the Dining Package right away. Those are the rules, mein herr. Das Maus has set reasonable rules und it is your rrrrrresponsibility to follow ze rules.

Interesting day; did a podcast this morning for Ricochet, wrote the usual, had some nice brainstorming with the boss – we used our nice brains – and headed off for a flu shot, which I will turn into a column. Have an observation about something else that’s going on, but it will have to be turned into a blog entry. Had several thoughts, which were duly tweeted. So! What’s left? What precious flash of a synapse wasn’t inflicted on the world today?

Well, there’s the usual mysteries of the universe. This picture was making the
rounds today; two galaxies colliding. Makes me think of those times when you're walking along, someone's coming straight at you, and you both make minor course corrections but still seem to be in each other's path, except it's played out over millions of years. Slow mo, but only to us. To some being who lives in deep time, it's like one of those car crashes: it happened so fast I can barely remember who was at fault, but I think the spiral galaxy didn't signal its turn.

There are two kinds of people, by the way: those who are irritated at the other person whose corrections put them in your path, and those who feel compelled to make an embarrassed smile and say “Excuse me,” even though nothing you did would have mattered.

It would be interesting to live in a colliding galaxy, no? Depending on the speed, of course, but I imagine it's a leisurely process. Still would play hell with everything. Now that I think of it, though, how damned likely is such a collision? We're not talking about midtown Manhattan on Dec. 31st here. They're all moving away from each other, right? Big Bang, everything heading out for the territories, and all that. The article also says “scientists go on to say that our own Milky Way and the Andromeda Galaxy will probably collide in three or four billion years.” Really? So we're heading towards each other, or one of us is leadfooting it? It makes me realize how woefully inadequate my knowledge of celestial things really is – I mean, I know the basics, but I'm missing the part that makes the idea of bumpercar galaxies just one of those things.

Then there's this.

A picture of the Milky Way. Says io9: “Two enormous, gamma-ray-emitting structures are bubbling out of the center of our galaxy. And astronomers have no idea what caused them.” That's comforting. They do have an explanation for the enormous white brackets and letters and numbers, each of which is several hundred light-years across, but about the bubbles they got bupkis. That's not what gets me, though: it's the Milky Way. Suddenly it seems as if we really should have a better name for the galaxy. You meet some aliens, work out the language issues, and find out they call the Galaxy “The Hand of God Prime” or “The Torch of the Void” or “The Cradle of Light,” and then they ask us, and then they look at us with their eyes on stalks moving...
quizzically up and down and say, in their grating metallic voices, “The Fluid of Mammary Glands Road? Seriously?” And one of them spies a Milky Way candy bar – actually, he heard its distinctive chemical signature as it underwent a chemical change when the wrapper opened, and this produced a rather dissonant change in the infra-red spectrum, which they usually reserve for tragedy and dark comedy – and he asks why that is named after the galaxy. Or if it's named for breast milk. “It's all about tits with you people, isn't it?” And then we sort of nod and say, well, you got us there, what can we say. But what did you say you called Andromeda, the Comely Buttock? To each his own, then.

What I love about peering into the void: more questions than answers. The better we know how to look the more we don't know. I'm not one of those people who revels in the sense of insignificance, though; yes yes we're ticks on a speck, but on the other hand I have a coupon for pizza I intend to use Friday, and let's see some distant gas giant come up with either “coupons” or “pizza” or “the weekend.” I also dislike the snarky routines about how there had better be intelligent life out there because there's bugger-all down here – fine. Go in the corner and hate your species and pretend we never invented art or rockets or music or cars or pizza. As a whole we may look like a pile of blind men grasping for a cord attached to a light bulb over our heads – we may not grab it, and fat lot of good it would do if we did – but we try. Some of us, anyway.

–

LATER Having exhausted the TV I’d recorded, I hit Netflix streaming tonight, and became acquainted with “The IT Crowd.” Amusing. Then Netflix recommended “Rocky and Bullwinkle,” which I saw as a child, and enjoyed. It has its merits, but am I the first person to say that the animation is just utter rubbish? Just wondering.

81 RESPONSES TO to infinity and, well, you know

Pencilpal says:
November 11, 2010 at 12:23 pm
Re: Fractured Fairy Tales: Even as a child, always enjoyed the droll narration by Edward Everett Horton. Delighted to find, when older, that he was in some great movie comedies, and had a face and comic timing to match his vocal wittiness.

Larry says:
November 11, 2010 at 12:30 pm
I think the readership takes issue with knocking R&B animation.
Crappy cheap animation: Clutch Cargo, Hanna Barbera, even
modern Warner Bros. (cause you compare it to its prime).

Great cheap animation: R&B, Simpsons, Hank Hill: its as if style dictates the quality of the drawing, rather cost. Also bailed out by high quality voice talent, humor and plots.

Mark E. Hurling says:
November 11, 2010 at 12:36 pm

Edward Everett Horton actually has a very short street, or perhaps court is a better term, named for him in Los Angeles just across the street from Balboa Park.

hpoulter says:
November 11, 2010 at 12:39 pm

Clutch Cargo – now there's animation for you. Watching that when I was a kid was like reading a Harvey comic. It was a sign that I was bored into utter spupidity.

Gag! If you can take it, watch some of this. So the hideous lips effect was called Syncro Vox – who knew? (If anyone, probably our venerable broadcast engineer)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MHg1-mpcUY

Cory says:
November 11, 2010 at 12:46 pm

Sam L:
Re: Crusader Rabbit and R&B. Look up Alexander Anderson, the man who created them. He worked with Jay Ward, left before the cartoons went bigtime and had to sue in the 1990's to get credit. Just died last week.
Also created Dudley Do-Right (a take off of Nelson Eddy in the RCMP pictures).
“Don't worry Inspector Fenwick, I'll get her back. And the rest of her, too!”

grs says:
November 11, 2010 at 12:46 pm

Here's the R&B bumper sequence:

http://www.cartoonthrills.org/blog/JayWard/rockyBullwinkleCorn.mov

Rocky and Bullwinkel and the collision of galaxies, all in one bleat.
That's why I come here.

bgbear (roger h) says:
November 11, 2010 at 12:53 pm

thanks grs, so short but, perfect.

bgbear (roger h) says:
November 11, 2010 at 1:07 pm

I was just thinking that that R&B bumper is like a really short version of the Firebird Suite sequence in “Fantasia 2000"(which is very similar to the rejuvenation scene in "Princess Mononoke" and both share imagery from the Rights of Spring and Night on Bald
Mountain sequences in “Fantasia”).

Nice work Jay, you did it for less 😃

**Wagner von Drupen- Sachs** says:
November 11, 2010 at 1:08 pm

Had to look up the word online: the M-W definition adds this helpful tip:

Rhymes with CALLIPYGIAN
Cantabrigian, get religion, homing pigeon, irreligion

I swan, these internets are a caution. Cantabrigian, just the word I was looking for!

**Cory** says:
November 11, 2010 at 2:03 pm

Wagner- You are obviously a Yale Man (h/t Thurston Howell III)

**Jim Easton** says:
November 11, 2010 at 2:29 pm

There are two kinds of people, those who divide the world into two kinds of people and those who don’t.

**Ryan** says:
November 11, 2010 at 2:40 pm

A few things:

1) I presume galaxies can collide the same way that ANYTHING can collide. Yes, big bang, everything expanding, etc... But that movement is all relative. The same way our planets are revolving around the sun, and moons revolve around planets, I presume galaxies are orbiting around something else. And those orbits can intersect, or be affected by gravitational pulls from other large bodies (other galaxies, for example).

2) No, you're not the first person to comment on R&B's animation quality. But kids don’t care about animation quality, overly (or at least, they didn't, in the past) – as long as it's entertaining.

**hpoulter** says:
November 11, 2010 at 2:43 pm

There are kinds of people: those who always leave everything unfinished and

**GardenStater** says:
November 11, 2010 at 2:48 pm

It's becoming more and more clear:

We shall never learn the tale of the man they called Tink.

My life is worthless…. 
pfsm says:
November 11, 2010 at 3:10 pm

I learned my German from Die Frau, who thought in German and translated into English as she spoke. Well, with a considerable assist from my parents who taught me Danish as a child before I learned English.

The thing that always wondered me about the genders in that language is that the sun is feminine and the moon masculine, which seems backward to me.

pfsm says:
November 11, 2010 at 3:12 pm

The genders in German, that is. Danish has genders too, but only two, common and neuter. Why bother?

Dr Alice says:
November 11, 2010 at 3:32 pm

I also heartily recommend “Father Ted.” First saw it courtesy of a friend I was visiting in England who had the series on DVD. I have never laughed so hard at a television show in my entire life. It's excellent.

Kevin says:
November 11, 2010 at 3:39 pm

I used to work with a scientist who was from Kazakhstan—an absolutely beautiful woman, with rich dark eyes—and, like Wrambling Wreck, one day I had the inspiration to ask her to say “moose and squirrel.” She did, with the Natasha accent, and I fell over laughing. The look she gave to me was past quizzical, almost malevolent, and even explaining the reason for my laughter did little to calm her down. (But to see those eyes flashing was its own reward, too!)

Re the Universe contracting: one of the interesting bits of research at this Laboratory concerns both Dark Energy and Dark Matter (no relation to Darth Vader). Dark Energy is particularly fascinating, because it turns out the Universe is continuing to expand, and that in fact the rate of expansion is increasing! What in the world is driving this? (Take that, secular materialists! Ha!)

hpoulter says:
November 11, 2010 at 3:43 pm

In the Lord of the Rings, Tolkien consistently uses feminine pronouns for the sun and masculine for the moon (how’s that for geeky esoterica?). I always wondered where he got it. Probably from Old English.

Grebmar says:
November 11, 2010 at 3:53 pm

I'm late to this, but as far as I know, English is unusual, in that it has only one article. Most languages are gendered, but only male and female. Why the Germans had to add a third neutral gender, and change most of them (adding three more – den, dem, and des) for different cases, is lost in the mists of time. Perhaps linguists know
the answer to that question.

As someone who knows Deutsch pretty well (and still gets completely tripped up by not remembering the correct gender), I can say that the change in case for the article results in a somewhat more accurate description of a thought—you know, for example, that a noun is a direct or an indirect object immediately because of the case.

**Grebmar** says:
November 11, 2010 at 3:55 pm

@hpoulter: The sun is feminine in German, the moon is masculine, so Tolkien probably did take it from old English, which has similar roots. Nature is also feminine (hence Mother Nature)

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
November 11, 2010 at 3:55 pm

Not exactly the same but, I once worked with a guest worker who was from the recently defunct East Germany. One of our co-workers always said “I am smarter than the average bear” and we had to to explain to Axel who Yogi Bear was (East Germans got no Yogi like those in West Germany).

We loved making him say “Yogi Bear” in his thick Teutonic accent.

Later he visited Hanna-Baberra themed “Great America” amusement park and returned to worked excitedly declaring “I saw Yogi Bear!”

you had to be there 😊

**Grebmar** says:
November 11, 2010 at 3:57 pm

PS: For what it's worth, gendered nouns also result in gendered pronouns, so using a gendered pronoun can be more specific than in English, where indefinite pronouns occur pretty often.

**ak138** says:
November 11, 2010 at 4:01 pm

Re colliding galaxies and gamma-ray-emitting structures: there's some part of me--my inner Mortimer Snerd--that thinks scientists are just making all this stuff up.

I loved R&B, Sherman and Mr. Peabody, Commander McBragg, etc., bad animation and all. I still have my Wossamatta U sweatshirt, long outgrown.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
November 11, 2010 at 4:28 pm

@Kevin,

DO I recall correctly you are (were?) associated with NASA at one point? If so was MS Kazakhstan a rocket scientist from Baikonur? In a previous life my employer provided security for US commercial launches taking place there. The stories about the tame Russians our guys would come back with were truly memorable.
Kevin says:
November 11, 2010 at 5:05 pm

Mark, no, never associated with NASA (though back in the 60s I got
up early to watch live footage from one of the Ranger probes as it
approached and then crashed into the Moon— I believe that was the
masculine Moon). I provide admin. support to the Life Sciences
Division at a national laboratory.
My flashing-eyes researcher is a biophysicist, now at another
research institution. She did, however, have a fascinating story
about students from a different floor in her University in Moscow,
who found an algorithm that apparently turned out to be quite
useful for predicting activity on Wall Street, and en masse they
traveled there and became fabulously wealthy. I think it would
make a good movie!
She was also rather callipygous! (and one of the nicer people that I
have ever known)

Shah Guido G says:
November 11, 2010 at 5:22 pm

JamesS,
The Italian words for earth and moon are “Terra” and “Luna”, so
they use those terms quite frequently.

And, while we are on the topic of Britcoms, Blackadder and Red
Dwarf are two of my favorites. One is for history geeks, the other for
standard space geeks.

Mark E. Hurling says:
November 11, 2010 at 5:28 pm

Well that IS interesting. Kazakhstan by way of Mockba (poor
attempt at emulating the cyrillic alphabet there). And now the good
old U S of A. Hope your acquaintance with her didn't prove
problematic at the outset of your background investigation.
Ve haff vays of findink out aaall about you, mein freund.

Pickypicky says:
November 12, 2010 at 12:38 pm

Great writing will shove mediocre animation under the waterline of
awareness; so it was with R&B — also South Park in the days before
it jumped its shark. Great animation and special effects won’t save a
lousy script, though Hollywood will never understand that.

A German short story had a line that went something like “I was tall
enough to lay my nose upon the table, which I was allowed to do if it
was clean.” In English, it's not clear whether the nose or the table
had to be clean; the German (“…wenn sie sauber war.”) leaves no
doubt that Miss Nose had to be clean, while Mr. Table's cleanliness
didn't matter.

Aren’t you glad I cleared that up? Always glad to help you express
yourself more clearly, Mr. Lileks!

I'll just show myself out…
metaphizzle says:
November 12, 2010 at 3:09 pm

hpoulter said: “In the Lord of the Rings, Tolkien consistently uses feminine pronouns for the sun and masculine for the moon (how’s that for geeky esoterica?). I always wondered where he got it. Probably from Old English.”

Grebmar said: “The sun is feminine in German, the moon is masculine, so Tolkien probably did take it from Old English, which has similar roots. Nature is also feminine (hence Mother Nature)”

It’s been too long since I’ve read The Silmarillion, but Middle-Earth’s sun and moon are either borne across the sky by Maiar (beings about halfway between angels and gods), or they are Maiar themselves. The sun-Maiar is a female, and the moon-one is male.

Considering how much of a linguistics nerd Tolkien was, I’m sure Old English or some Germanic language was his inspiration for that particular bit of myth.

Terry aka TeeOC says:
November 15, 2010 at 4:53 pm

R&B was all about the soundtrack and the writing, the best voice-over artists ever! June Foray, Paul Frees, Bill Conrad
to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
I know I should change the rotating banner art; it's done, it's over, it was a million years ago. Now I'm back to this:

The snow fell steadily this afternoon, without haste or anger: the clouds were just making a delivery, that's all. And that's fine. Has to come sooner or later, and [...]

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THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

NOVEMBER 2010

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UNTOLD RICHES AWAITS YOU

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

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is HERE!
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
I'm having trouble calling up the site tonight, so I don't know if I'll even be able to post. It's as if the site is infected with turkey-valium, and cannot rouse itself to display an admin page. Takes ten minutes to try to post an image, so I'm loading in the code and crossing my fingers. Hope it works.

Why am I up? Because it was a wonderful day, perfectly paced – dinner arrived at 5, I got my second wind and burned off half the meal doing all the dishes, then had sufficient energy to do evening exercise and end up with sufficient gusto to lay out 37 pages of the 2011 Joe Ohio site. O what a fascinating life I lead. Anyway: dig this. It's a silent movie from the early 20s, sponsored by a newspaper. They'd ask people to send in their dreams, and they'd film the winner.
This, of course, is what makes modern people hit PAUSE:

Oh ho.
And so:

Wonder what dreams the occupants of the house have now.

All I can do today on this slow slow site; hope to have it fixed by Monday. See you then with the full panoply of updates!
Pass it along, if you wish

25 RESPONSES TO small friday

hpoulter says:
November 26, 2010 at 7:54 am

What an incredible newspaper promotion! They went to some trouble and expense, too – all those locations. Here it is for download:

http://www.archive.org/details/TribuneA1924

Must have been fun for the newspaper staff to judge the entries. I'll bet they got some (unfilmable) lulus

GardenStater says:
November 26, 2010 at 8:54 am

I've always wondered about newspapers way back when that would provide the exact address of people they wrote about. Can't imagine it today.

Thanks for mentioning about the slow blog–I thought it was a problem on my end!

Sydney Brillo Duodenum says:
November 26, 2010 at 10:36 am

It's funny – after the husband checks the engine of the car after it acts queerly, he reaches into his jacket, at which point I expect him to pull out a cell phone and call AAA, but he of course reaches for his watch. I'll have to give this video a much closer looksee for a “time traveller.”

Dan Tink says:
November 26, 2010 at 10:37 am

Does everybody block the sidewalk in that neighborhood?

I wouldn't harm the vehicles, but I'd give them a good looking into if I was a pedestrian.

swschrad says:
November 26, 2010 at 11:34 am

Wednesday afternoon, the site was missing, 404-land. Slow is a minor improvement.

turkey and all the kit for Thanksgiving, breakfast today was a slab of pumpkin pie with chemically-infused white oil food substitute product material. Sugarless. Stabilized with half the Gilbert chemistry set.

Ahhhhh, but the homemade pie made up for it.

diet imitation whipped cream with a massively decadent pie. What a country!
swschrad says:
November 26, 2010 at 11:36 am

@sidney et al: one would hope, if he owns a garage, it's in San Fran.

bgbear says:
November 26, 2010 at 12:02 pm

but, there is no “there” there.

GardenStater says:
November 26, 2010 at 12:28 pm

I'm guessing at this point that we'll never find out who Mr. Tink really was....

Calling Lance Lawson–Lance Lawson to the White Courtesy Phone, please.

CaliforniaJeff says:
November 26, 2010 at 12:45 pm

I grew up in the last generation in southern California suburbia when it was considered that mundane information like one's address would not create a personal safety liability. The presumption that your fellow citizens where decent people ruled.

The shift came in the mid-70s for us: our front door, which was never even closed the entire summer (only a screen door between us and the world patrolled by Jack Webb) began to be closed and locked every night. Some of this undoubtedly was due to my parents entering late middle-age, but there was a distinct change in the feeling of safety in the community. My 10-yr. old friends and I rode our bikes all over the city, gone for hours, without concerning our parents one iota. No one does that here anymore, and it ain't just the advent of video games and computers. Sigh.

Funny what I noticed because of my 21st Century fishbowl view:

1. Putting the baby, in a wicker basket, on the floorboard of the car! No car-seats for the tyke, no seat belts for anyone, and those little doors would not prevent anyone from being thrown from the car in an accident. Of course, we kids used to ride around in the bed of our father's pickup truck, on the freeway, no less, a thought that brings a reflexive pang of horror to my mind today.

2. I know it's a dream, but that bottle of milk has been without refrigeration of any kind for hours by the time Mom pulls it from her bag: our ideas of germ control and food preservation have maybe become both more informed and more paranoid.

3. The traffic cop should have stood out more, but it has become an accepted convention of the first couple decades of film, so that when I see it, I don't raise an eyebrow. But what a strange sight, if it were to happen in your town today, and not the result of a funeral procession, traffic accident or power outage.

carl treseder says:
November 26, 2010 at 1:29 pm

From 1934 until the early 1970's, my mothers parents lived around the corner from San Juan Avenue on Rosedale Ave, and in my 1950's youth I walked with my grandfather along this and other nearby
streets in Oakland. As late as the 1960's this was a working class/middle class neighborhood, mostly long time residents, many well tended yards with plantings that flourished in Oakland's mild climate. Cactus gardens, redwoods, camellias, quite a diversity. A Lileks kind of place.

swschrad says:
November 26, 2010 at 1:41 pm

@GardenStater: Mr. Tink was a brutal ax murderer in an unfinished novel by Robert Herkimer Stevenson (not the famous Robert Stevenson who got published.)

well, the little skunk finally got his when he put eggs down the heater air intake of Sheriff Joe Rebel's squad car one hot day in Gators Spit, Florida.

whoa, did the little skunk finally meet a reckoning!

never did learn to write with his deformed left foot, and with the subsequent derangement from interrogation, the novel was never completed.

much to our betterment, I must add, since the snippets in the wild have been the subject of six book-burnings and ten Supreme Court cases.

love that Wikipedia!

Chris says:
November 26, 2010 at 4:06 pm

What an inconvenient way to have to carry a baby. Thank God for modern strollers, car seats, and even those baby backpacks!

hpoulter says:
November 26, 2010 at 4:08 pm

Question to ponder – where was this film shown? Probably not on the newspaper website. Did the local theater just add it to the shorts rotation? Was it shown in other cities?

Mahariness of Franistan says:
November 26, 2010 at 4:36 pm

@bgbear: Nice Stein reference!

swschrad says:
November 26, 2010 at 6:19 pm

@hpoulter: obviously an ad short run in the local theaters before the show bill started. production cost was next to nothing, so whoever had a 35mm stand camera and a Kensol hotpress could grind these out and process them on a Virginia reel in a sink for two bucks and charge 10 a shot. place ‘em in the theater for a “dollar a holler” and charge buck-fifty, and you’ve got a reasonable little part-time job.

Geoff says:
November 26, 2010 at 6:42 pm
Man, that guy really has a rude way of waking up his wife – I thought she was going to end up with shaken-wife syndrome.

Susan says:
November 27, 2010 at 12:52 am

10:49 Friday evening. Did not watch the video. The oldest granddaughter (age 10) is asleep on the couch after an evening of Scrabble, Stardust is playing softly in the background. Happy Thanksgiving!

Chuck says:
November 27, 2010 at 1:28 am

The addresses. ....as most of you know, this was very common in newspapers and magazines years ago.

TByrd says:
November 27, 2010 at 10:07 am

Having been a resident of the SF Bay area for most of my life I am wondering about the circuitous route a train from Oakland to San Francisco would have taken in the 20′s. This is definitely pre-BART and pre-Bay Bridge. The ‘train station’ in the film looks suspiciously like the ferry building in downtown San Francisco. Also wouldn’t it be easier just to take a ferry from Oakland to Marin County? Then again perhaps that’s just part of the ‘dream’?

old unkajoe says:
November 27, 2010 at 11:56 am

swschrad: Thanks for clearing up the Mr. Tink mystery. I think.

Crid [CridComment at gmail] says:
November 27, 2010 at 12:47 pm

Commie Framm:


hpoulter says:
November 28, 2010 at 6:09 am

@TByrd – I think they just left a leg out. They took a commuter train to get to the ferry, and then the ferry across the bay.

Isn’t that the Embarcadero we see them in front of when they discover the missing baby?

Too bad they left it out. Shots of the ferry trip would have been interesting.

Umbriel says:
November 29, 2010 at 1:23 pm

I wonder if that marina where they pick up the rowboat in SF is the one that got taken over by sea lions.
Kevin says:
November 29, 2010 at 3:38 pm

I had a mild local angle, too. I taught elementary school for a year, about a half-mile from this location. Don’t think any of my students came from that direction, though– there was a school closer. (It was a GRIM year, too– I thoroughly admire teachers that can retain their enthusiasm and optimism.)

fantabulous says:
November 29, 2010 at 11:20 pm

I like the part where he stomps the fish.
That was an epic weekend, at least in length. Can’t say I did much except hunch before the machinery and produce stuff for next year’s site. No, amend that: got up some of the Christmas lights. I went to Target on Saturday to get lights, since all the old ones were dead, and was presented with the usual choices: LEDs for an insane amount of money, Heavy-Duty old-style bulbs for half as much, and cheap lead-filled Sur-Fail Brand lights for 8 bucks a box. Of course I went with the cheapest. For heaven’s sake. I’m not going to spend $300 to put up lights. No. I usually get three years out of them, and if you assume 50% failure rate, I’m . . . justifying my penny-wise/pound-foolish behavior, I guess. But this is what happens when you look at your property tax hikes. The entire city opened their envelopes and felt the blood drain from their faces.

I used my homemade halberd to string the lights on the top branches, and it looks nice. I did not put up the blue lights, though. Bought them to go around the door. A nice accent color. Told a friend I was doing blue this year. “You’re not Jewish,” he said.

“Obviously,” I said, “or you would have said ‘so you’re Jewish?’” Wait a minute. “You have to be Jewish to have blue lights?”

“It’s the Hanukkah color.”
“Yes, but . . . it’s the Swedish flag color, too, right?” (Quick Google search on iPhone.) “Yes it is.”

“So you’re Swedish?”

Grrr. No, point is, no one has a lock on blue. Do they? I don’t know. Blue just seems apt – cold and hard and unyielding. You know, holiday colors! I mean winter colors. But of course the holiday lights are meant to connote warmth and celebration, not the grim collective Jaw of Mankind set against the imminent rule of ice. Aaaannnd now I’m just writing nonsense. Although I am part Swedish.

One fun weekend project: when Apple discontinued its old homepage sites, about 200 links on my site were blown up, including all the Diners and all the embedded movies for B&W World and 100 Mysteries. Oy. (Or whatever they say in Sweden.) That set me back, time-wise, but it did give me an incentive to redo the Diner site and prep it for iTunes delivery again.

Next year it's weekly Diners. Shorter, but weekly.

The major accomplishment around here: the execution of the Bison Bounty project, aka the kid's school project. This year they're studying Native Americans, and everyone has to pick a topic and give a presentation. So it's housing, or food, or hunting. Since Bison provided everything, she went with that. The Wal-Mart of the Plains Indians was my suggested subtitle, so she went with that. But every other suggestion met with disapproval, and as any parent who's tried to cobble together one of these class projects knows, it's a long nightmare of frustration and despair. Last spring it was Wisconsin that caused such endless grief; now it's Bison.

Also spent some time finalizing the recent vacation memories. When I was a kid I think we took 10, 12 shots on a trip. One roll. Maybe two. If they were converted into slides, they were seen once or twice when Company came over – this meant setting up the thick shimmery sheet, plugging in the projector, and watching grainy still images of the people who were already in the room, but wearing shorter clothes, and squinting in front of something famous. After the vogue for slides had passed, Dad took a few photos, which required developing, of course. You popped out the cartridge – what marvelous high-tech we had in those days, what with self-contained film cartridges to flashcubes that automatically revolved to produce a fresh one – and you took it to the drug store, which gave you a little paper slip, redeemable for your precious memories. It was a big deal when the pictures came back. It was a big deal when there was some stunning new innovation, like matte finish pictures with rounded corners. Hey, no more poking yourself with those pointy picture-ends anymore!

The envelopes went into a drawer; sometimes they'd make it into an album. I always liked looking through those, for some reason; seemed a fine bored-rainy-day thing to do while we sat around and waited for the invention of cable TV.
What must have seemed annoying was the range of photo albums. You were guaranteed to have a hodgepodge collection of books. This would have driven me mad, if there were people like me back then, and I’m sure there were. There were people like me in Roman times, complaining that the new thick histories required larger non-standard scroll-cubbies, which threw off the symmetry of the shelves. But the photo books had to adjust to the different styles; first pictures got bigger, then the square photo gave way to the rectangular. I had one photo book that used hard gummed sheets with transparent overlays; you put in your picture, pressed down, and it stayed in place – like magic! Or like something with an adhesive coating. It’s far better to have slideshows you can pipe to your TV.

Isn’t it?

In a way. For Thanksgiving I threw together a slide show and piped it to the TV, and the guests seemed to enjoy it. But for all my no-hard-copies sentiment – which arises more than anything from a sense of being overwhelmed by the quantities of stuff, especially books, which crowd in from every wall and taunt me (remember what I’m about? This 700 word history you read in college? No, of course not! But you can’t throw me away! I’m a black-spined Penguin! Me and all my mates look great on the shelf, don’t we? All nice and neat and even and black. I’ll outlive you! Your heirs will give me away! Your signature, so proudly written across the inside cover, will make someone laugh with its self-consciously ornate flourishes, so typical of an English major with infinite self-regard for his penmanship. By the way, the name’s Thucydides. You misfiled me between Hugo and Tolstoi. It’s okay. They talk my ear off, but neither of them can make it halfway through me to talk to the other.”) – but I do want photobooks.

So, I started to make books in iPhoto for every year. Did that after I’d winnowed out the good photos from the bad, and edited the movie from the last trip, burned it all to disc (twice) and backed it up (thrice) and put the discs in an envelope along with ephemera (drink coaster from the Bahamas, my name badge, a matchbook) and the envelope into the big plastic bag marked 2010. In a month it goes in the basement in the box where all the other years are kept.

All in the hopes that my daughter cares to reconstruct her childhood one rainy afternoon.

Sorry about slowness over the weekend, sitewise; some caching issues, it seems. An email sent to my host, Hosting Matters, let to prompt investigation and multiple emails detailing what they were doing, and why, and how. They rock and you cannot do better. Everything’s working now, and updates resume tomorrow. Have a grand day!
42 RESPONSES TO *monday, finally. or finally! monady.*

**swschrad** says:
November 29, 2010 at 11:27 am

it is good that the matters host did things to energize Our Gracious Host.

the cachet is better when the cache is flowing.

or so King Benjamin said

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**Al Federber** says:
November 29, 2010 at 11:38 am

Blue/green lights in the trees/shrubbery and red/amber lights around the door.

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**TWylite** says:
November 29, 2010 at 11:42 am

In Scändiñævïa, they use so many ümlâûts and other funny markings on top of their letters so they don't freeze their heads off and die of hypothermia, which would make all communication impossible. How do Swedish Jews celebrate the winter holidays? Do they make matzo-meatballs? Light a self-assembled Menorah from Ikea?

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**sally** says:
November 29, 2010 at 11:42 am

I'll be brash enough to speak for the entire tribe. No, we don't own “blue.” Use it all you'd like, we don't care.

In fact – speaking just for myself now, but ardently – use it in abundance, please. If blue starts being absorbed by Christmas, maybe Hannukah can get some different colors as recompense. I'm tired of blue.

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**swschrad** says:
November 29, 2010 at 11:53 am

there are no Jews in Scandinavia because by the time they reverse steps Bizarro-3 and Bizarro-4 and do them the right way, the first two days of Hanukah are already over.

and they're doomed.

to celebrate the rainbow of human experience, I do the multi-color light thing only. the blue bulbs are for the Finnish, rolling in the snow after the saunas. hey, guys, next time bring some keys out with ya.

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**Sara** says:
November 29, 2010 at 11:57 am

I'm half Swedish, and our phrase is Uff Da!
Jennifer says:
November 29, 2010 at 12:03 pm

Those albums with the adhesive pages? After ten years you lift one up, and get a lap full of photos. My poor mom and all that organizing (I suppose it doesn't help that I nick the one's I like).

The Other Jeff says:
November 29, 2010 at 12:07 pm

May I just say… HUZZAH! For the Diner! I am already joyous!

Cory says:
November 29, 2010 at 12:20 pm

Little known fact:
The guy who trademarked the color blue in 1909 is the same guy who invented the comma

swschrad says:
November 29, 2010 at 12:24 pm

@Cory: and the lawsuits between him and the guy who created “cyan” went on for 20 years.

this is why there are two color systems, the additive and the subtractive.

Wikipedia is your friend (authoratative citation needed.)

Kurt says:
November 29, 2010 at 12:38 pm

I put up blue lights this year; I guess some people will assume that I'm Jewish, but I just liked the color.

Dianna says:
November 29, 2010 at 12:50 pm

For several years now, I've been using Google's Picasa to store/edit pictures, and think it's pretty awesome. Especially that it's free. I've scanned the old slides and old photos from a few generations and 2 families, and also have “filed” them in Picasa. I've been loading those digital photos onto a digital frame to enjoy a continuously running slideshow. Then, a couple of weeks ago, we bought a new 3DTV and wireless blueray 3d player, featuring all the latest and greatest stuff. One of the coolest features is Picasa Web Albums, where you access all your uploaded Picasa Web albums through the blueray player, wirelessly, and instantly can select by album name for a wonderful 55 inch slideshow! The only dilemma now is…what to do with all those empty slide trays, the old projector, the old screen, and boxes and boxes of old photos. Last time I looked, this stuff was selling on Ebay for pennies (if it was selling at all!)

swschrad says:
November 29, 2010 at 12:56 pm

@Dianna: if you had a really nice slide scanner, we could talk. I have 40+ years of Ektachromes to get on slideshows.
Joe Broderick says:
November 29, 2010 at 1:05 pm

So I finally know where the time goes. It is collected, year by year, and stored in a box in Mr. Lileks' basement.

nixmom says:
November 29, 2010 at 1:17 pm

1) Hate to break it to you, James, but Menards' had 100-light strings (indoor and outdoor, green cording) on sale this weekend for $1.98 a pop. Easily a "oh-heck-we're-just-going-to-toss-them-in-January-anyway" price point. Moreso when you consider there was also a $1.00 per string rebate. (Mail-in of course, so we'll toss the rebate slips in January as well)

2) Another option is that all-blue lighting is to honor the police, who may or may not be able to spend the holiday with their family. Could be a complete urban myth, but one I think is kind of neat.

Dianna says:
November 29, 2010 at 1:22 pm

Hey Swschrad, I can sympathize with the task that lay ahead! 40+ years will take some serious time. I started out with one of those one-at-a-time scanners... each slide took about 3 minutes to process, and the resulting file wasn't that great. Many screamed obscenities later, I upgraded to my current Epson V300 scanner...3 slides or 3 photos at a time! takes about a minute, and the image quality is excellent. Not only that, I can edit the resulting image. Don't know about your ancestors, but mine seemed to take lots of vacation pics where the mountain range (or whatever) was the primary thing in the image, with the people being secondary. Cropping down the mountain revealed some pretty cool closer-ups of Granny and Gramps!
The scanner also converts documents to PDF files, so I continue to use it for work-related tasks. ahh, technology!!!

bgbear says:
November 29, 2010 at 1:26 pm

Funny, you don't look Bluish.

Rick says:
November 29, 2010 at 1:37 pm

Speaking of holiday lights, our 9 month old is fascinated with the lights on our tree. It's amazing to see the simple joy in his eyes looking at it.

juanito - John Davey says:
November 29, 2010 at 1:50 pm

Lileks

Last spring it was Wisconsin that caused such endless grief; now it's Bison.

Wisconsin. It's always Wisconsin. Confounders.
Alas, I still have a pile of tapes from the early 2000s of our firstborn performing the typical “firsts”. I think I have converted a total of six tapes to DVD, and have about 18 tapes remaining. Everything after that is straight to digital. And the amount of DVDs and Thumbdrives sitting our safe deposit box is getting unwieldy. Those, of course, are backups of the backups that exist at the house. Strangely, a second child does not impart a doubling of media, but actually brings a multiplier effect significantly larger. Perhaps a data repository in Wisconsin. That’ll learn ‘em!

Bill McNutt says:
November 29, 2010 at 2:05 pm

I got a terabyte NAS to backup my images, but then decided that the images were taking up too much local hard drive space. So I moved them to the NAS. And now I’m working without a net again. I need another NAS to backup my NAS.

swschrad says:
November 29, 2010 at 2:07 pm

@juanito: it is legend that the first child gets its weight in photos taken every month. the second child, the cameras molder.

“oh, look, a novel thing! why, it's an heir!” gives way to “crap, another year and a half of no sleep.”

until child #1 is large enough to take his/her/its own pictures of everybody else, at which time another room of the casa gets inundated with silver halide static domains on dusty media.

RebeccaH says:
November 29, 2010 at 2:15 pm

You're lucky you only had bison to contend with. I had to build castles. Three of them. From scratch.

Cory says:
November 29, 2010 at 2:20 pm

swschrad:
You are right-on concerning the lawsuits and the color systems. What you may not know is there was also a legal battle way back over the comma and the semicolon- I forget how it was settled but that's why there are two sets of punctuation, the multiplicative and the divisive

writeaway says:
November 29, 2010 at 2:32 pm

Thanks, Dianna for the scanner info. Every year I say I am going to scan my dad's old slide & then I look at the scanners and lose heart. Maybe the Epson will give me courage!

GardenStater says:
November 29, 2010 at 2:38 pm

@swschrad: “@juanito: it is legend that the first child gets its weight in photos taken every month. the second child, the cameras molder.”
Try being the 4th of 4. Not only didn't I get my picture taken, but they once actually left me behind when they left on a vacation (family legend is that they got down the block when mom said “The baby!”).

Not that I have any issues, or anything…

**Bob Lipton** says:
November 29, 2010 at 3:16 pm

It's Chanukah, not Passover, so it would be potato meatballs — I mean meat potato balls. Because you'd probably serve them with gefilte bison, made from bison you came home and found swimming in your bathtub.

Oh, heck. All my ancestors come from the other side of the Baltic.

Bob

**Bob Lipton** says:
November 29, 2010 at 3:18 pm

Or maybe it's potato bison.

Bob

**JamesS** says:
November 29, 2010 at 3:19 pm

@GardenStater:

I guess “Home Alone” has a special meaning to you, eh?

**Bob Lipton** says:
November 29, 2010 at 3:28 pm

No, let me start from the beginning — some days I regret the lack of an edit function around here. It's Chanukah, not Passover, so you'd come home and spin the bison, waiting to put potatoes on the menorah and complain to the landlord because he made one day's worth of oil heat last for eight days. Then he would complain that you tried to pay your rent with chocolate instead of real money…

No, that's not right either. Frankly, it's been a while and some of the details escape me. I'll have to get back to you on this.

Bob

**Kevin** says:
November 29, 2010 at 3:54 pm

@GardenStater

I'm the second of four sons, so still had a Baby Book somewhat kept up. My younger brother had a great line the other day, “I'm not saying my parents didn't love me, but the mobile revolving over my crib had vultures.”

**David** says:
November 29, 2010 at 4:02 pm

Of course, blue is also the Advent color (see, for example,
http://www.crivoice.org/colorsof.html and

But you knew that…right? 😊

swschrad says:
November 29, 2010 at 4:43 pm

@GardenStater, Kevin: we had a routine in our family, just two kids, but we still had a routine. in case somebody gets left behind, get thee to the nearest police station, sit on a bench (not too near the donuts,) and wait. something of a unification will eventually occur.

one time I had to catch up to the folks in the wilds of nowhere, and for some silly reason we all decided I would bus up there. so I was waiting around in the reservation police station for two hours for the folks, who bore tattoos on their foreheads saying “I am chronically late, give me a cookie and smile,” and the cops looking at each other.

GardenStater says:
November 29, 2010 at 5:19 pm

@swschrad: Since I was only a month or two old when the abandonment occurred, it might have been difficult to make it to the Police Dept. Fortunately, they didn’t get far before realizing their mistake!

(But still no baby pictures…)

Charlie Young says:
November 29, 2010 at 5:23 pm

I’m guessing JL has an Apple TV and is presenting those photo slide shows through his big screen already. Unfortunately, the jump from computer to TV is still not easy or complete.

swschrad says:
November 29, 2010 at 5:34 pm

@Charlie Young: it’s easy if you turn one off, and then walk over to the other and turn it on.

for some wacko insane reason, default drivers do not have any lo-fi video ports on as the base state for video cards, in addition to the hi-fi monitor port.

not motivated enough to find the time to jump through all the hoops to get NTSC RCA jack video out on my Ubuntu box in the living room. I already have 800 satellite channels with nothing on, I don’t feel a need to stream even lower video creatures at this point 😏

Natalie says:
November 29, 2010 at 5:59 pm

Weekly Diners. You’re going back to weekly Diners!!! Seriously, I’ve missed those.

I’ll consider that my Christmas present.
iakobos agathos says:
November 29, 2010 at 6:36 pm

Thucydides isn’t misfiled between Hugo and Tolstoi, if you sort by the Greek alphabet (Eta, Theta...TAU).

Okay, I have too much time on my hands...

Kev says:
November 29, 2010 at 7:30 pm

Little known fact:
The guy who trademarked the color blue in 1909 is the same guy who invented the comma

I didn’t know that you could trademark a color as common as blue, but the punctuation part makes sense, seeing as how my brother-in-law successfully managed to trademark the frowny.

Cory says:
November 29, 2010 at 9:55 pm

I didn’t know that you could trademark a color as common as blue,

Kev: At the turn of the last century, not many people knew that. The critical 1901 Supreme Court case was the United States v. Roy G. Biv. The Court decided 8-1 that primary colors could be trademarked, but secondary colors and gray were derivative and thus were not subject to the same law. The Cyan case that Swshrad (you can tell he’s a lawyer) refers to was a lower court case attempting to decide whether cyan and blue were different colors. It was decided they were, thus producing the two color systems he referred to. As an aside, it was this system that allowed the University of Michigan to adopt Maize as one of its colors, Maize being defined by the court as “an arrogant yellow.” Surprisingly white and black have never been the subject of trademark dispute.
I am not as familiar with punctuation law, citing only the discovery of the comma and the well-known dispute over it and the semicolon; Ask Swshrad, he may know more.

Mark says:
November 29, 2010 at 11:09 pm

Weekly Diners just made me so excited that I voided my bladder.

Jordynne Olivia Lobo says:
November 30, 2010 at 4:50 am

The blue lights are for Elvis. Everyone knows that Elvis was secretly Jewish – the three big giveaway clues being: one, his middle name was Aaron; two, he took the blond-streaked & brown dye out of his natural black hair; and, three, he then recorded his subversive Protocols Of The Youngsters Of Zion Hannukah-code song “Blue Christmas.” (Another World Jewish Conspiracy theory born, and it was a piece of cake, thank you very much – now let’s see what the scholars at Al Azhar in Cairo do with THAT!)

RobertB says:
December 2, 2010 at 12:44 pm
http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=8391
I'm fairly sure blue is owned by Wal-Mart.
As for the Diner … please, please publish an RSS feed, for those of us who don't use iTunes. Please?
The Bison Presentation was a complete success. Every possible aspect of the bison's life was answered in my daughter's speech, as evidenced by the fact that not one peer in the 5th grade had a question afterwards. I think that says it all. Also, they were two minutes late for recess.

Hey, did you all CyberShop on CyberMonday? My wife tried, and Barnes & Noble servers were overloaded and hiccuped and lost the orders twice. Must have caught them totally by surprise, this whole online thing. It's like going to a check-out counter with a stack full of books and having the clerk enter a catatonic state, then there's a flash of light, you lose consciousness, and when you wake up all your books are back on the shelves.

I'll admit the deals are spectacular – Amazon had a deeply discounted bongo drum, last time I checked. I did get on a waitlist for a Swiss Army Knife; if I ever find myself facing the Swiss Army, I want to make sure we're evenly matched. (Was there ever a recent battle where the famously neutral Swiss used those things? “Reports are coming in now, and over 5000 enemy forces appear to have been killed with a corkscrew, with several hundred wounded claiming their nails were filed by that useless metal emory board.)

Just remembered I already have a Swiss Army knife, but it's not a classic Red model, and hence maybe doesn't count. Looks like it's from some crazy Terminator future, where robots rule everything. No, it counts, all right. It's
the basics: every man should have a knife, a Zippo, and a flask, in case you have to saw off a limb and cauterize it. I haven't seen “127 Hours” – I'm waiting for the extended director's cut, “128 hours,” which contains a solid hour of screaming – but I'll wager the guy had all the items described above.

Maybe not the Zippo. This may be Zippo's fault, because they keep issuing such declasse downsmarket lighters with goofy designs that scream I CAN HAS MULLET. Okay, Playboy Bunny, fine. Reefer leaf: sigh. Sparkly rainbow metal shimmery background with Confederate flag: if you must. I have a collection of Zippos, but haven't added anything in some time, because there's nothing to be had – unless you want to pay $150 for a Vietnam-era lighter, which I don't, because I wasn't in Nam and hence have no right to own it.

The fiche machine is acting up at work, a balky cow that gives no milk. But the other day I did find something interesting. Hey, look at this: It had a tower.

And a different name: American Agricultural Mart. No longer the world's largest commercial building, but still PDB on the structure scale, or Pretty Damned Big. The tower was downsized to a squat nub, and probably just as
And then it was Tuesday | The Bleat.

well; that’s not exactly useful space up there. It was a product of the 20s boom, as you might expect, and just thinking about the 20s gives me intestinal grips. Because there, my friends, was a boom. The 80s also. In a lesser sense, the 90s. Booms that produced things. The last boom just made houses. Ten billion houses. Oh, we got a few skyscrapers out of it, but they were mostly residential; we didn’t spend the fat years pushing stone into the sky like we used to do. It was a thumb-twiddling boom like no other, and all the “landmark” architecture was mostly incomprehensible European-derived hell-boxes plunked down in the middle of progressive cities, and labeled “library” or “theater.” There’s no American vernacular for large-scale architecture, or for sculpture. O for the days when bewhiskered plutocrats with uncomfortable collars would cut the ribbon on a statue named VIRTUE then hie back to the hotel to meet with the mistress. I’m serious: at least there was a line between then and now, between the Classical and the Modern, instilling the urban landscape with timeless symbols of the concepts that undergirded society. A boom used to give us brick and it gave us stone; last time around we got houses with drywall a kid could put a fist through.

Or so it seems. The long yawn of history will probably find something interesting. I was poking through the fiche today, as I said, and I got out a scroll from 1954. Lots of stories about the debate over whether the hideous recession was over. I’ve no idea if it matches our contemporary travails; I doubt it. For one thing, no one’s talking these days about upticks in steel production. But you don’t think of the 50s as having recessions, do you?

There’s WW2, which kicked off a boom, and then there was some sort of nasty business around Nixon time, and then there was the Carter trough, then here. People forget the dot-com crash, the ’87 crash, the “Worst economy since the Depression” talk of the 1992 election, and all the other dips into the ditch. This is why I never enjoy a boom. But this will be the third Christmas of the Great Contraction, and I’m tired of it. Everything still feels brittle and unsteady.

Art Notes: I’ve been reading “1922” by Stephen King, part of a novella collection with the great title “Full Dark, No Stars.” It’s the best thing he’s done in years, and there’s nothing supernatural about it. Just good fiction, without any of his tics or tricks. Probably took him a week to write. Also started the latest version of “Metropolis” – yes, they found more footage, this time in Argentina. If you don’t like the movie, or know it only from chopped-up crappy prints with a stupid soundtrack, you may wonder why finding 600 additional frames in poor condition matters. I suppose it doesn’t, except that it’s the most brilliant movie of its era. Yes, people GESTURE. Yes, they overact. Yes, it’s didactic. But for heaven’s sake, it’s brilliant. When you hear the original score the entire movie is elevated to a level few films inhabit, and the immensity of the thing is astonishing. The fact that it came from a culture that would go full-bore insane in a few years makes it even more haunting.

Well, enough; time to hit the TV, as is my right at the end of the day, and watch the IT Crowd. Broad, silly, hilarious, distinctly British – they do this sort of thing very well. Minor Matchbook update, here. Have a grand day!

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=8393
65 RESPONSES TO and then it was tuesday

Petronius says:
November 30, 2010 at 3:14 pm

1. The Merchandise mart in chicago now is a senter of the furniture and decorating business. The idea of using it for cattle shows is hilarious. BTW the Kennedys no longer own the building. For many years it was the only real asset the family had, but they eventually cashed out.

2. I saw Metropolis in its new form in a theater a few weeks back, and it was magnificent. I’ve seen at least 6 different versions, from a ghastly no-sound 16mm in college, through the notorius Georgio Morodor version with music by Queen in the 80s. I finally have seen what Lang was striving for. The odd thing is it is very emotional, something we don’t associate with Sf anymore.

Kevin says:
November 30, 2010 at 3:31 pm

@bgbear
Yes, I have always enjoyed seeing that Assyrian temple alongside the Santa Ana Freeway. It was always so wonderfully odd. Now, it appears to be about 39 different small shops or something.

RLR says:
November 30, 2010 at 3:36 pm

Girly-men carry Victorinox contraptions.
Real men carry Leatherman tools.

bgbear says:
November 30, 2010 at 4:27 pm

Then there are us Gerber babies.

swschrad says:
November 30, 2010 at 4:28 pm

@RLR: carry, exactly, where? much of the time around the house, I am carrying a recip or a circular saw, or a 1/2 inch battery hammer drill, or these days, hanging onto a snowthrower.

bump, bump, SNARL — recip saw trumps Leatherman. please take your stump outside 😝

hpoulter says:
November 30, 2010 at 4:34 pm

Act fast and you can get a “Bluto” pocketknife for only $60 (supposedly lists for $185). Is it worth it? not to me.
And then it was Tuesday | The Bleat.

http://www.woot.com/

**madCanada** says:
November 30, 2010 at 5:33 pm

Acch! Won't get a chance to lay paws on a restored Metropolis disc for at least another week, crazy schedule & all. Genial Host & Bleatniks are driving this Lang fan berserk with anticipation!!!

@ Kerry Potenza. Unless you're handing out trophies or cash prizes, your opinion is just your opinion. 😐

**bgbear** says:
November 30, 2010 at 5:49 pm

for that little snark, I fine MadCanada 2 extra days of waiting for Metropolis disc.

**GardenStater** says:
November 30, 2010 at 6:26 pm

madCanada: Jealousy is a green-eyed monster, my friend...

**madCanada** says:
November 30, 2010 at 7:00 pm

Oh yeah, uh-huh, one day I will win the KerryPotenza LUVV, and it will be y'ALL givin' ME the green eye.

**Pencilpal** says:
November 30, 2010 at 7:16 pm

Sigh. I guess we'll have to wait for Wiki-Tinks.

Oh, but I think I've discovered Julian Assange's real identity.
http://realidentity.webs.com/

**madCanada** says:
November 30, 2010 at 7:57 pm

@ Pencilpal

“I'M freeee!!!!” … or at least in Ecuador.

**Kerry Potenza** says:
November 30, 2010 at 8:02 pm

@madCanada: Fair enough. Your point is well-taken. I did get a little maudlin there.

**madCanada** says:
November 30, 2010 at 8:43 pm

@ Kerry Potenza

cheers.
bgbear says:
November 30, 2010 at 10:21 pm

And there I thought Assange was Peter White from the Venture Brothers.