Eyes bleeding yet? I'll change it soon. Just needed some color. Spent a lot of time sorting graphics this weekend, moving them from vaguely-named folders to highly-specifically named folders. The graphic above is from a liquor pamphlet designed to show you how liquor enhances your life; I was amused to see a modern recession-themed version in the Sunday paper today. It said you can get 17 drinks from a bottle! It's your best value! There were people sitting around laughing, but it had the creepy vibe of an old Newport ad. Those were the cigarette ads that shouted ALIVE WITH PLEASURE, but you weren't sure what they meant – the people who were having snowball fights outside, while smoking? The people who were waterskiing, while smoking? Life itself? The cigarette? There was just something wrong about every one of them.

For example: Headless fire-succubus:
Women are always screaming with happiness and pleasure-aliveness – or sheer terror:
The genius of the ads: at first glance, they gave you the impression they were supposed to give you. Happy smoking people! But the more you looked at them, the more you studied the relationships, the more stories you could read into the pictures, and they were never good. It's the guy in the middle: he's smiling, but there's something else going on behind his eyes. He may be going with the disembodied blonde-head woman, but he's forgotten all about her. Also, he has a large knife in his hand. Oh, you may say it's the edge of the table, but please.
Notice: everyone's eyes are shut except for the guy in the middle.

Now. You can say this is just the result of reading too much into these things, but please: they have dozens of photos, and they chose them for a reason. They chose them for the fleeting impressions they leave, and if they’re happy, fine; if they’re unnerving and ambiguous, fine: they’ll be remembered. Or not: never, ever wanted to smoke a Newport in my life. Wasn’t a menthol man when I smoked cigarettes, but now and then I’d “take a trip to the mountains,” as the inveterate menthol-smoking pinball playing vagabond radio DJ and periodic Valli short-order cook Rick would say. (Last time I was him was a decade ago; bus pulled up outside the office, he was driving. He nodded, gave me that Travis-Bickle grin, closed the doors, drove off.) Rick smoked Trues, which were carefully crafted to make the smoke actually taste like the plastic in the filter. Marlboro Greens were nasty. Kent Menthols were good, but I was always a Kent man. But I digress. Here’s another:
He's building a fire, the old-fashioned way. It's living-pleasure fun! So how did she light her cigarette? If you want to go deep into the pseudo-psycho-sexual analysis of these pictures, he's whittling away at his own log, if you know what I mean. But when you study the faces again, you see the recurring theme of the Newport ads: the hellish prison of gaiety. I you asked any of these people what they wanted, they'd all say the same thing: dear God let me stop laughing.

Went to the mall on Saturday night. Daughter was at a concert with a friend and her dad. Owl City. At the same place where I saw many concerts, but this was before the place was renovated; like so many great buildings downtown, it spent its declining days as a non-denominational church – “Jesus People” in this case. How 70s. It was a dump, musty and stripped and peeling and apathetic. But when the lights went down and, oh, I don’t know, Mink DeVille hit the stage, no one cared. I think I saw Genesis there too; one of those concerts where 90% of the audience approaches the event as a religious ceremony, but ten percent are drunk idiots who feel it is their duty as a concertgoer to shout WOOOOOO during the quiet parts. Awright! Evocative mellotron! WOOOO!

En route to dinner with my wife she noted she hadn’t been to a concert until
she was 17, and that was Styx.

Styx? We've been married twenty years and I'm just learning now that you saw Styx?

We had dinner at an Indian restaurant, where I had a nice vindaloo that did not make me sweat a quart. Good thing, too; they had napkins specially designed not to absorb moisture; dab your forehead and you just rearranged the sweat. Afterwards she needed to go the Mall, and I dropped her off, went to Target, got my phone which had slipped out of my pocket earlier in the day. One of the fellows who collected carts found it in the corral, and called me up. I told him to sell it to Gizmodo, but he wasn't interested.

Back to the Mall. I like the Mall on a Saturday night. Frankly, I like the Mall any time of the day. Not the Mall of America, but Southdale. Nice and quiet and underpopulated, except for the Apple Store, which always looks like the US Embassy the day before a country's invaded. Went to see if I needed a new computer. A clerk wandered over, asked if I had any questions: surely, yes. I patted the new Mac Pro with the new Intel Xenon Eloahiamo chip, or whatever, the Nehemiah, and while I understood it was surely faster, it was 2.66, and my old Mac Pro Dual Quad Core Intel Xenon was 2.88. Small difference, perhaps, but how much speed bump would I see, really?

He smiled and said he'd be right back with someone more versed in these matters. Out came another clerk, stout as the previous one had been lean, and he explained it all. I said this sounded nice but I was guessing applications would have to be written to take advantage of these speed bumps, no? He said they did. So if I was still chugging along with CS3, no point to buying this rig, eh?

"I'd say no," he said.

There you have it: Apple is so fat and happy the clerks have absolutely no compunction not selling you a computer. Now, anyway. It's like walking into a car lot and having the fellow shrug and say “just for driving to the store? You're fine with what you have.”

Left the Mall, drove to Walgreen's. Yes, this story gets better and better, doesn't it? My wife needed to restock on the 296 things women need. I am so glad mascara is not part of my life. Or foundation. Then home to await the daughter. She came in at 10:30, beaming, wearing a shirt with the band's name. She loved the show it was AWESOME. I asked if everyone stood. Yes. Could you see anything? Not all the time. Well not at all. But that's okay.

Everyone always stood. I hated that. Couldn't see. Of course, if it was “festival seating,” there weren't any chairs, just a mass of people packed on the ground floor. Why that never ended in the death of hundreds by crowd-enabled compaction, I have no idea; I still remember the Led Zep concert where one fellow flung fireworks and another chap set his shirt on fire. I was close enough to see Page play the theramin, and close enough to note he
looked as though he'd spent the previous night throwing up every piece of
nutrition he'd consumed since 1972. I don't know how you play a guitar that's
heavier than you are.

The weekend was more than that, of course. So much more! I bought a hard
drive on Sunday! True. My Western Digital backup drive died, again. It's been
begging to be put down for months, and it also suffers from woolgathering;
whenever I open a dialogue box to store something, the computer has to wait
for the WD drive to say Oh! Right! Sorry, be there in a second. I took this as an
opportunity to back up. Love to back up. Am one of those well-backed-up
people who almost wish they'd have a crash so they could write a long, smug
piece about how they didn't miss a second of PRODUCTIVITY.

Here's a picture I found in the folders, taken early in March before the world
greened up. I love it.

To get the full effect, try this. It's a still from a Kodak Zi8 camcorder, so it's not
as good as I'd like. I confess to desaturating some areas and saturating some
others.

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Later today: motels, around 10:30 or so. See you then!
62 RESPONSES TO *alive with pleasure!*

**DryOwlTacos** says:
May 3, 2010 at 2:28 pm

I thought festival seating had gone the way of the betamax after the Who at Riverfront in Cincinnati.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
May 3, 2010 at 2:30 pm

I noticed the same thing about menthol preferences, but self-censored any comments for the same reason as bgbear. I do recall that during the 70's advertising for menthol cigarettes was aimed at black people. Another commonality was a bottle or can of Orange Crush was almost invariably enjoyed along with the smoke.

**Rex V.** says:
May 3, 2010 at 2:42 pm

Going to see The Blasters Thursday night at the House of Blues. My heart sank a bit when I saw that they had added an opening act to the bill. I was hoping to get out of the show at a reasonable time and now the show will likely go on until 11. For a lot of clubs, that would be an early ending time. I've never understood how they think they can attract a lot of working people during the week when at some venues the headliner doesn't go on until 11 or Midnight. Guess I'm just getting too damn old.

**GardenStater** says:
May 3, 2010 at 2:53 pm

@Mark E. Hurling: “Riding in my dad's pickup during the winter with the windows rolled up while he went through several White Owl cigars more than killed the desire for that.”

I was the only one in my family (mom, dad, two sisters and a brother) who didn't smoke. When my sister was about 16, she was allowed to smoke openly (different times). About a week or two after that, my sister, my dad and I drove down to Florida to meet Mom at my grandma's place.

The two of them smoked non-stop all the way from Northern New Jersey to the Gulf Coast of Florida.

It was December.

The windows were shut.

I thought I'd just about die.

Needless to say, I've never taken up the habit.

**rivlax** says:
May 3, 2010 at 2:54 pm

Love the Bleat header today. That's my demographic: hootenannies and alpaca cardigans. They were probably listening to The Brothers Four or the Highwaymen (because this looks post-Kingston Trio).
rivlax says:
May 3, 2010 at 2:57 pm

That girl in your pic looks like she's smelling her hand, just like the chick in that motel post card.

Pieter says:
May 3, 2010 at 3:06 pm

Ever notice that none of the cigarettes 'smoked' by any of these people in any of these ads has any smoke emanating from the business end of the cig. Don't want to even hint that there might be smoke coming from these 'smokes'.

nightfly says:
May 3, 2010 at 3:50 pm

If you drank a vat of whatever concoction that is in the banner, you'd be smiling too! And those orange wedges – large enough to feed a Cub Scout troop! She made her sweater out of the rinds! (She just had so much extra energy, you know?)

I'm still trying to figure out what those guys are looking at. The guitarist is perhaps just feeling the song… the banjoist, however, is clearly lost, having wandered in from some other advert. He's not even forming a chord with his fingers, which is OK since his banjo has no strings anyway. Don't try to tell him; he's too rapt, he'll never believe you.

juanito - John Davey says:
May 3, 2010 at 4:00 pm

Rex V.:
May 3, 2010 at 2:42 pm

Going to see The Blasters Thursday night at the House of Blues.

In 1982 I saw the Blasters opening up for……. The Go Go's. Yes, the affection of a young lovely was involved in my ticket purchase. The bonus was the Blasters, whom I hadn't seen live yet. I had already seen the Go Go's a few times in their previous Punk iteration.

ContinentalOp says:
May 3, 2010 at 5:49 pm

Opportunity to gain Cool Dad Points: If your kid likes Owl City, point her in the direction of the song “Such Great Heights” by The Postal Service.

Christina says:
May 4, 2010 at 7:06 am

Okay, let's start at the top, with your creeptastic banner graphic. They don't look happy. That's not gaiety; that's demonic possession. Their soulless eyes stare in horror as their bodies just keep dancing, dancing, dancing .... It's “The Red Shoes” updated for modern life.

Headless fire chick is about to be forced to fellate that guy who has a grip on her head. And you know what? You're next! You can see it in their eyes.
Robin Hood is giving that woman the shaft, and she's crying out in pain. Note all the nice phallic smokes arising from the pack to do a train. (Not that cigarette ad imagery is ever sexual ...)  

I can't clearly define the creepiness of the next one. They're all watching that brunette get off, but on what? And why do they find it so funny?

Mr. Log Whittle is preparing a woodie for later. “Laugh at my impotence now, bitch; I'll get you later with Mr. Stiffie. Note the abundance of rock-hard testicles from which is artificial manhood arises. That is just so wrong on so many levels.

jonny b says:
May 5, 2010 at 12:00 am

In Austin TX in the late 80s, at the end of the main drag, the Alive With Pleasure billboards were actually "hand-painted", and badly. Lovely, lovely things: Twice the nightmare. I regret not having documented every single one of them.
something more, later.
Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Dead tree in the backyard. Big one, too. That makes two I’ve had to pay to remove, and this one will be ruinously expensive. But I must look on the bright side: this frees up an area for landscaping! But it ruins the path that went around behind it. The path will still be there, but it won’t be behind anything. Everyone loves a path that goes through and behind. Then again, no one ever used it; the path didn’t go anywhere except around the tree, and not too many people who’ve visited Jasperwood ever wondered “what’s around the tree there, besides the other side of the tree?” Still, I’ll miss it. The changes around here happen at a slow pace – photos from four, five years ago look current, except for minor touches. The centerpiece on the kitchen table. The items on the mantle. My studio changes glacially; all the change happens out of sight on magnetic platters. Most everything changes out of sight, really.

At the risk of repeating: another day blogging. Saw my child off to the bus; turned around, and it was time to get her from the bus. I’ve now decided that my favorite hour of the day is eleven to noon, and my least favorite noon to one. I don’t take a lunch hour; haven’t since I worked in an office. When I worked for the St. Paul paper we went across the street and sat at a lunch counter with all the other lawyers and journalists and office workers, in a cafe loud with conversation and full of cafe aromas: the grill, coffee, cigarette smoke. In DC we went down to Wollensky’s, where the old journalists drank their lunches. I was amazed to see the cliche come to life: hard-bitten cynical reporters, drinking heavily at lunch! There were a few fellows who could put
away three full brimming scotches over the course of an hour, and now I realize they were what you call alcoholics, probably. I like a drink, and to quote Christopher Hitchens I’ll take a drink if I have to, but the idea of having anything at noon was madness. It made a blurry wreck of the rest of the afternoon.

Right? Or not, if you’re a functioning alky, I suppose; then it just puts the lead back in your pencil. But this was the era of the Gentleman’s Deadline, when one could type on a piece for a day, gather some quotes from your friends in your well-thumbed Rolodex, string it together, season with conventional wisdom, bake, sprinkle with cliches – time will tell, yet one thing is certain, voices on the Hill are saying, with elections coming up – and hand it off to the desk, which would massage it and put in paragraph breaks, then send it out on the Wire.

It was a leisurely profession, for some. It was a Bureau, not a daily newsroom. Bureaus have different paces, different rhythms. The home office is far away. You’re a breed apart, an expat, might as well be in Rangoon, dash it all; you’re in the world but not of it. Until you go native, and start to see DC for your home. Then the seduction is complete, and you’re one of the Elect, and the idea of going back home where a party might have someone who’s a manager at a company that makes drill bits instead of someone who’s a lobbyist for the Chlorine industry just seems so depressing.

No one made anything tangible, only compulsion and license.

I hated office rhythms before I had an alternative. The internet, that fountain of chum, is perfect, because there’s never that deadly time when initiative and newness and interest intersect around 3:27 to provide the office-worker’s afternoon bromide, the conjuring of the evening’s compensations, the life you’ll live when the whistle blows and you slide down the dino tail.

Looking back, I wonder what the hell I did with my evenings. Read? Yes, a bit. Watch TV? No, not much. It’s like I sat in front of my computer waiting for the internet to happen.

Between the whistle and home was the Bar, the aforementioned Wollensky’s. The men who’d drunk their lunch went home; the fellows who’d stayed dry went down to toast the ruins of the workaday world. I’d have a Beam on the rocks, then start the 3 mile hike home. Walked to work every day. Walked home every night. I miss those people and I miss that time, but I was glad to go to a place with a yard and a creek and a dog and city whose past and present I loved. Now at 5 PM I flick the switch on the coffeepot, and get ready for the third shift. It’s all work, and play; it’s all the office, and home; it’s all the same. As I said, I sat around waiting for this all to happen. Makes me wonder what’s coming I can’t predict. I’ll be the old guy in the restaurant, content to post 15 times a day on various platforms, when the modern people are all streaming 24/7 video from tiny earpieces. Every man a king, as the saying goes: but a Larry King.

Finished watching “Monsters, Inc” last night – had stopped for a few days to
chew through some other rentals, including a British sort-of gangster movie called “44 Inch Chest.” It started, then got to a place and stayed there for 45 minutes, like a train that couldn't leave the station. Worth it, if you're in the mood for John Hurt shouting the F and C words through false teeth, and would like to see Al Swearengen as a gay man. I'd also Netflixed “Fourth Kind,” a fake documentary about alien abduction, and turned it off after seven minutes. So. Back to “Monsters,” which has, as they say, a special place in my heart. Perhaps because my daughter was around Boo age; perhaps because it's a movie about fatherhood, in a strange way. Don't want to read too much into it, like saying Sully's a divorced dad who can't be with his kid except for popping out of the closet; don't think that's there. But fatherhood? Sure. The last scene never fails to get me, right here.

Conceptually, it's brilliant, and brilliantly simple; you get the idea right away, and it scales up to the chase scene in the great Door Hangar. Technically, it's lovely, from the autumnal palette and homely brownstones of Monstropolis, to the endless textures of the monsters themselves. The music makes me smile – partly because it reminds me of Disneyland's “Laugh Factory” attraction, which I've visited about 20 times with Natalie – and the 50s-meets-Gorey style of the credits is a treat. At some point when they write the history of art in the 21st century, there will be a page about “snow falling on Sully's moving hair,” which is like the computer-art version of the first person to draw a white line on a metal vase to indicate a light source.

But: I watched the Blu-Ray, and was somewhat surprised to see that the higher resolution made the characters seem less integrated with the background than the normal Blur-Ray version I'd seen before. It's not new – while watching “Lady and the Tramp” the other day there's sequences where Lady has no shadows as she walks across the floor, and the illusion of integration is lost. If you're looking for such things.

There's something about the dogs in “Up” that struck me the same way: they're off. Everything in “Wall-E,” though, was seamless. Took me a while to admit what I was feeling when I first saw it: damn, this is bleak. It's like the Soylent Green of kid's movies, but the predicate for the story is so over-the-top I couldn't take it as a Serious Indictment. For heaven's sake, a spacefaring civilization can take care of its garbage.

Anyway: a sequel to Monsters Inc is in the works, and I'm happy. Buzz and Woody aren't a comic team, they're equals who do well apart and play off each other when needed. Mike and Sully are the Pixar Abbott and Costello – no, strike that. I don't like Abbott and Costello. But you know what I mean. Short excitable guy, big easy-going guy. Hah: more like me and the Dark Chef from my old Diner days.

Later today: Comic Sins, and Portfolios! Stay tuned.
66 RESPONSES TO **dead tree, drunk lunch**

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
May 4, 2010 at 3:02 pm

*Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.*

yawn

**swschrad** says:
May 4, 2010 at 3:04 pm

@Mark E Hurling: there are too many blundering idiots out there drawing up curriculums, and too many more teaching them.

item. our internment camps were not fun.

item. we knee-jerked a million people into them, wrecking their lives, careers, families.

**ITEM: bad is bad, but we never killed 8 million people just because we needed a freakin' scapegoat.** my Dad helped liberate one of the last camps in WWII. when he got mustered home, he banged his head on the wall for several months at night trying to forget what he saw.

there is NO comparison. I would have yelled that nincompoop into quitting, myself.

**Leigh Hanlon** says:
May 4, 2010 at 3:13 pm

“Monsters, Inc.” impressed me with the decision to name the character “Sully” — which then mirrors the “Sullivan’s Travels” climax in the Pixar movie's storyline. This is right up there with the name of the colonists' ship being “Bellerophon” in “Forbidden Planet.”

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
May 4, 2010 at 3:15 pm

@bgbear, nice reference to Ubergrupsturmfuhrer Alinsky, the only author I know of who dedicated one of his books to Lucifer.

@swschrad, Sorry for your father's experience. That was surely devastating and I hope it didn't continue to haunt him for too long, although I can't imagine it did not. I understand your desire to yell at him, but in my family, by the time you raised your voice to a yell, violent attack was the next imminent step 3 seconds later. I raise my voice very infrequently for this reason, it triggers an avalanche (at least in me) of some very undesirable side effects.

**DensityDuck** says:
May 4, 2010 at 4:06 pm

:sigh: Keep on barkin', sheepdog.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
May 4, 2010 at 4:52 pm

It appears I've treed a duck. I didn't know they could perch, what
with the webbed feet and all. I’d even forgotten that metaphor I used some time back. I must really bother you for you to have remembered it or looked it up. Kind of sad for you to be so captured and consumed with bile over little ole’ me.

How did you like that profile?

My offer for us to meet still stands though. I’d hate to think I was barking up the wrong tree. I’ve always found that those with most smug (sigh) self regard and who can throw invective with such little imagination are always the last to want to really engage. Kind of like the fierce chihuahua yapping from behind the fence. Since you’re so good at looking things up work just a little harder and find me. It will be an experience you won’t forget.

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hpoulter says:
May 4, 2010 at 5:36 pm

The camps were unfortunate. It is far more unfortunate that they are probably the number-one thing modern kids know about WWII. A deep confusion of thought makes temporary internment equivalent to extermination.

I like to think that the people in the camps were serving their country. It is quite likely that they made Japanese espionage in the US practically impossible. On the other hand, German (and Russian) espionage within the US was pervasive. Sure it was involuntary service, but not every kid sleeping, and sometimes dying, in the mud in Italy, North Africa, or the South Pacific was there by choice, either. Many were coerced by their draft boards. We still honor their sacrifice, as well we should.

if I were partisan, I would note that all the people involved in setting up the internment camps, principally FDR and Governor Earl Warren, were to become liberal Democrat icons.

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hpoulter says:
May 4, 2010 at 5:40 pm

@swschrud : I appreciate your point, but you are off by an order of magnitude. About 120,000 people in the internment camps.

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Mark E. Hurling says:
May 4, 2010 at 5:50 pm

@hpoulter,

Something overlooked about the internment camps is that a surprising number of US citizens of German descent were locked up alongside those of Japanese descent. At this late remove it is hard to say if was justified for the Japanese. I used to work for a retired Army colonel told me once that there was an absolutely real threat from the Japanese. A little research turned up the Black Dragon Society which if it could be confirmed as having real presence in the US would have more than constituted such a threat.

The Germans in this country did themselves no favors with their moronic Bund rallies though. You could make a much better case for mass internment of them. Trouble was there were so many, and scattered so far over the landscape it was probably only practical for those deemed greater threats. Sound like anything familiar today? By the way, my naturalized randfather was “persuaded” to drop his race for country board when he was run off the road one
night and a sign left on his car saying, “no krauts here.” I must be an angry white guy and so not to be paid attention to for having brought this up.

Now Earl Warren is an interesting case. When I was in the police academy the lawyer teaching us laws of arrest had argued the amicus curiae brief in front of Warren for the Escobedo vs. Illinois case. He concluded that old Earl must have been so conflicted over his role in the internment that he got religion when he was appointed to SCOTUS and so we go.

Lee says:
May 4, 2010 at 6:08 pm

I love that phrase
No one made anything tangible, only compulsion and license.

Paul in NJ says:
May 4, 2010 at 8:53 pm

> Wait, you don’t like Abbott & Costello? Wow. Why not?
This may be the first time that Lileks and I agree to disagree. Bud Abbott wasn’t ‘mean’ – he was the straight man, and there was a different cadence to comedy back when.

John Robinson says:
May 4, 2010 at 10:12 pm

Anybody notice the guitar-player in the header looks uncannily like a very young Mike Rowe? Dirty Jobs indeed …

Ken Paulson says:
May 5, 2010 at 7:27 am

My grandfather used to break down comedy to “Fatty and Skinny”. You could never tell if he was talking about Abbott and Costello, Laurel and Hardy, Ralph and Ed, the schtick just seemed to work. Fred and Barney were pretty much the same build, though. More like Tally and Shorty. Just doesn’t work.

Ken Paulson says:
May 5, 2010 at 7:30 am

Further to the comment concerning The Who's bluegrass days. Pete does play a mean ukulele.

DensityDuck says:
May 6, 2010 at 1:30 pm

Awful easy to be a tough guy on the internet. Why don’t you post your address? Don’t worry, you won’t feel a thing, unless your German heritage gives you some kind of spider-sense.

And, y’know, like I asked before: What *DID* change in the classroom after your little Stand In Defense Of All That’s Right? Did anyone actually care, at all, what you had to say about anything?

I’d be that the teacher's internal monologue was something like “what? Oh. Uh…okay…smile and nod, smile and nod. Yes sir, yes, I
understand, yes I understand your feelings, smile and nod, smile
and nod, thanks for your time I'll consider your thoughts have a
good evening, whew glad that's over with where's my snack?"

Fred says:
May 13, 2010 at 12:32 pm

“in contrast to the helpless waifs awaiting their princes to rescue
them. In fact, the story line turns the whole prince/princess dynamic
on its head. The prince is irresponsible and needs to be taught some
lessons”

No offense and not to cast aspersions on what is probably a fine
movie but can anybody name a movie that has come out in the last
20 to 30 years where the girl is a helpless waif awaiting her prince
to rescue her? Or a movie in which the guy didn’t need to be taught
some lessons?

The stereotype these days is that the girl is the strong independent
one and that the guy is a well meaning dufus or a dipstick. There's
nothing original about it...

← Older Comments
adding this, and will add something more, later.
Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
It's a cool May so far, and looks to stay that way for a week. I'd rather have it the other way around: normal April, warmish May; this feels like a cheat, a joke, and a cruel one at that.

But. A fine day, even if it had a meeting. A meeting with many stakeholders. For the most part I want there to be one stakeholder, and I want it to be me, and I want the stake to be wooden, and I want to be holding it as it's in the chest cavity of a vampire, who is dead. Anything else and you're asking for trouble. But this has to be done. It's the 1960 Survey, a then-and-now look at downtown. In 1960 the paper sent two photogs to shoot every building and every street downtown, and the 50th anniversary of this time capsule cannot pass without being put up on the web for all. It's my big summer project. I will write and narrate. I will compose the fargin' theme music.

Interesting stuff in the mail today. A Bleatnik from Texas, Bob from Austin, sent along some postcards, and one of them was from Alexandria MN. It'll go in the upcoming Main Streets section, which should be along next month. The card, with a contemporary view provided by Google Street View:
Closeups. Cars, signage, life, vitality: all preferable to the contemporary iteration.
Two books in the mail today. The first is “Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition,” which I really look forward to reading. It's by Daniel Okrent, whose account of the construction of Rockefeller Center I enjoyed a great deal. It begins the day before Prohibition took effect, with the streets of San Francisco jammed with people trying to transport as much hooch into their house as they could possibly buy. This will give you a taste of the scope of the work:

In 1920 could anyone have believed that the 18th Amendment, ostensibly addressing the single subject of intoxicating beverages, would have set off an avalanche of change in areas as diverse as international trade, speedboat design, tourism practices, soft-drink marketing, and the English language itself? Or that it would provoke the establishment of the first nationwide criminal syndicate, the idea of home dinner parties, the deep engagement of women in political areas other than suffrage, and the creation of Las Vegas? . . .

Prohibition changed the way we live and it fundamentally redefined the role of the federal government. How the hell did it happen?

I intend to find out. I'm guessing the speedboat design had to do with enterprising folk finding swift ways to get hooch from Canada or Cuba to the states. The nation had a Minnesotan to thank for the nightmare, naturally: Volstead, whose name is known now solely for his ill-advised Act, was from here. Heckuva job, Andy.

Note: this will be a Ken Burns documentary, soon enough.

The other book made me laugh when I heard of it, and not for the reasons the original creators may have intended. I've never been much of a Superman fan, but the story of his creators is interesting. Many might have wondered what they did for a follow-up. Well: a few years ago I came across their next
great project, a thing so ill-advised it made me gape: a crime-fighting comedian.

Funnyman. This is just horrible:

Picture a guy with a Danny Kaye / Dick Van Dyke face, baggy clown pants, enormous shoes, and a line of *strenuously* comic patter. He's impervious to danger, because . . . well, he's a comedian, I guess, but you have to take their word for it. He's not funny at all. I can't imagine anyone found him funny. I can't imagine kids enjoyed it, because superheroes are supposed to be awesome big bullet-stoppers or shadowy knights of the night, or cheerful up-and-at-'em American originals. What was with this guy?

The authors have a theory: he was the first Jewish superhero. That doesn’t account for his failure – it failed because the concept was doomed. The authors don't press the point beyond what's on the page or in the dialogue balloons, but they set the stage with a primer on Jewish humor – and you can't understand American culture without knowing about Jewish humor.
any more than you can understand American music without knowing Black music. Patrons to this site will know there’s much fun and occasional insight gleaned from studying the minor-league aspects of pop culture, and that’s the case here. No one insists this is a great lost comic of tremendous historical importance.

Plus, the illustrations are great. Oy:

![Illustration](image-url)

That’s from 1947. Yes, it’s serious. The book has all five comics and the syndicated stripes. (Yes, syndicated strips. Such a thing they did on the Sabbath? Who knew?) (Sorry.)

So between the two you have the high and the low, both concerned with the vast torrent of American 20th century history. “Funnyman” goes on my groaning shelf of pop-culture books; “Last Call” I’d buy on iBooks right now if I could.

The Bleat Recommends

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=6911
LATER today: Out-of-Context Ad Challenge, and perhaps Black and White World. See you on Twitter, Tumblr, and PopCrush! (I’ll have the Lost recap up by nine; if you don’t care, yesterday’s page had the “24” recap.)

47 RESPONSES TO flarblondjet!

GardenStater says:
May 5, 2010 at 6:10 am

Wow, that boycott ad is really strange. Hard to believe it came out as late as 1947. How times change.

crossdotcurve says:
May 5, 2010 at 6:12 am

I live in New Orleans. Many of the t-shirt/souvenir shops in and around the French Quarter are owned and staffed by Arabs. Right after 9-11, the local morning radio shock-jock duo called for a boycott of those stores, and suggested even going down there to ask for their papers (an Arizona preview). They also did some Limbaugh-like parodies of Arabs that were pretty disgusting, and called for Manzanar-like detention camps. The local wingnuttery cheered them on phone call after phone call…

Chuck says:
May 5, 2010 at 6:37 am

Seems to me that Funnyman would defeat his mortal enemies with such superpowers as public humiliation, caricature, withering sarcasm and back-handed compliments, like a more effective Al Franken, with maybe a measured use of hand buzzers, squirting flowers and exploding cigars.

Michael Rittenhouse says:
May 5, 2010 at 6:46 am
One aspect the old photos can't convey is the smell of 1960s U.S. cities.

I got a whiff of that on my last trip to Mexico City, in 1992. They're about 20 years behind us in smog controls, and the cloud of what Spock called “incomplete burning of hydrocarbons” hit me when I stepped out of the airport. Like a trip back to my childhood.

It reminded me of the sinus sting from burned oil (cars with more than 80,000 miles could be identified by their blue tailpipe smoke) and the wide black stripes from “road draft tubes” (no PCV system to recycle oily gases), and it's a wonder all the city dwellers didn't just keel over by 1968.

That was before we figured out the lead in gasoline might hurt us. Good times, good times.

**Bob** says:
May 5, 2010 at 7:04 am

I'm thinking “Buy Gentile” is a commentary. Shuster and Siegel were both Jewish, after all.

**ancient hacker** says:
May 5, 2010 at 7:07 am

Re: Video: Perry Mason makes Chekhov drop the knife with the POWER OF HIS MIND.

Wow. Just Wow. Perhaps the most poorly scripted, acted, music'ed, and directed scene of memory.
Oh wait, there was a scene or two of “Manos” that was a tad worse. That “accent”, that hair, that emoting. Just pathetic.

**madCanada** says:
May 5, 2010 at 7:11 am

The fact that we can safely laugh at that 1947 ad is a hopeful sign that the arc of history bends towards tolerance. A little perspective and comfort to Arizona's Latino community, perhaps.

“Funnyman”? Oy.

**hpoulter** says:
May 5, 2010 at 7:16 am

@Bob – I thought that at first, but that ad was not from the comic book. It was from the book ABOUT the comic book, and added some historical perspective.

**hpoulter** says:
May 5, 2010 at 7:38 am

I'd like to see a footnote on that ad. I'm sure it was not mainstream. I found what looks like a reference to it as a “throw-away comic strip” – probably from the Klan or a similar group. Probably no more representative of its times than those “Chick's Publications” oddball-Christian tiny “comic” books you find around today, or than “Tijuana Bibles” were back then.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=6911
Cristiane says:
May 5, 2010 at 7:46 am

Had to watch the Ironside video without sound, but surely it's the power of Theodore Bikel's ACTING!!! (he was the original Broadway Captain von Trapp) that made Chekhov drop the knife. Credit where credit's due, after all...

John says:
May 5, 2010 at 7:56 am

This is shocking news. I thought I was the only person in Austin who read this. It's not a Bleat Town, if you know what I mean; and if you have spent eight nanoseconds in any college town, you have apprehended in full the physics of Austin. But even it can surprise. After 21 years, I should maybe give it a little more credit.


juanito - John Davey says:
May 5, 2010 at 8:00 am

More disturbing than knowing that there was a Funnyman number ONE, is the concept that it made it all the way to Funnyman number FIVE.

Brisko says:
May 5, 2010 at 8:03 am

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster were tremendously prolific creators in an era when comic publishers accepted just about everything, threw it at the public and waited to see what stuck. Most of the greats who worked in that era (Joe Simon, Jack Kirby, Bill Everett, even a teenaged Stan Lee) did the exact same thing and of course most of them are not worth remembering. Around the same time Superman was created, Siegel also created The Spectre who is another well-known DC character.

In the 70s and early 80s he was a tremendous voice in the fight for creators' rights, speaking out on behalf of other creators and praising the independent publishers who were giving creators more rights and better pay than the “Big Two” who could more easily afford it.

Lars Walker says:
May 5, 2010 at 8:32 am

I've mentioned before (probably more than once) that Andrew Volstead was a native of Kenyon, my home town, so I won't repeat that... heh.

I have a friend who says he's a relative of Volstead's, and that the whole family was heavily involved in bootlegging. So he thinks Andy intended the “unintended consequences” all along.

nightfly says:
May 5, 2010 at 9:11 am

Daniel Okrent wrote “Nine Innings,” an incredibly detailed/boring (YMMV) account of a single mid-year ball game between the Orioles
and Brewers from 1982. He doesn't quite get around to a five-page aside on Rollie Fingers' handlebar 'stache, but... yeah... it's intricate.

Personally, I really liked that book, and it was at its best when he took an in-game decision and traced it back to its possible causes, like Livingston trying to find the source of the Nile. This sounds like it would be similarly fascinating.

**Moishe3rd** says:
May 5, 2010 at 9:18 am

Great “Buy Gentile” ad. I love James Lilek Ephemera. A wonderful resource. And, did you know? – that Minnesota was once considered the most “anti-semitic” state in the country. It had more members of the Ku Klux Klan than any other state in the 1930's? I don't remember the exact dates – and I think it was started by Father Coughlin, the notorious anti-semitic radio guy in the 1930's; but somewhere in there, there was supposed to be a “Jewish plot” to take over Minnesota on such and such a date. The good farmers of the North were barring their doors, ready with shotguns to face the hordes of ravening Jews...

**Melinda** says:
May 5, 2010 at 9:46 am

Hmm... A Jewish plot to take over Minnesota, and then Rhoda Morgenstern moves to Minneapolis, “where it's colder and I figured I'd keep better.”

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
May 5, 2010 at 10:06 am

Laugh at that 1947 ad madCanada? I'm not chiding you here, but I found it chilling. That depiction at the bottom of the ad could have been in Der Sturmer. Bad stuff, really bad stuff.

Mr. Lilek’s, you are spot on about the boat design. The Military Channel had a history of the Coast Guard (or the puddle pirates as my navy friends refer to it). They spent half an hour on the race between the bootleggers and the Coasties on engines, hull design, etc. in getting hooch on shore vs. interdicting it. Family lore has it that one of my great uncles spent some time in the clink for getting caught making bath tub gin. I always wanted to know more about that, but the elders code of silence came down on it, and now anyone who would know about it is gone.

**Baby M** says:
May 5, 2010 at 10:25 am

*Laugh at that 1947 ad madCanada? I'm not chiding you here, but I found it chilling. That depiction at the bottom of the ad could have been in Der Sturmer. Bad stuff, really bad stuff.*

Unfortunately, that kind of thing is becoming more and more mainstream these days–and not on the Tea Party side of the political spectrum, if'n ya knows what I means.
swschrad says:
May 5, 2010 at 10:53 am

Minnesota was not the only unexpected place where the yahoos ran at night. Once had a girlfriend in Nebraska whose family remembered the Klan running about after the cops went to bed, burning crosses on the lawns of those goldarned evil murderous Catholics, blinkin’ minnow-munchin’ Papists.

might as well have been targeting Oakland drivers, for all the good it did them. Them darn rapscallions boasting about their “sixes” doing as well as 8 cylinders. It ain't natural. ptooie.

I have generally observed that the folks who are fingering a particular class of “troublemakers” as cause of all the troubles in the world are quite adept at torpedoing any ship that might bring them good luck as soon as it appears on the horizon. Perhaps they should look to their own failings.

Bill Peschel says:
May 5, 2010 at 11:15 am

In a Baltimore bar back in the '80s, I was sharing space with a drinking acquaintance, a truck driver in his 30s who liked to take rest stops to smoke a doobie. Real laid-back, funny guy.

Then, one afternoon over the brews, something tripped his bigot button and he spouted off about the Jooze in the banking industry, taking over everything, the international conspiracy. The filth unspooled as if he had been programmed. His talk threw me so far off balance that I actually threatened to punch him if he went on about it. (I'm not proud of that, BTW, but it was the nearest I ever came to starting a bar fight, that's how angry I was.)

And, Baby M, your Tea Party comment confuses me.

Marjorie J. Birch says:
May 5, 2010 at 11:16 am

My late father grew up in St. Mary's County, Maryland which became a great place for bootlegging during the twenties — you had the woods for cover and all those little creeks and inlets from the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River for access and quick getaways. Most of the local lumber companies, because they had a legitimate reason for building a dirt road into the pine woods, (“just choppin' trees, officer!”) also manufactured “spirits.”

My father remembered seeing the canvas-covered boats being tied up to certain wharves. (And being aware that he shouldn't be too curious!) He also told me that instead of Cowboys and Indians, he and his friends played Bootleggers and Revenue Agents. (No one wanted to be the Revenue Agents.)

Baby M says:
May 5, 2010 at 11:18 am

Perry Mason makes Chekhov drop the knife with the POWER OF HIS MIND.

Tragg, take him to the agony booth!
Di says:
May 5, 2010 at 11:21 am

I'm thinking of The Pythons “funniest joke in the world” – your enemies will die laughing!

And the Jew-hating Uncle Sam is a pretty shocking image, especially if it is from 1947, right after the concentration camps, etc. 😊 Must be from some KKK-specific pamphlet. My little town east of San Diego was KKK central back in the day, but a somewhat kinder and gentler place now.

Baby M says:
May 5, 2010 at 11:25 am

Bill: Don't want to start a political flamewar debate here, but you're right, I didn't express my point very clearly, so here goes:

Conventional MSM wisdom associates antisemitism with the political right—but if you want to see open, blatant antisemitism these days, you need to look at the political left–Firedoglake, Daily Kos, Democratic Underground. Just as an example, go to any one of those sites and run “Joe Lieberman” as a search term—you'll find plenty of commenters asserting that the Senator is serving Israel rather than the U.S.

swschrad says:
May 5, 2010 at 12:24 pm

proving once again that wackos know no bounds.

a tenet of US foreign policy for years has been, “He's a bastard, but he's OUR bastard.” thus explaining why South America, among other places is not necessarily tranquil.

the 99% of the population “on the bottom” in those types of countries just see the bastard.

of that population come the polarized, who mature into wackodom.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 5, 2010 at 12:34 pm

IIRC, the car modifications that led to NASCAR racing started with running liquor.

xrayguy says:
May 5, 2010 at 12:44 pm

though it was spelled verblunget?

WatchWayne says:
May 5, 2010 at 12:59 pm

@swschrad– I'll bet not one Bleatnik in 200 immediately understood your Oakland reference, and I treated myself to a smug, self-satisfied pat on the back because I did know.

Ironically, among yesterday's Shorpy.com posts, there is a photo of some KKK klowns in action, and I can't be sure the car is not an Oakland. I have looked at hundreds of contemporary cars, and haven't found anything closer.
I guess I'm just getting older and mellower (or tireder) because I don't even make fun of my friends in the Ford-vs.-Chevy arguments any more.

**QA Hates You » Blog Archive » My Feelings On Meetings, Echoed**
says:
May 5, 2010 at 1:21 pm

[...] humorist James Lileks on meetings: But. A fine day, even if it had a meeting. A meeting with many stakeholders. For the most part I [...] 

**Kevin** says:
May 5, 2010 at 2:20 pm

Re bootlegging and NASCAR: I once read where someone talked to the owner of one of the tuning garages in bootlegging country. He said he was actually doing the tuning for both the rumrunners and the cops, and the interviewer asked, “So, did you tune all the cars the same?” The owner replied, “Well, the bootleggers paid in cash, and with the cops we submitted an Invoice and got paid six months later. Whose cars do you think got the better tune?”

**Pat In Colorado** says:
May 5, 2010 at 2:27 pm

Okrent has an article in the current Smithsonian magazine about Wayne Wheeler, the driving force behind the passage of the 18th Amendment and a forerunner of today's political operatives such as Rove and Carville.

And yes, NASCAR definately has its roots in the moonshinin' bizness.

**Pat In Colorado** says:
May 5, 2010 at 2:30 pm

or even definitely

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
May 5, 2010 at 3:54 pm

I got a brain storm this afternoon about how to make a point with people and asking for I.D. I was paying for something with my VISA and was asked for my I.D. It hit me like a flash. I was being asked for my papers! All very routine, it's happened a thousand times before. It wasn't a big deal then and it's still not a big deal. Someone wants to verify your identity.

I looked the clerk dead in the eye and asked, “So you want to see my papers?”

“Well, uh, yeah.” the nice young man said confusedly, and then with a slight light dawning in his eyes.

“Sure no problem, of course you can see my papers.”

I'm going to do this from now on when asked for some form of I.D. Maybe, just maybe, it will put into context some of the absurdities being flung about re: Arizona.

Tell a friend!
canajun-eh says:
May 5, 2010 at 4:33 pm

Mark E. Hurling: Seriously?

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 5, 2010 at 5:02 pm

Absolutely. Didn’t you get asked for papers when you came here? I know I did when I passed through Vancouver, BC. Then again, it may have just been me. Could I have been profiled without cause?

old unkajoe says:
May 5, 2010 at 5:25 pm

My grandfather was, for the most part, a fine man, except when it came to Jews. He blamed every single one of his personal failings on them. Couldn’t get a job? The Jews controlled the businesses, that’s why. Couldn’t get a loan? The Jews ran the banks. Sad stuff.

Dave says:
May 5, 2010 at 5:38 pm

Our own political biases makes us see what we want. A couple of people see the anti-Jewish ad and immediatly think of Arizona. When I saw it, the first thing that popped into my mind was people boycotting Israeli made goods. There is that large Lutheran church that voted a couple of years ago to “study a boycott” goods coming out of parts of Israel.

Kev says:
May 5, 2010 at 6:41 pm

@Mark E. Hurling: The “Oh, so you want to see my papers?” idea sounds brilliant!

@old unkajoe: I had a friend in college who was otherwise a perfectly good guy except for his anti-Semitism. It was annoying to watch a movie with him and hear him shout “Joo! Joo!” whenever a Jewish person was listed in the credits. I asked him once why he felt this way, and he said that “all Jews were rich and talented.” We tried to point out a Jewish guy who sometimes hung out with us–perhaps the worst percussionist in music school, and barely able to afford tuition and books–as an obvious counterexample, but he’d have none of it. (The funny thing was that he was a Hispanic guy in Texas, where his ethnic group probably outnumbers Jewish people by a 10-1 ratio, but still, he felt that he was somehow oppressed and they were the appropriate target.)

After a few months of this, a friend of mine and I got tired of it and came up with an antidote to his anti-Semitism: This guy’s last name was Nava, and every time he started his anti-“Joo” rant, my friend and I would break into a rousing chorus of “Nava Nagila.” It drove him crazy, but we made our point.

Stjohnsmythe says:
May 5, 2010 at 9:24 pm

Subject change: Is i just me or does the sign on the Andria Theatre look, well, you know...
canajun-eh says:
May 6, 2010 at 12:25 am

Mark E. Hurling: Funny you should ask about papers...As white, middle class, English speaking, law abiding citizens that wanted to emigrate to the USA, we were hassled by US immigration for 6 years and spent thousands of dollars for attorneys in order to get our permanent “papers”. We were employing US citizens! Our American friends and neighbors were perplexed, and wanted to intervene on our behalf. All during that time, it seemed to us that the poorly educated, non-English speaking, ragged immigrants were having a much easier time getting their “papers”. We eventually prevailed, but the point I’m trying to make, is that they get in (and sneak in) because there are jobs for them that US citizens apparently don’t want. Seems to me, hassling people based on their appearance is just a way to make it look like they’re doing something about the problem, while employers are continuing to enjoy the fruits of cheap labor. There are some fairly obvious methods to end the practice of hiring illegals, but that hasn’t happened and likely won’t happen any time soon.

Brisko says:
May 6, 2010 at 7:59 am

No new Bleat today? I am freakin’ right the $#%&, man. Reading the Bleat is the first thing I do every day at work. No work today until the Bleat goes up, I guess. ;D

nightfly says:
May 6, 2010 at 11:33 am

...they get in (and sneak in) because there are jobs for them that US citizens apparently don’t want.

Kind of. They do want jobs, but not necessarily “jobs Americans don’t want.” They’re often jobs MOST people don’t want: menial, thankless, grinding work. But those are the simplest jobs to get precisely because they don’t require a lot of paperwork like proof of an advanced degree and a lengthy resume of experience, complete with references and people to provide them. An illegal immigrant can’t possibly fake all of that, so they take whatever they can get in hopes of building a better life than they had in their basket-case country of origin.

Those who legitimately DO have such a background (and the proof to go with it) are far more likely to apply for a work visa and take the same route to citizenship you did.

Seems to me, hassling people based on their appearance is just a way to make it look like they’re doing something about the problem, while employers are continuing to enjoy the fruits of cheap labor.

That’s the thing – I don’t think it’s based on appearance. It’s based on sneaking in. It’s not Arizona’s fault that most of the sneaking-in folks share a particular appearance. Some of the people they share it with are here legitimately, or are naturalized or native-born citizens of the US. That’s unfortunate, but not enforcing the borders because it may seem offensive is more of a problem, morally and logically. It would in effect mean that we are afraid to apply a law equally to all people, that some people ARE treated differently based entirely on appearances rather than on easily-understood and objective criteria: lawful entry, lack of criminal record, documentation.
Now, targeting the employers who use illegal laborers is another excellent idea. We have to also target the excessive and punitive regulation that makes it profitable for them to risk it; but Arizona can't do that alone. That's a federal remedy since the feds are the ones who enacted all of that in the first place. If those two changes were made, then I think we'd all see a surprising number of "jobs Americans don't want" filled by a surprising number of Americans.

fizzbin says:
May 6, 2010 at 11:52 am

I really should not...but since the subject has been broached, “…there are jobs for them that US citizens apparently don’t want.”

Oy, vay!! Again with the simple reason for simple minds ka ka. The reasons for illegal immigration are numerous and complex. BTW, with all the whining about building fences, etc, on our southern boarder in order to secure (as much as possible) the U.S., has anyone bothered to see how the Mexican government fortifies THEIR southern boarder, hmmm? For those of you interested it will turn out to be, ah, interesting. And don’t forget to educate yourselves on how the Mexican government treats illegals in Mexico. Oh, and don’t forget to carry ID papers on you at all times when you are south of the boarder.

So, that’s enough stirring of the poop pot for me 😏

fizzbin says:
May 6, 2010 at 11:56 am

@nightfly... excellent post! Much, much better than mine.

canajun-eh says:
May 7, 2010 at 4:36 pm

@nightfly: One thing I've learned about Americans; if they REALLY wanted to keep people from crossing the border, they’d have figured out a way to do it. And quickly. Long before now. Something is holding up approval on that order.

Fred says:
May 20, 2010 at 12:39 pm

Well there are at least three of us in Austin...
Please install and activate the “Twitter for WordPress” plugin to use this section.

THE LATEST

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?
Got a call from a marketing company; did I have time for a survey? I did.
First question: how many teeth have I lost?

Zero.

Thank you. Have you heard of any of the following services that advertise automobiles?

She listed some names, and I ticked off the ones I’d heard. Every other question was about car marketing. I wanted to ask her what was that about the teeth? But I suspect someone piggybacked on the car-marketing campaign.

Say, can I just have you ask one question?

Sure. What?

I want to know how many Americans have had a tooth taken out. I mean, we’ll never know the real number, but you guys can project based on your samples, right?

We can, but – that’s it? We can build in a few questions about toothpaste preference, if you like, or -

No, no, that's okay. I just want to know if they've had teeth taken out.
Sure. May I ask why?

Look, do you want my business or not? It's my affair if I want to pay for tooth-extraction data, so I can study the demographics, the income levels, the number of minor children in the household, and imagine that I am the King of Extracted Teeth, that the souls of the teeth are collected in my head and I have some measure of control over the people whose dental essence I have grasped, and that they are my slaves in the afterlife. Or, uh, could be, if I thought those things. Sorry. I'm, uh, doing research for a company. That makes strings you tie on doorknobs. Send me a bill. Good day.

The survey also asked if I was the head of the household, and I had to chuckle there. The survey taker laughed also. Yes and no, I said. Yes on this, no on that. But let's say no. Unless you're asking who the dog thinks is the head, then yes.

So that's yes?

That's a no.

Odd how there's no third option for “co-equal rulers.” It works fine. Oh, now and then we have a spat and I insist she leave and rule Byzantium and trouble me no more, but it's a passing storm.

The book described yesterday, “Last Call,” amuses and informs on every page. Of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, led by self-described “Christian Socialist” Francis Willard, we learn that they weren't content to close the wretched saloon. The agenda included the eight-hour day, worker's rights, and “government ownership of utilities, railroads, factories, and (she was nothing if not eclectic) theaters.” But of course. All in the name of shaping the rude clay of the individual into something that meets the meddler's standards. It's not enough to keep them from hoisting a beer; we have to make sure they're not watching a play that simply entertains when it could instruct. There's a faint whiff of the Maoist in that lady. It gets better:

Along the way she also took up the causes of vegetarianism, cremation, less restrictive women's clothing, and something she called “the White Life for Two” – a program “cloaked in euphemism,” wrote Catherine Gilbert Murdock in Domesticating Drink, that “endorsed alcohol-free, tobacco-free, lust-free marriages.”

The WTCU gave way to the Anti-Saloon League, which was much more focussed, and much more successful. The Saloon was already seen in the popular imagination as a hell-hole, a stinking pit with fresh sawdust tossed on stale puke, ravaged men trying to raise a glass of caustic rotgut with shaking hands, syphilis-infested doxies in the backroom. Probably not far from the truth, at least in the grim parts of town. Americans drank a lot.

You might think this is it for the Bleat today, but it's not: stop back at noon.
for B&W World, Bleatplus, and the Out of Context Ad Challenge solution. More bleat-like items in the morn and early afternoon at Tumblr. It's been a busy day – blogging, of course, but then a column for Pajama Media, a column for the Hughniverse, and a column for the Star Trib. Wednesdays are HELL.

What's your busiest day? Busy is good, I think, but enough is enough.

Pass it along, if you wish

57 RESPONSES TO absent teeth & new cars

Brisko says:
May 7, 2010 at 10:37 am

I forgot about Barry Fell, as well. He wrote a book called “America B.C.” that deals mostly with Druid and Norse colonizations of the eastern seaboard area and claimed that Mystery Hill in New Hampshire was found a Druid astronomical observatory and that South Royalton, Vermont has found an Equinocial sunrise temple observatory to Bel, who was at the center of the Druidic cult of the sunrise and fertility. Oh, he also claims that the Algonquin language is a pidgin language of an earlier native tongue and Gaelic.

It's pretty interesting stuff, and as someone said all weird and far out, but none of it impossible

Brisko says:
May 7, 2010 at 11:56 am

I just read that back and realized I think far faster than I can type. I'm going to attribute the random extra words in various sentences to that and not losing my mind.

Kev says:
May 8, 2010 at 12:17 pm

Thank the godz for caller ID..if I don't know 'em, I don't answer.

Same here. And since there's no caller ID at all on the house phone (I'm not going to pay extra for something that's free on my cell phone), it never gets answered at all; everyone has to leave a message, and almost nobody does. And if someone calls my cell from an unfamiliar number and doesn't leave a message, they don't get their call returned, either. I figure that if they don't have time to leave me a message, I don't have time to call them back.

Am I a curmudgeon-in-training or just very protective of my privacy?

Kev says:
May 8, 2010 at 12:21 pm

After coming out of the pentathol laughing, I spent the next three days flat on my back unable and unwilling to eat. I had the shakes and sweats for the next 2 weeks intermittently. My lower lip and shin were
numb for 6 months.

Mark, I hope you mean your lower lip and chin were numb; if your dental surgery affected you in the leg area, your dentist must have been quite klutzy...

Forgot to answer this earlier: My busiest days are Thursdays, when I teach from 8 in the morning until 9:45 at night. (That explains why it took me until yesterday to read this post and until today to respond.)

fizzbin says:
May 8, 2010 at 2:00 pm

@Kev ....dagnabit, you ain’t no curmudgeon, your a sensible person. I, on the other hand, am going out to buy more ammo....and I don’t know what that has to do with anything, except that you can never have too much ammo 😊

Di says:
May 10, 2010 at 7:40 pm

A. Hopkins is great – but he is especially great when it comes to the CRAZY!

Fred says:
May 26, 2010 at 12:08 pm

“Am I a curmudgeon-in-training or just very protective of my privacy?”

Well... the thing is, is that the protocol for phone calls is changing. It used to be that you would leave messages but this new generation with all their new-fangled ways has come to the conclusion that BECAUSE of caller ID that voice messages are passé. The idea is that you will recognize the number and if you want to call back then you will. Forcing the callee to check their voice mail by leaving a message is considered gauche and an imposition...

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

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

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is HERE!
Correction: when I said on the radio I didn’t believe the Norse made it here I meant here. Also, Manhattan.

I've always wondered if you can have two colds at the same time. What happens to the second cold that comes along in the middle of the first? Does it hitch a ride, stay low, wait for its moment? This cold, I was told by many who believe there is One Cold at any one time, is tenacious, a squatter that roams from room to room, resisting eviction. Well, it will lose. But it's making May a bother – and May is already off to a fabulously disappointing start. Snow in the Dakotas, I hear. I don't even want to hear about snow in the arctic in May. There should be one day, at least, when it doesn't snow anywhere on the planet.

Today's links, in case you see how long this stupid thing goes and have no desire to plow down to the bottom:

100 Mysteries barrels on towards the 80-entry mark, here.

The long Comic Ads project wraps up with the 70s – total pages, over 260! Here.

Black and White World: minor entry, but it has Suzanne Pleshette. Here.

BleatPlus. Here.
Strib column, here. (Scroll down.)

Aaaand the solution to the Out of Context Ad Challenge.

Interesting day; sorry about the late Bleat. Forgot to post. Spent the morning on the other blogs, and did my best not to scatter my attention over sixteen different things. I don’t even look at the news in the morning – the afternoon is when I step away from the jobs and reconnect HOLY MOTHER WHAT’S HAPPENING WITH THE DOW

I’ve always thought this was a fool’s rally, but most plunges are panics, so it all evens out . . . somehow. The Greek Contagion will not be contained, I suspect. The BBC had a piece about the roots of the problem, in case they’re not screamingly apparent to anyone, and said “it all began with giving up the drachma for the Euro.” I could have told you that. Never liked the Euro. I know it’s silly to have opinions about other people’s currencies, but money is an emotional subject with ancillary aesthetic components. (This should be no surprise to anyone who’s followed this site for a while, as the Engraveyard is all about other people’s money.) Friends who went to Europe or lived there
raved about the Euro, because it made buying things in different countries so much easier. But the idea of eliminating long-standing historic currencies in favor of an airy named ultra-special transnational currency seemed a symptom of everything I wouldn't like, if I lived there. I'd think I'm an Englishman, dash it all, and I prefer the Pound. If it was good enough for Winnie, it's good enough for us. The lira! The drachma! The cold antiseptic sting of the Swiss Franc!

Sorry. Anyway. It plugs into something that's saddened me for years: the transformation of Europe from a collection of individual states and cultures into a series of quaint localities regulated by the dour chestless statists of Brussels. I was listening to a Ricky Gervais podcast tonight – rather, Ricky positing a statement which is then given a small comic slap by Steven Merchant before it's handed over for Karl Pinkington to misunderstand and ruin to tremendous comic effect (a sequence that gets funnier the farther it gets from Gervais) – and they were discussing the need to be proud of England without giving succor to the face-painting hooligans with an ABSO who chant Eng-a-lund until 3 AM every St. George's Day. It was sad, for two reasons: 1) the question of English pride was instantly met with demurrals and denunciations of Nationalist yobbos, and 2) the only things Gervais could cite as a reason for pride were scientists and artists. Don't get me wrong: I love scientists and artists. But this is a rather rarified defense, which Merchant deftly punctured: yes, when the soccer supporters are chanting about England, let's get them to listen to some Elgar.

On the other hand, Elgar is one of those artists who's distinctly British. Decent, just, regal, solid. Every European culture has distinct composers who capture the national flavor – Wagner's theatrically tragic romanticism, Respighi's time-soaked Roman interludes, all the mournful bipolar Russians. (France had no distinct classical voices until Debussy and Ravel started blowing smoke and pouring absinthe; they got in on the tail-end of the tradition to make its decline seem comfortably modern. There was Berlioz, who was amazingly French, but: how many great French symphonists? Right.) These are sounds that shape cultures, create and reinforce identity. As
an American I don’t believe in this sort of cultural homogeneity – for us. But for them? It’s who they are. You can be an Italian in Europe with Italian values in an European context, but the idea of making everyone Europeans with European values, with nothing to distinguish the individual cultures but varieties of cheese seems foolish. Because these things will assert themselves again, and they will do so at the worst times.

O Irony: Europe could be truly multicultural if it defined the term to mean a large geographical entity with several distinct cultural identities sharing simple values – parliamentary democracy, degrees of socialism, abhorrence of militarism, and so on. But the leaders have pushed multiculturalism down to the local level, where immigrant cultures abrade long-standing traditions, and the pub that had no trouble being down the block from the Church is now forbidden a license to move because it would be too close to a Mosque. The pretense of continental old-culture integration must assume that immigrant cultures assume to the new transnational model, when most immigrant cultures will simply maintain their old ways. Why not? I would. It’s human nature.

The American experience – in theory, anyway – required acceptance of a set of civic ideals, because those were the cultural norms. As played out in the 19th and early 20th century, this meant learning how to operate the System that ran large cities, and if you were in smaller cities, it meant forming discrete isolated organizations that kept private traditions alive while maintaining involvement with the civic apparatus. It generally worked because everyone was from somewhere else, and everyone was interested in Doing Better. Getting Ahead. Making Things. Baking a bigger pie to be carved up, or inventing a new pie altogether.

Bromides and generalities, I know. But of all the Outrage of the Day stories that gush over the wires, the tale of the high school kids who were expelled for not hiding American flag T-shirts on the Fifth of May is one that just . . . depressed me, completely, for a while. So the act of wearing a flag on another nation’s non-holiday holiday is an act of provocation and malice. So we are now to assume that other American citizens will be insulted by the presence of the American flag on a day that commemorates a battle against France in another nation, and must be protected from the sight lest they . . . what? Get violent? I doubt any school administrator would admit he or she suspected that would happen, which leaves us with: The presence of the flag is offensive. So says a public official.

Tell me how this goes someplace we want to be.

—

And on that note! Enjoy the links – scroll up, if you didn’t hit them. Me, I’m looking forward to a fine Friday with all the requisite elements, and I wish you a great weekend. See you Monday.
129 RESPONSES TO euros and sea-monkeys

DensityDuck says:
May 7, 2010 at 2:49 pm

I think it's amusing to see so many people suggesting that Mexican teenagers are so dangerously violent and emotionally unstable that you just have to let them do whatever they want and for God's SAKE don't PROVOKE them.

I mean, doesn't that seem like a shockingly racist thing to say?

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 7, 2010 at 2:53 pm

@Terry Fitz, fair enough. We can't always agree on everything. Upon reflection, your comment did in fact make the point you just offered. Ah well, grammer was not one of my strengths, those gerunds and dangling participles always left me flummoxed.

You have stated the actuality of events accurately, but please understand, a group of people becomes a mindless mob so fast it can boggle the mind. Peace out.

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 7, 2010 at 3:05 pm

@DensityDuck, I'm not sure I follow the point you make. Are you suggesting that the assistant principle should have left well enough alone because everything would be OK and all would walk off singing “We are the World?”

I can't speak for the others, but most of the mobs I've seen were white middle class students and suchlike. Three of those mobs weren't, but they were no more nor less volatile than us white folks. Just go to Chicago on St. Patrick's Day some time. Now THATS a volatile crowd, even before they start drinking.

Crowds are not about ethnicity, they're about too many primates packed too close together with something other than an altruistic purpose.

EnfantTerrible says:
May 7, 2010 at 3:13 pm

Do you take Ambien and then write during the subsequent fugue state? France had no distinct classical voices before Debussy and Ravel, you say, and then contradict yourself by mentioning Berlioz. But what about Satie, Faure, Saint-Saens, d'Indy, Gounot, Couperin (father and son), Rameau? Are they chopped liver?

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 7, 2010 at 3:33 pm

I think that Mr. Duck was just pointing out the irony of people who no doubt believe they are not racist, e.g. assistant principle Rodriguez, in trying to preach tolerance, is prejudging the behavior of the Latino students.
However, I see the point out resident constable is making about crowds but, as pointed out before, no such evidence existed of a unruly mob until the second day.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 7, 2010 at 3:35 pm

@brisko, these were really good sandwiches with the crust cut off and everything.

Borderman says:
May 7, 2010 at 3:38 pm

_Bonfire of the Vanities, anyone?_

At this stage it looks more to me like Vanity of the Bonfires.

Ego-swollen leftist school administrator + Ego-swollen leftist opportunist news reporting = invocation of Monkey Dance.

_The proper analogy would be students wearing Mexican flag apparel on the Fourth of July to a *Mexican* school – you know, *in Mexico.*_

Actually, Cinco de Mayo is only celebrated in Mexico in the state of Puebla and by Mexican-Americans living in the United States (and what does that tell us?) A better analogy is students wearing Mexican flag apparel the weekend after Labor Day during The Defeat of Jesse James Days in Northfield MN to a school in Mexico. It makes the same same amount of sense.

FWIW, my wife and her family, all of whom are either Mexican nationals, dual-citizens of Mexico and the United States, or naturalized American citizens originally from Mexico, have never been able to understand the big deal about Cinco de Mayo in this country. The real independence day in Mexico is September 16, which marks the beginning in 1810 of the 10-year long war for independence from Spain. Everyone in Mexico knows that. But not certain Mexican-Americans living here, I suppose.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 7, 2010 at 3:41 pm

or, so I am told. . .

madCanada says:
May 7, 2010 at 3:51 pm

I actually know nada about Cinco de Mayo & had to look it up.

How about Day of the Dead instead as prime holiday? Now there's a Mex party that includes everyone, and you get to hang skulls everywhere too!

jeischen says:
May 7, 2010 at 5:19 pm

The ’70s comic ads sure took me back. Yes, I was in Jr. High in the
mid-70s and yes I did own that cool “Let’s Boogie” t-shirt with the pimp and ho under the night light. I also owned a KISS t-shirt with silver letters. A couple of years ago, I went to a ’70s party and wore a curly wig, fake sideburns and fu manchu mustache. I looked eerily like the spawn of Ron Jeremy. My wife took my photo on her cell phone. She showed it to some 20-something girls at her sister’s bachlorette party a few weeks later, but didn’t tell them I was dressed up for the party. They we aghast until she burst out laughing.

Di says:
May 7, 2010 at 5:39 pm

Gas stations were something else, weren't they? Sacred places along the Lincoln Highway.
http://www.ronsaarli.com/stockImages/lincolnHighway/GulfGasStation.jpg

I do remember that Texaco always had the cleanest rest rooms. Back in the day.

browniejr says:
May 7, 2010 at 6:44 pm

“too many primates packed too close together with something other than an altruistic purpose.”
For a humorous example, go here (scroll down):
http://www.startribune.com/entertainment/popcrush/93068924.html?elr=KArks47cQiUec80yOiLU47cQUU

browniejr says:
May 7, 2010 at 6:47 pm

Damn- it worked this morning… Try this one:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyYY96wcj50&feature=related

shesnailie says:
May 7, 2010 at 6:55 pm

_@_v – careful about those pic-anic baskets or you'll end up like this poor bruin…

http://www.snapsandbytes.co.uk/prisonbear.mpg

Anders Hudson says:
May 7, 2010 at 7:09 pm

I love watching people from outside California trying to interpret California. It's like kids making up rules to the story as it goes along.

I'm ten minutes from Morgan Hill. The faculty member who issued the reversal or removal order of the shirts was concerned about their safety. Stone cold came out and said that. If a faculty of a school cannot guarantee the safety of its students under any circumstances, they have bigger problems than T-shirts.

madCanada says:
May 7, 2010 at 7:48 pm

Wow, even super-liberal Cenk Uygur says basically what Lileks says.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vWCSvljWxU
browniejr says:
May 7, 2010 at 7:50 pm

Anders- Many of the people commenting here (including me) are from California...

You say the faculty member was concerned about “their” safety. Who is “they/ their?”
The kids wearing the flag T-Shirts? If so, why did he presume that the other kids would get violent, when he had a half day of evidence of no such violence?
If “they/ their” is the other kids, then having 5 or so potentially violent kids reverse their shirts also makes no sense. Better to call the cops/ have them escorted home to keep everyone safe, rather than worry about their wardrobes!

I actually work in the Safety field. When a designer cannot get management to implement a design change for technical or cost reasons, he or she would often try to convince me to advocate the change for Safety reasons. More often then not, the change would either have no impact on the Safety of the design, or might even degrade the Safety. Invoking the Safety of the students sounds an awful lot like the faculty member has run out of excuses, and now is invoking “concern about Safety” – after all, who could argue AGAINST the Safety of students?

canajun-eh says:
May 7, 2010 at 8:12 pm

I must agree with the guy from The Young Turks in MadCanada's link. The whole thing is just a waste of time. nobody gives a rat's ass about this “incident” and most of all, James should be ashamed of himself for trying to make a mountain out of a molehill. The kids were just “havin' some fun, and everybody knows that…take a chill pill people. Although Anna N...haven't noticed you here before, but you rock girl.

steveH says:
May 7, 2010 at 10:32 pm

Tempest in a teacup dept., etc.

Turns out that the t-shirts in question at Live Oak were not brought out for some special political purpose; they tend to be part of the usual rotation. Having finally seen TV news reports on the kids in question, I’ve seen them going to/from LO at various times. (I live about four blocks from the school, on the other side of the freeway overpass.) And shirts with flags, or flag motifs are not uncommon. Nor does anyone seem to care, one way or another.

Went to get some dried fruit from a local grower (pluots and peaches this time), and the way home was past LO. I thought that the five or six news network camera vans, complete with deployed satellite dishes was just a wee bit over the top.

This has turned into the biggest thing to hit town since the flood of ought 97, except this is a lot sillier.

Borderman says:
May 7, 2010 at 11:10 pm

@canajun-eh
nobody gives a rat's ass about this “incident”...

If that were really true, then how do you explain so much discussion of it in this thread?

...and most of all, James should be ashamed of himself for trying to make a mountain out of a molehill.

Making a mountain out of a molehill stems directly from the actions of the school administrator. We were all minding our own business until he attracted news coverage with his self-righteous temper tantrum. And is it really necessary to point out to you that this is Mr. Lileks' blog? You want to tell a guy who pays for his own private blog that he should be ashamed of something he writes about based on your values? Or anybody's values but his? I politely suggest you get your own blog.

Borderman says:
May 7, 2010 at 11:48 pm

@AndersHudson

I love watching people from outside California trying to interpret California. It's like kids making up rules to the story as it goes along.

Interpretation of this opportunist spectacle as a “California event” misses the point. Your state, wonderful place that it is, does not have a lock on people like this. We have just as many misinformed, super-sensitive ideologues right here in Texas nursing bruised political feelings based on their reading of history. (And I am not making this up. Promise.)

Paul says:
May 8, 2010 at 1:05 am

that B&W world flick, Fate is the Hunter, is a decent movie, but it's based on a terrific book about flying. the author, Ernest Gann, wrote about his zillions of hours as a pilot of DC-2's and DC-3s and their ilk. If you ever see it in a bargain bin or used bookstore give it a try. No Suzanne Pleshette, though.

madCanada says:
May 8, 2010 at 7:18 am

I love these folk who keep trying to change the subject. You're like foot-soldiers of sanity.

fizzbin says:
May 8, 2010 at 7:34 am

I prefer being a foot soldier of INsanity. Somebody had to say it. Your welcome 😕
mezzrow says:
May 8, 2010 at 12:14 pm

two things:

1. infantile music school joke re: The Pines

“Swines of the Appian Way, by (wait for it) Res-piggy.”

2. James – bless you for the GG logo and the ad. Imagine if the Texaco Star on your Dad's shirt disappeared from the face of the earth. I saw that GG logo on my dad's shirt for the youngest years of my life. Short version – Dinsmore Dairy, Jacksonville, FL – largest herd of registered Guernseys in the US in the 1940's and 50's. The herdmaster (went to HS w/ his kids) came from the island of Guernsey. The milk was ambrosia – after you drink what we call milk these days, GG tastes like half and half. Look at the color of the Twins throwback unis – that's the color of pure Guernsey milk. “Higher butterfat!!” Those were different days, indeed.

JamesS says:
May 8, 2010 at 6:52 pm

Re: Fate is the Hunter.

His old friend, Glenn Ford, tries to prove it wasn't pilot error. This leads to flashbacks, to WW2.

Did it involve that fateful day over Macho Grande?

shesnailie says:
May 9, 2010 at 1:02 am

_@_v – over macho grande? no… those wounds run pretty deep...

JohnW says:
May 9, 2010 at 11:16 pm

“No, I'll never get over Macho Grande…”

Ed Driscoll » PJM Political: From the Earth to the Moon! says:
May 22, 2010 at 3:23 pm

[…] Lileks longs for the days when currency still had the same names as listed in the Monty Python “Money” song, and goes back to the future with his recently announced dead-tree […]

Please install and activate the "Twitter for WordPress" plugin to use this section.
Wii Fit says I'm not. It gave me a BMI of overweight. I should post a current picture and let you judge whether I'm a blobby pot of human porridge; I don't see it, but most men don't, I suppose. Most see themselves as Virile and Impressive even if most can't see their feet. But who am I to argue with a piece of consumer electronics that's so carefully calibrated it can actually tell whether or not I'm standing on it?

So for the last week I have spent time on the Wii Fit, working my way up from Calorie Burner status to Calorie Roaster – which makes me think I'm gripping a podium in 1977, wearing wide lapels, calling a unit of heat “a hockey puck” – to CALORIE INCINERATOR, a status I achieved today when doing one of the step routines.

I am also jogging, which is amusing; I hate running. Avoidance of running is one of my guiding principles, but here I am, jogging along rudimentary computer-generated landscapes, eager to prove to the machine I am not overweight. The program kicks up a different Mii every time to lead me on my run, and since my daughter downloaded a batch of Miis from the great seat of Wii users, this means I follow Jesus some times, and occasionally Pikachu.

I asked her: did you download Jesus? She said no. Anyway that's not Jesus. Why would you think that's Jesus? It's a dude with a beard.
Who kindly gestures me to follow him.

*It's not Jesus, Dad. Jeez.*

But it is Pikachu. If he's not leading me, he's standing on the sidelines, cheering me on. Or he's in the audience during the Step program. This is Wii Fit in a nutshell: you're doing a step routine on stage in front of an audience, which rises to its feet as your act proceeds. I cannot possibly imagine a situation where anyone would fill a hall to watch people step up onto small platforms, even if they do so in synchronized movements. Every time I do the program I look for Pikachu in the audience, and he's there.

And so am I.

I have two Miis – one was created a long time ago, and reflects my old glasses. Yes, it is important to have your digital Wii identifies reflect your eyewear. So I created a new one – and did so while stripped to the basics, not holding the remote, thinking this would make me less overweight. (No.) He's in the audience. Sometimes he stands on the sidelines and cheers me on as I jog.

To be honest, I like it. It's an easy way to get some exercise, and I don't get enough. I tend to think that just being myself is sufficient, since I don't sit still, run up the stars 40X a day, move, and generally abjure sweets. But this forced me to examine my eating habits. So:

**Breakfast:** One bowl of Fiber One cereal, with one sausage garnished with Rooster sauce. About 300 calories.

**Lunch:** a pathetic sandwich, consisting of one slice of bread with peanut butter, or some sort of pressed, chopped, formed, mechanically separated meat, with a banana; about 300 calories

**Supper:** whatever, but not a lot

**Late night ritual TV snack:** a tiny snack-bag of popcorn (110 calories) and a sugar-free Jell-O pudding cup (60 calories.)

Also, a glass of wine. I don't eat a lot. I'm not overweight. I AM NOT OVERWEIGHT.

I am in a war against my Wii and I will show it who can win. But the last time I went on a diet and dropped a ton of weight, people thought I had a terminal disease.

**Good weekend.** Cold. Damn. Friday was perfect; did everything I wanted to do, watched an old B&W movie while creating the week's website content, then watched “Surrogates.” It's “The Matrix” meets “Die Hard” and I say that as a compliment; it was much better than expected, and didn’t bother with long “philosophical” speeches about identity and reality. The only thing that seemed somewhat wrong was the absence of heavily-modified surrogates; if people really could project a corporeal version of their ideal self into the real world, you’d have furries, people with tails, Borgs, Sailor Moons, and so on. And there would be fistfights everywhere over everything, just for sport.
Saturday I . . . what did I do? I scanned. Lord, I scanned. I have so much stuff to scan, and every pamphlet suggests a project. For example: someone sent me a 1962 dining and entertainment guide to LA; every page has something worth noting, so that means scanning all 60 pages and putting the thing up on the web, I suppose. It was a chilly day, overcast, blustery, so it was a good day for staying inside, leaning over every 90 seconds, and replacing a piece of paper on the scanner with another one. If only there was a Wii program for this; I could be a CALORIE ROASTER for scanning.

I grocery shopped, as usual, and discovered a new brand of bread:

Concluded: it has to be Mexican. And it is. Here's something I didn't now: the Bimbo folk own some American brands, such as Brownberry, which I buy; Entenmann's, a famous New York brand, and Thomas's English Muffins. I wouldn't have known if they hadn't decided to bring out Bimbo Bread.

Sunday we went to a restaurant that has Kids Eat Free Sundays, and also Moms Eat Free on Mother's Day. Dads pay. When the bill came it was five dollars more than I expected, and I asked the clerk why; he paused, and said "the salads." Oh, right. "It's still a pretty good deal for $17.99," he said, rather pointedly. I said yes oh yes of course i it is, don't get me wrong, dreadfully grateful and all that, just wanted to know the precise breakdown. Everyone at the table agreed I had made a mistake, and shouldn't have asked, but: is there anything wrong with being curious why a bill is five dollars more than
expected? I’d forgotten that salads were extra. I backed off the moment I was made aware of this hideous error.

If someone says Sixteen Eat Free if one person orders a $20 entry, and the bill is $31, is it okay to wonder where the extra $11 came from?

UPDATE: wife says I am not overweight, but notes I haven’t stepped on her recently, so maybe the Wii has a point.

LATER: Motels, around noon. See you then – and of course at PopCrush, starting at 9, and Tumblr, starting at ten.

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75 RESPONSES TO **wii faat & bimbo bread**

**Tony** says:
May 10, 2010 at 2:05 pm

I like to think I’m relatively fit, but I too have never seen the point of running. Unless you’re being chased.

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**Tacobob** says:
May 10, 2010 at 2:51 pm

And ofcourse on the web site, they show the little girl teddy bear licking a strange shaped honeycomb...And just enjoying it a little too much. Eeck.

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**gemartini** says:
May 10, 2010 at 3:19 pm

Is Bimbo Bread the Mexican equivalent to Wonder Bread? Ugh!

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**Terry Fitz** says:
May 10, 2010 at 3:24 pm

Exercise is nothing but wear and tear on the body. Recline as much as possible, and eat boa-constrictor style. These, together with a youth spent in a series of ill-advised liaisons and a maturity spent with one understanding soul, are the keys to happiness. And red wine in amounts right in-between “enough” and “too much”. Of course, if one bowl of cereal and one sausage for breakfast makes you feel good about yourself, have at it. One thing’s for sure...I will not worry myself to death.

---

**Rubo** says:
May 10, 2010 at 3:27 pm

I’m with Tony, I don’t see any reason for running either.

I had to go on a low carb diet, due to borderline diabetes. Lost 12 lbs. so far.

Truth of the matter I really don’t miss bread so much, but sure get a
hankering for some donuts that are made locally.

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 10, 2010 at 3:40 pm
Cereal and sausage for breakfast? Eeeew!

Brisko says:
May 10, 2010 at 3:57 pm
I live on sandwiches, more or less (my wife thinks I'm insane for some reason). I'd be lost without bread.

browniejr says:
May 10, 2010 at 3:59 pm
Running: The only 2 reasons to run are for panic (being chased, hailing a fire truck, etc.) or passion (you really need to catch her before she gets away...). Otherwise, a good walk will get you there.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 10, 2010 at 4:20 pm
Tia Rosa from Bimbo Bakeries is some of the best commercial tortillas and chips.

Di says:
May 10, 2010 at 4:38 pm
Steve Martin (or maybe his Dad) in your banner 😊

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 10, 2010 at 4:41 pm
looks like Perry Como to me.

Di says:
May 10, 2010 at 4:50 pm
“Como”?  
Ha it works 😊

browniejr says:
May 10, 2010 at 5:39 pm
@Di: Posted this before, but it fits: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1yvS_m_7eE  
(Some of Eugene Levy's best work from the SCTV days.)

juanito - John Davey says:
May 10, 2010 at 5:51 pm
Yup, the Bleat poster boy this week is either:  
Perry Como  
Rock Hudson  
Cary Grant
OR
A still alcoholic, and younger, Pat Summerall

swschrad says:
May 10, 2010 at 9:21 pm
/yyyy that's got to be off a record jacket. just got that 60s “living stereo” look of the RCA art department.

Perry Coma.

“Broadway Shows Ala Italia”

Kev says:
May 10, 2010 at 10:27 pm

_Bimbo acquired Mrs Baird’s, a venerable Texas brand, several years ago. Lots of jokes circulated about Mrs Baird’s (depicted in ads as a 1910-ish working mom), um, “extracurricular activities,” but thankfully they fizzled out quickly._

DryOwlTacos, you beat me to it by a few hours (I, too, would have described Mrs. Baird's as “venerable”). I'll never forget the headline (I'm pretty sure it was actually in the *Dallas Morning News*, believe it or not) when that sale was announced: “Mrs. Baird is now a Bimbo.”

Kev says:
May 10, 2010 at 10:28 pm

And BTW, Mrs. Baird's first name was “Ninnie.” (I learned that while on a bakery tour in Cub Scouts.)

Bob W. says:
May 10, 2010 at 10:30 pm

I have an Oroweat / Entenmann's store a quarter mile from my house, and I recall doing a double-take when a Bimbo Bread poster was put up in their window a few years ago.

My question for all you Bleatnicks…do any of you remember Australian Toaster Biscuits? I think they were either an Oroweat or an Entenmann product. I sure would like to know if they still are made (they disappeared from our stores years ago), and how I would go about getting some.

For those not familiar with Australian Toaster Biscuits, think high quality English muffin. A finer texture, and melt-in-your-mouth good. They were available in a regular variety, and they also had a cornbread version.

jamcool says:
May 10, 2010 at 10:51 pm

Apparently Beem-bo is phasing out their regional bread brands, the same way that Sara Lee has all but eliminated the Rainbo and Colonial brands and Flowers is replacing Holsum with its “Nature's Own” breads.:(
**Kev says:**
May 11, 2010 at 9:58 pm

*Apparently Beem-bo is phasing out their regional bread brands*

I think there'd be a riot in Texas if they tried to do that to Mrs. Baird's.

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**Marilynn says:**
May 12, 2010 at 7:39 pm

Spelled Bimbo but pronounced Beem-bo. Don't mispronounce for heavens sake! They get really upset. They go under George Weston bakeries around here anyways.

Love the “grunting” sound the wii fit makes when I step on it. Very motivating.

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**Nivaya says:**
May 13, 2010 at 2:21 pm

I'm pretty sure Bimbo bread was one of the first brands I was ever aware of, from when we used to vacation in Spain. At the age of 4 I knew “bimbo” was a terribly rude word, and giggled accordingly.

Also, hpoulter, there are a lot of us who make the effort to look “normal” these days in Second Life. At least, humanly proportional. That's not to say there's not a disproportionate amount of “fug”, but yeah. Some of us work pretty hard not to look like Barbie on crack.

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**Harriet Russell says:**
May 14, 2010 at 5:20 am

i love both peanut butter and cheeze as the filling of my morning sanwich.:”

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**Emily Cogburn says:**
May 16, 2010 at 7:25 am

Excuse me if someone's already said this, but I'm too lazy to read 73 entries. Have you measured your height lately? Most people lose vertical inches as they age and if the Wii is asking you for that and you are reporting your height from when they measured you in HS gym, that may be part of the problem.

Love your stuff. Just bought 3 of your books for my friend.

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**Pikkewyntjie says:**
May 17, 2010 at 11:41 am

Corporate whores and proud of it! I remember when Bimbo began to enter the U.S. market back in the 90s and I thought surely they would use a different name in the U.S., but I guess brand recognition in the Latino community was too high to worry about a few “tee hees” here and there.

Their was a time when companies would do anything to protect their brands from any sort of bawdy associations. Remember when Esso changed its name to Exxon because “Esso” sounded vaguely like “asshole” (but apparently not to Canadians, because they didn’t change the name there).
I saw a job posting just this morning for the Bimbo plant in Gastonia, NC and thought about what the ribbing their employees must get. As for pronouncing it “beembo,” I think that just makes it even more hilarious!
Monday was the damndest day; could not have been duller. Everything from the weather to the work to the meals to the general tenor of the ether itself was just – not – there, and I suppose I’m to blame. The days are what we make them. But Natalie was home today for Pointless No School Day, and I had lots of blogging to do. So. Couldn’t sit outside much; blustery, with spits of rain. Ran a ten-minute mile on the Wii, in addition to all the other activities; once you start building habits on this you’re loathe to do less, because the machine gives you positive feedback in the form of generic encouragement that mostly boils down to “Hello! Looks like you’ve pushed a button and stepped on a slab of plastic! Congratulations!”

But it was fun. It’s a pleasure to hang around the house with my daughter, who was alternately working on a story about a bird, drawing pictures, reading, and otherwise acting very self-possessed and self-occupied. She got her own breakfast this morning – at some point she got tall enough to reach the milk in the fridge. Sigh. Another thing I don’t do anymore. I remember when I’d make her lunch by putting her on the high chair, picking it up, walking it over to the microwave, and letting her push the buttons to nuke the Easy Mac. That’s parenting: a measure of your success is how you’re needed less and less.

You spend your life thinking you’ll fight this battle or that, picking your foes, but you never figure you’ll go twelve rounds with irrelevance.
Anyway, I'm tired of looking screens and pushing buttons. There will be a break from this on Thursday; the Cooking Channel is coming over to the house to do a brief segment on the Gallery of Regrettable Food. I will have to cook something. I will have to have props. How do I get myself into these things?

While scanning the Great Backlog I came across this illustration from True Magazine, 1959. It's the shopping section at the back of the book. The female-head-mounted-like-a-trophy will be found later today on Tumblr – and by all means, do go there; every day, it's like a miniature Institute of found peculiarities. The quantity of stuff on the internet is starting to overwhelm me, frankly; you wander off your paths, start clicking on tumblrs, and insane amounts of pictures march past in an endless cheerful mad parade, with no context, no reason, no purpose. Just images tossed into the great roiling pot of post-modern remix culture. I wonder if someone who's, say, 20 and not particularly schooled on history and graphics can make sense of this without context, or if he even wants to; an 8-bit computer game is a 60s cigarette ad is a 40s propaganda poster is a 70s bikini picture is a 2010 photoshopped image. It's like driving down a road at 60 miles an hour and trying to read words written on fence posts.

I wonder if we're a decade away from a time when the landfill stratums fall silent, and there's nothing to hold and examine, nothing to find in an antique store a half-century hence. Can't even imagine such places would have bins of thumb drives – five for a New Dollar! Pot luck! This is why I like sites like this, which turn your page into gawdawful mid-90s sites.

As I was saying. This was in the back of the magazine: an illustration for a shopping section that showed the sort of things guys liked to get through the mail.
Well now. A gun, a purse, a pipe holder, a shirt, a drill, a radio, a fishing reel. Fella could do alright, shopping through the mail.

I'd like to say more, but I have four pieces to do in the next 48 hours, and I'm almost grateful for them; actual topics on which I can focus and unload. Nothing that usually piques my interest or provides some diversion is doing the trick, which gives you that horrible feeling you have exhausted the limits of your interests. There are times when I feel somewhat stupid for putting stuff up here at all. It's another rule of the internet: whatever you are doing, 100,000 people are doing it too, and if ten percent are doing it better, that means there are 10,000 people eating your lunch every day. The numbers probably scale up.

Despite that, Comic Sins later today.

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**51 RESPONSES TO tuesday, may 11**

**Ed Driscoll » Party Like It's 1999** says:
May 14, 2010 at 4:15 pm

[...] Found via James Lileks, behold the Geosynthesizer! For those who long for the days of GeoCities Webpages circa 1996 or [...]
UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

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

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is HERE!

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?

Use the form below to search the site:

Search

VISIT OUR FRIENDS!

A few highly recommended friends...

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

ARCHIVES

All entries, chronologically...

July 2013
June 2013
May 2013
April 2013
March 2013
February 2013
January 2013
December 2012
November 2012
October 2012
September 2012
August 2012
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Today was a repeat. Same sky, same rain, same cold. Watching May pass like this is like getting a text photo of your child getting a second neck tattoo. The damage was done with the first one, but you still wish there was something you could do. The blossoms are gone from the tree; the Oak Island Water Feature has been still for a fortnight. Every day I poke the water accumulated in the roof of the gazebo, and dump great sheets of cold water on the bricks. Oh, it’s green enough; it will be beautiful again when the temps get out of the trough, but -

But isn’t it always like this? Was there just one or two great perfect springs that made us think it’s supposed to be different? The perfect isn’t the enemy of the good. Memory is the enemy of the moment.

I blogged all morning. Having exhausted the radio show I used to listen to, I’m listening to Dimension X x x x, an early 50s sci-fi show held in high regard. It’s a half-century old, so it’s all quite quaint; the rocketships, as they’re always called, are usually staffed by crews taken from WW2 movies, with Brooklyn mugs down in the engine room, tough rough hard-bitten captains – the old man’ll get us through! – and a general lack of science. You can see the ships, all silvery and pointy with rivets everywhere, guys in blue jumpsuits, radio operators speaking into hand-held mikes. As usual for the era, the universe is full of civilizations that destroyed themselves in Atom Wars, or serene and confident species bent on conquering Earth. If there are robots, they speak in horrible raspy electronic voices. But they don’t smoke:
That’s Elektro. According to wikipedia, he had a most American life: he toured America in 1950 as part of a Westinghouse promotion, then had a bit part in a 1960s Mamie Van Doren movie “Sex Kittens Go to College,” where he was billed as “Thinko.” He came close to destruction, but is being rehabbed.

When it was done I blogged in silence. At noon I did Wii Fit – “The Illusion of Fitness, with All the Aches of the Real Thing” – then called the Metropolitan Airport Commission to ask for $14,000. They said sure.

To elaborate: there’s a noise-abatement program that refits old houses, insulates them from the full-throating screams of the silver birds above. Since Jasperwood is directly under the approach to the airport, we qualify for new windows. That’s great. But I would rather have something that quiets actual birds. There’s a bird outside my window who starts to sing every morning exactly half an hour before I wake. I get up. I put in an ear plug. I go back to bed. I hate that bird. I do not want to get up with the birds. I wish the bird was more considerate. But that’s the last thing you get from Nature. Consideration is a human invention. Could be worse; I’m sure someone wakes every morning in June at 3 AM because of the seasonal screams of African Copulating Spiders, which shriek for four hours until spent. I used to live near the Zoo in Washington DC, and there were birds that mated constantly, and it sounded like Jack Bauer interrogating an ostrich.

Then more writing: have a piece due on the end of “Lost” tomorrow for the paper. Wrote itself, really. Then: child gets off bus. Stands at the bottom of the stairs, glaring at me, because I forgot to pack her sandwich today.

“I had one piece of seaweed and a Juice and a Pocky.”
“So, you're hungry!”

“I guess.”

She tromped over to the Wii and fired it up. She's serious about meeting her daily goals, too. She weighed herself.

“Dad, I lost ten pounds.”

Sure enough. But unlikely.

“Maybe I had weighed myself in the evening before. It said you weighed more at night.”

Not ten pounds' worth. Obviously the board was wrong, but it congratulated her anyway. I'm surprised the thing doesn't come with a motion-sensitive pole you can stick down your throat. Hello! I see you've thrown up seven ounces today! Great! Want a tip on finding websites that reinforce your burgeoning pathology?

Gah. Well, we had dinner, then went to her band / orchestra concert. It's 4th grade, and they just started at the beginning of the school year, so as you can imagine there's a lot of barking and frapping, but they held together, and that's something. The orchestra was good too, sawing away with earnest diligence – Gnat plays cello. Every cello player can sympathize with her horror in the first number – the rod that elevates the cello loosened, and the cello slid down until she was hunched over like Quasimodo trying to examine a bunyon.

Afterwards I spoke with one of the Dads; he's the brother of the guy who did Veggie Tales. Small world, eh? One year you're driving around with a tot singing SAAAY-BUUU, and the next you're talking to the guy's bro, and what he's doing now.

Never could get the achoo-mu-mu boo-hoo mu-mu sequence down pat.
Wish I had more, but between the evening work and watching Lost – and then writing a recap – I find myself staring at 1 AM now. The bird? He’s sleeping. Fiend.

Back at 10:30 with Out of Context Ad Challenge, and B&W World around 2:30.

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Pass it along, if you wish

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53 RESPONSES TO ceee-buu & elektro

raf says:
May 13, 2010 at 10:58 am

browniejr: ...OTOH, why do planning commissions or boards allow such stupid decisions like putting houses downwind of fat-rendering plants?

In my vast(ish) experience on a planning commission, I noticed this dynamic: land planned as agricultural or industrial can be acquired at lower cost than that planned residential. This provides an incentive for developers to buy such land and request a replan/rezone or a variance to develop it residential. Most planning commission members are either unknowledgeable and tend to give excessive deference to developers (or city professional staff)or are allied with developers (or council members who are) through common interests or political ambition. (Why? Because those who are not so aligned serve only one term on the planning commission before they are replaced by the appointing authority who were elected with the support of the development community.)

One of life's ongoing ironies is that the “Plan” which was supposed
to stabilize development turned out to be a destabilizing factor.

C. Wingate says:
May 13, 2010 at 12:52 pm

My favorite VT silly song is technically not one at all: the flannelgraph of St. Patrick which has a Star Trek connection!

lanczos says:
May 13, 2010 at 6:21 pm

Ahh, the “Fat-Rendering Plant” gambit.

Here in The Glorious Heroic Peoples’ Revolutionary Soviet of Austin, our “fat-rendering plant” was Austin’s Mueller airport. It was opened in the early 1940s, wa-a-a-a-ay northeast, far from town. By the 1960s, the entire airport grounds had been encircled by housing. Naturally, it had to be moved to the (retired) Air Force Base southeast of Austin (Bergstrom) because it was so-o-o-o “racist” to keep the airport in that location, even for private aircraft / National Guard helicopters / etc.

There’s your analog.
default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
OMG! Friday the 13th falls on a Thursday this month. Expect rain. It's raining again, as I write; it rained earlier today. It will rain tomorrow. The weather is simply incontinent. Today was another Xerox of the day before, except I left the house to have lunch and do some office stuff. This blew a three-hour hole in the Productivity Matrix, so I've been scrambling ever since.

But I had time to tease Dave Barry. While sitting in the waiting area for my daughter's karate class, listening to the kids get a stern lesson about handling their bow – IT IS NOT A TOY IT IS A WEAPON – I learned Dave would be doing a live chat on the Arizona Republic website, so I fired up the iPad and "jacked into the net!" as poseurs said around 1997. Posing as "Seamus," I
asked him how he would advice the BP executives dealing with the oil spill to react – if he was Captain Morgan.

He said he would tell them to drink a great deal of rum.

I clucked: not the response I was looking for, friend. It goes back to this:

When we were at the Democratic National Convention in ’08, we interviewed Captain Morgan, who was swaggering around the joint inviting everyone to a party at the White House, provided he was elected. Drink up! But since this is the modern era of moderation, he ended his party-hearty exhortations with a qualifier: “Responsibly!” We found this so hilarious – a pirate, urging responsible drinking; an incarnation of a liquor brand contractually obligated to leaven his bacchanalian enticements with “Responsibly!” – that it became a tag line of sorts, and since then nearly every communication has ended with “Responsibly!” Occasionally I get a text message from Dave that consists entirely of “Responsibly!” But it’s been a while, and I guess he forgot.

So I texted him an admonition, and went back to reading “Last Call,” Daniel Okrent’s book about Prohibition. (I could give you a detailed review when I’m done, or I could just mention it every other day to note how much I’m enjoying it.) When class was over we picked up Chinese next door, and drove home. Phone buzzed; text message. Daughter wanted to know who it was.

“Dave Barry,” I said.

“Cooool! Pirate books!”

“He is dead to me on pirate matters,” I said.

“Why?”

“He has forgotten the Captain Morgan Creed. Responsibly.”

Pause in the back seat. “Okay what does that even mean?”

“It’s a private joke.” Whereupon she told me about the private joke she had with her friends okay it was weird but one day they were talking about teeth, and Bryn had a tooth that was coming in sideways so we called it Rebel Tooth, and then there was Shy Tooth, and others like that.

By now we were home. We had our Chinese food and examined our fortunes, which were the usual drivel: People are drawn to your personality but slightly repelled by your copious moles. “They’re not fortunes!” Gnat said. “They’re not ever fortunes.” I explained people probably sued because the fortunes didn’t come true.

“Why would people sue over that?”

Ah, the age of innocence. Talk to your mom, she’s the lawyer.

She went off to animate a running cycle; I hit the Wii to pretend I was running on an island. This time I was following Hello Kitty. But I saw Jesus Mii on the hill, jumping and urging me on. He was next to Pikachu.
Did some stretching exercises with the scary Wii instructor lady, who's like a ghost made out of ceramic. Did my 30 minutes, then dove back into the work. Whipped up a brief video for the Strib's vid honcho, who's returning to TV in Kansas. A column here, a column there, a feature piece, tumblr, then this.

**Updates today?** Criminey, no! Nada! Squat! I'll be lucky to get anything out for Friday. But left over from yesterday is a mild and inessential Black and White World, if you're interested. (It has that highly-prized, elusive Star Trek connection.)

Oh, what the hell. Here we are, in the last days before the boom crumpled, and the new next times began.

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**Pass it along, if you wish**

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**59 RESPONSES TO responsibly!**

**Jeff** says:
May 13, 2010 at 9:28 pm

... from the Land of Sky Blue Wa-aaaa-ters, comes the beer refreshing —

comes the beer refreshing . . .

**juanito - John Davey** says:
May 13, 2010 at 10:46 pm

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**Jeff:**
May 13, 2010 at 9:28 pm

... from the Land of Sky Blue Wa-aaaa-ters, comes the beer refreshing —

comes the beer refreshing . . .

Hamms!

Hamms.
Stewart says:
May 14, 2010 at 12:16 am

Doesn't anyone here remember the suave, charming, smooth-talking hipster of the breakfast table, Super Sugar Bear? A Lounge-lizard's line of patter always promoting to cartoon kids the essential nutrition and goodness of Super Sugar Pops? Had he not been furry and funny it would have been creepy. “Hey kids! Come over here and try my cereal, sugar on the outside, nourishment on the inside, mmmm, mmm!”

He got blown away in one of the anti-sugar hurricanes, I expect. His cereal is now merely “Corn Pops”. I hope that Sugar Bear took his earnings and bought up the remaining stock of Sugar Pops, bought a Gore-sized mansion and and made the largest room a disco/breakfast nook. I'm afraid the neighborhood parents have gotten a restraining order, as he kept approaching their children and inviting them over to his place...

browniejr says:
May 14, 2010 at 12:48 am

MikeH: The Most Interesting Man it the World (“Stay Thirsty, My Friends.”) has got to be one of the most creative and funny beer ads ever: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U18VkI0uDxE

“He can speak French in Russian!”

browniejr says:
May 14, 2010 at 12:59 am

Or even “He can speak French in Russian!”

Kev says:
May 14, 2010 at 12:22 pm

@Stewart: I think you got your That Used to Have Sugar in Their Names mixed up. Sugar Bear was the mascot of Super Sugar Crisp, now Super Golden Crisp. (Obviously, they couldn’t change his name to Golden Bear, because Jack Nicklaus has dibs on that name for his sportswear line.)

Sugar Pops (now Corn Pops), had a nameless cowboy as its mascot; way before that, IIRC, it was a cartoon prairie dog named Sugar Pops Pete.

swschrad says:
May 14, 2010 at 12:48 pm

ooOOoohhh, prairie dogs. carry bubonic plague.
part of this complete breakfa...ach...

thump

stjohnsmythe says:
May 14, 2010 at 7:20 pm

Pitch responsibly!

http://mlb.mlb.com/sponsors/captain_morgan/first_pitch/
Stewart says:
May 14, 2010 at 9:15 pm

Well, dog-gone-it, I guess my memory is more shot than I thought it was. Teach me to open m big fat mouf.
It's Friday! The day that's better than Saturday because when it's over there's still Saturday to come. I've always liked Friday more than Saturday; the Duty portion is well spelled-out, in work terms, and there's no threat of chores. Just the promise of pizza and a night with no deadlines. But Thursday had its merits – the rain came, pounded away, but slunk off like a sloppy drunk around five. I filed hella copy, including the PopCrush blog - and, drum roll, it has in its short tenure become the #1 non-sports blog on the site, with twice the traffic of #2. It's #2 overall.

So that's nice.

Went downtown for a co-worker's goodbye party. The head of our video department is leaving to return home to Kansas, going back to TV. You know how these things go: toasts, gag gifts, recollections. If ever I leave I don't want one in a bar, and long ago I decided I didn't want one in the office. There have been many. Lord. There have been many. The last batch to be eased out just left, but in the first and second waves of the Exodus there were gatherings back in the lunch area of the newsroom. Cake and coffee and
speeches and handshakes; best wishes and recollections. Then everyone drifts back to the jobs they still have, and the celebrant wanders out, wondering how to design the last few moments. You watch them go, and it's like reading a story about a space probe that's ended its mission but is still heading out. It'll keep in touch, but it won't be the same.

I've quit a few jobs. Quit the Valli restaurant at least twice, but still went back every day. Couldn't stand losing the insider vibe, though. Couldn't stand being a citizen. Couldn't stand being one of those guys who drifted through, wore the vest, had a few shifts, hung it up. When I quit Ralph & Jerry's, the convenience store where I worked after college, I was one of the last of the old guard to go. A year before, Hunter – a huge guy with insufficient teeth and a constant line of wacky patter, the soul of the store after ten PM – had left to go West. Never came back. Lloyd, who was like a chronically depressed Iggy Pop, had quit without cause, and he was in the wind. Victor had left the summer before, and we had a party outside the store to send him off. Beer in the back, brats on the grill. He doused his apron with lighter fluid and set it on fire. It was the way of our people.

I quit because I had a new job at TV Guide. When I quit that, I came back a few times, but it awkward. I was the Free Man, the one who'd gotten out, or I was the Guy Who Never Fit who still felt free to waltz back and say hey. It's instructive: you see how live goes on without effort after you leave. You were hardly invaluable. You may think you're all that, but the ocean closes seamlessly over any ship once it's sunk, big or small. If you're lucky the discomfort makes you glad: you look at the “Hang In There ‘Til Friday” poster with the cat dangling from a limb, feel the two PM torpor, hear the happy chatter of the guy who loves his job and lives for this and will be manager some day, or assistant to the manager, and you smell the burned coffee, the sour carpet. You remember how the people in this office thought the people over in that office couldn't do anything without them, and vice versa. It all comes back and you can't wait to go.

The only thing you really miss is lunch. Where you went, who you went with, what you said and did, your private jokes. The peculiar, intense, and inevitably evanescent bond of people who are putting up with someone else's crap.

To make tonight's shindig even more piquant, it was a boss with whom I'd had some disagreements, including some dressings-down in which I'd chewed the inside of my cheek bloody to keep myself quiet. But there weren't any hard feelings. Everyone got what they wanted, in the end, and the entire year seemed like a mad hazy interval that just . . . happened, then stopped. If there were any hatchets in hand we buried them deep. The last year at the paper, if nothing else, certainly kept my attention; didn't feel bored, I'll say that. Up in the dark, alone, out of the house with a go-cup of coffee, hurling up Park to the office with the rest of the river of commuters, standing before cameras in a suit at nine AM to improvise some video: what the hell was that?
And now it’s done, and he’s gone, and it was a pleasure to tell him it had been a hell of a gig. I needed a year where I talked as much as I wrote; I got it. Now the next thing.

If ever I quit the paper, or get trundled out in a downsizing, I want a party at my house, and I want to invite everyone I ever worked with. Work is life; quitting is death; the goodbye party is your wake, but you get to make a speech.

As I may have noted, I’ve been working my way through Perry Mason from the very beginning. It’s a perfect show for me to overthink, since it contains almost nothing in the way of personal stories a modern lawyer drama would be compelled to include. There’s no trendy plots, no buckets o’ dudgeon ladled over hot-button social issues, no sex, no backstory. It just appears fully formed: Perry is The Man, Della is the indispensable assistant, Tragg the worthy adversary, Burger the Devil, and Paul Drake the smooth PI. Also Gertie. Of course, it didn’t just appear out of nowhere – there were popular novels, and a radio show that had no relation to the Mason of the TV show.

Which brings us to a new site. Perry Mason: the Case of the Curious Detail. It will be an account of every single possible ting I find notable in the entire run of Perry Mason, including all the guest stars. The cars. The way half the episodes ended with everyone having a good laugh. It’ll be updated whenever.

This is the only white-text-on-black-background site I’ve done, but for the subject, it’s unavoidable.

Here it is.

Also: 100 Mysteries, because it’s Friday. HERE.

Thanks for your patronage! See you at tumblr, where it’s the Institute of Official Cheer between 10 and 4, and PopCrush, where it’s just . . . stuff. Also a Strib column! Have a grand Friday, and I’ll see you when the wheel turns around again.

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**48 RESPONSES TO work is life**

**Beryl** says:
May 14, 2010 at 1:45 am

Oh mister. The first few graphics, they no show.

**shesnailie** says:
May 14, 2010 at 2:45 am

_@_v – good thinking on that cancelling law &order nbc… because
you've been so successful in developing new shows lately…

**John S. says:**
May 14, 2010 at 5:28 am

Re William Talman's rasp, do you remember the PSA he did where he said he was dying of lung cancer? Almost scary enough to make me quit.

**Dr. Spyn says:**
May 14, 2010 at 6:05 am

Thanks, James Jimmy Jim — now I have a picture of William Talman cavorting in his birthday suit AND I CAN'T GET IT OUTTA MY HEAD!

**Dr. Spyn says:**
May 14, 2010 at 6:10 am

“Strange Illusion” indeed. The kid was the whimpy juvenile lead in “Life With Father.” The kind of kid you wanted to wedgie even if you weren't the class bully, just because he was asking for it so hard.

**Defrost Indoors says:**
May 14, 2010 at 7:09 am

Fred Astaire was one of those guys who was born looking 55.

**hpoulter says:**
May 14, 2010 at 7:28 am

According to PopCrush, I see Pixar's “newt” movie has been cancelled. I don't know what to think about that. There must have been compelling reasons. A lot of people are dismayed that Pixar are working on sequels instead of more new ideas, but I imagine they aren't coasting on the sequels (no “Shrek 3”-type dreck). I liked Cars (many didn't) but I expect the sequel to be better. Ditto with Monsters, Inc (which I liked less than many people did, but still enjoy)

**kevin says:**
May 14, 2010 at 7:52 am

That reminds me of one of Louie Anderson's best bits…driving around with his mother, she sees a garage sale….“Let's stop, maybe we can get you a shirt”….“Sure ma, maybe Raymond Burr lives there….”.  

**Pencilpal says:**
May 14, 2010 at 8:18 am

We need Perry in the DOJ today. Right & wrong, fellas, right & wrong.

**GardenStater says:**
May 14, 2010 at 8:27 am

Nice binoculars.
juanito - John Davey says:
May 14, 2010 at 8:36 am

Paul Drake was a Werewolf Of London… because his hair was perfect.

I'd concur with your assessment that Work is life. But when you think about it, it is also true that Life is Work.

Congrats on PopCrush!

Brisko says:
May 14, 2010 at 8:39 am

Padding in a movie? Pshaw, that's not padding. That's a classic standing around looking awkward scene. It's of vital cinematic importance.

hpoulter says:
May 14, 2010 at 9:10 am

Insufferable Perry: “Bring my friend a nice dish of…crow. He'll eat it here”.

Irascible Hamilton: “And bring Big Boy here a nice dish of souffle à la merde. It will go with that grin he's wearing”.

wiredog says:
May 14, 2010 at 9:33 am

Came across a Star Trek/Gone With The Wind linkage. Who knew? Sort of like one of those alternate universe plots.

Imdb page.

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 14, 2010 at 9:34 am

“hurling up Park” What an ironic turn of phrase. It reminded me of the promo posters for Wayne's World 2. You know the one that said “Hurling at you September 28!”

browniejr says:
May 14, 2010 at 9:41 am

@GardenStater: What a Poindexter! (the nerdy kid, not you!) I haven't seen the movie, but having such a clueless character go through the film surrounded by weasels with pencil thin mustaches could really be played for comic effect, if done right. Why is it that all weasels have these ‘staches in these films, anyway?

Bonnie_ says:
May 14, 2010 at 9:59 am

“It was the way of my people.”

Yep, I'll be laughing all weekend over that.
swschrad says:
May 14, 2010 at 10:01 am

only thing worse than Goodbye Cow-irkers V.51 is going to the wake for the death of a newspaper.

had the chance at AP when the States-Item was folded by the executive suite, not the press' magic fingers. is there an afternoon edition in print anywhere, any more?

anyway, long story short... a few old timers, couple of new guys, sympathizers from the surviving morning pub, not much talk, not much beer, and I expect things didn’t get wheeling until almost everybody left. not much glee in the place.

when it's YOU that can't find anything to get up for the next morning, you finally understand why.

GardenStater says:
May 14, 2010 at 10:03 am

James: Re the Coca-Cola ad you posted on Tumblr (the bathing beauty/"YES"):

I was renovating my house years ago. While in the process of gutting my son's bedroom, I saw that some previous owner had used cardboard instead of sheetrock on one of the closet walls (cheap? lazy? Who knows?). I began to tear the cardboard off, looked at the other side, and saw a woman's face. So I gently pried off the whole piece.

It was that very ad, a poster/store display from 1946, measuring about 4 feet by 2-1/2 feet. The colors were perfect, since they hadn't been exposed to sunlight for more than 50 years. I took it to a restorer, who repaired the tear and patched the nail holes. It's now framed, and hangs above the couch in my living room.

It's one of my all-time favorite finds, and the reason I would never let anyone else do demolition work in my house. If the average workman had found that, it probably would have ended up in a dumpster.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 14, 2010 at 10:18 am

William Talman was one of the scariest hitchhikers ever in a suspense movie. Brad Pitt in “Kalifornia” didn’t come close.

Brisko says:
May 14, 2010 at 11:10 am

@shesnailie

They haven’t definitely cancelled Law & Order. It just wasn’t on the first list of renewals released. The fact that they won’t comment on this isn’t good news, though. I love L&O, though; I’d be supremely disappointed if it was cancelled.

JamesS says:
May 14, 2010 at 11:30 am

The way half the episodes ended with everyone having a good
laugh.

Now I understand the endings of many Harvey Birdman, Attorney At Law episodes, where they did the same thing. Always figured that was a parody of something; now I know what it was.

swschrad says:
May 14, 2010 at 11:31 am

@shesnailie: don’t worry, NBC has a backup plan. they'll have Seinfeld and Leno develop a new concept… dropping green goop on adults acting like children.

they’ll call it Board Meeting and they are studying the flycam footage of GE’s executive floors for details now.

terrace says:
May 14, 2010 at 12:37 pm

Keep watching Perry Mason for the two perpetual courtroom spectator guys. Both middle-aged, one swarthy with a pencil mustache, the other with eye-catchingly prominent eyebrows. Last week, in one of the first episodes of season 5, they were actually sitting next to each other. Eyebrow guy also shows up in other background contexts: walking into a building, sitting in a nightclub. They never have lines. I have to wonder who they are – my best guess are relatives or friends of somebody getting steady extra pay.

There's also the story behind the court clerk played by veteran character actor George E. Stone, who goes back to the Warner gangster film era of the early 30s. By the late 50s, he was virtually blind, and friends in the production procured him this steady work, occasionally with brief dialog.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 14, 2010 at 12:44 pm

Reminds me of an SCTV sketch of a Hollywood documentary series with a episode based on extras and their essential place in the movie industry.

D Palmer says:
May 14, 2010 at 1:23 pm

My father is a big Perry mason fan. He collected all the books, so I read them all as a teenager in the early 80′s. They were fun. He tells me that ESG has some sort of hand powered machine that he used to literally crank out the plots. Perry was always justthisclose to breaking the law as he defended his clients.

Today I am less impressed with his trickory than I used to be. At least all his clients turned out to be innocent.

swschrad says:
May 14, 2010 at 1:47 pm

@brisco: LnO definitely got cancelled in the second round of nonrenewals. but a new spinoff lives!

in TV production, this is called “extending the franchise.” when the
mothership disappears, it's called “cheaper retread” by the stagehands. All the expensive talent is replaced by Askin Whoshe and Gimme Scale.

**Brisko says:**
May 14, 2010 at 2:13 pm

Jesus, Mary & Gunsmoke. I don’t check the news for 3 hours and it becomes official. I hate my life now.

Actually, SVU has been better than the main Law & Order for awhile. At least it got renewed.

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
May 14, 2010 at 2:21 pm

**Law and Order: Traffic & Parking Division**

*In the urban parking lots, the city are represented by two separate yet equally important groups: the meter maids, who chalk the tires and write the tickets; and the clerks, who collect and process the fines. These are their stories.*

**Rex V. says:**
May 14, 2010 at 2:44 pm

I think the tragic wistfulness that Ray Collins brought to Lt. Tragg stems from the fact that he started out as one of Orson Wells Mercury Theater, had roles in Citizen Kane and The Magnificent Ambersons, and was now a minor player on a TV drama.

**swschrad says:**
May 14, 2010 at 2:49 pm

@Brisco: if you start that, then WE start hating your life.

quit it.

stop.

ah, who cares? it's 5-o'clock somewhere

😊

**Lars Walker says:**
May 14, 2010 at 3:14 pm

bgbear: Very good.

**Brisko says:**
May 14, 2010 at 3:20 pm

@ swschrad. It's with a K. And I was joking. 😁

**HelloBall says:**
May 14, 2010 at 4:10 pm

**Law & Order: Public Restroom Sanitation Division**

On second thought, forget it.
**swschrad** says:
May 14, 2010 at 4:23 pm

*Law & Order: Commander Paul Blart*

Episode 142: Gum in a Water Fountain.

**browniejr** says:
May 14, 2010 at 4:36 pm

The Law and Order parodies are like when Friday and Gannon worked in Public Relations Division for an episode... for an example, see here: [http://www.hulu.com/watch/55223/dragnet-public-affairs-dr-07#s-p11-so-i0](http://www.hulu.com/watch/55223/dragnet-public-affairs-dr-07#s-p11-so-i0) (starring Howard Hessman [Dr. Johnny Fever])

**shesnailie** says:
May 14, 2010 at 4:53 pm

`_@_v – law & order a pizza wasn’t the same after jerry orbach left the show...`

**swschrad** says:
May 14, 2010 at 5:00 pm

*Law & Order: Patrolman Jack Bauer*

Episode 73: Tuesday, 8:04 PM: Where was Patrolman Bauer, And Why Do These Donuts have Blood on Them?

**shesnailie** says:
May 14, 2010 at 5:33 pm

`_@_v – law & order escargot – miss lumaca gets a-salted in little italy`

**swschrad** says:
May 14, 2010 at 5:52 pm

*Law & Order: Hey, dude, we're making TV here. You mind getting out of the frame, we have a permit. What is this, a shakedown? — oh, wait a minute, hold it right there, that's full of raw film, it can't get light — dammit! No, sir, I didn't put that there. What is it? Help, hey, you can't arrest me, I'm staff!*

**fizzbin** says:
May 14, 2010 at 7:50 pm

Re: “I don’t think those are real”.....somewhere in the multi-verse, Irritable Bear weeps 😝

**James Vaughan** says:
May 14, 2010 at 11:02 pm

... oh no! Not the dreaded white type on black background! Sue it looks cool- but all your readers will go blind!
browniejr says:
May 14, 2010 at 11:54 pm

James Vaughan: Remember the early daze of PC's when the text was all green on a black background? The cool kids had amber text on black. How DID we all survive it? (Written by a guy using reading glasses- so there may be something to it!)

Cory says:
May 15, 2010 at 9:29 am

I'm more vexed by the loss of Little Orphan Annie than I am L&O.

Ray Collins- one of the great movie lines of all time “You're gonna need more than one lesson and you're gonna get more than one lesson”. Turned out to be true, in the movie and real life.

Lauren says:
May 15, 2010 at 9:47 pm

“believe or not I'm...” I thought you'd finish off your Barbara Hale, William Katt confection with the fact that he appeared in the Perry Mason TV movies, I think as Paul Drake Jr.

I am impressed that in these days of syndicated what not that KPTV in Portland (Oregon) has been showing Perry each weekday at Noon since the 70's!!! I'd be watching it each day too if I could get KPTV here...darn.

sucireef says:
May 16, 2010 at 1:06 am

Waited on Raymond Burr in college. He was Mammoth.

swschrad says:
May 16, 2010 at 8:43 pm

@browniejr: the REAL early days of PCs, when they had separate terminals (North Star basic, anybody?) green and amber text was common. much less so was white on black.

or black on white (or yellow) if you had a Teletype or other printer-output terminal.

much preferable to the RF-modulated stuff on a normal TV, because the dot pitch was way too wide, and it was difficult to read. your VICs and Trash-80s and Ataris were various blurs passing in the night.

the Mac128 was much more readable than the IBM 5150 to me because of the black on white presentation, and the crispness of that little Sony video module.

and then I had to go back into the lab, plug the logic analyzer back into the IBM, and go tracing out the bits on the EXORcisor to try and get a comm board working.

xrayguy says:
May 18, 2010 at 12:52 pm

Gertie, always mentioned never seen. Here is a new bar game to play-name all the television ‘characters” who were mentioned but
never seen. Hint-two on the Andy Griffith show.
The sun returned, and all was forgiven.

**Saturday** was errands, of course, and supper with the Fellas from back in the day. Many days, actually. No specific day stands out. Afterwards I returned home immobile from consumption, and sat on the sofa for two hours watching “Up In the Air,” which I liked, a lot. It ended and it was 2 AM and I had the usual feeling you get at the conclusion of Saturday: the weekend is done, and tomorrow will be a workday masquerading as a weekend day. Duty and order return like hungover legionnaires mustering for morning roll call. No, wait: Saturday had something else. Errands included ten more damned bags of cedar chips, and this time the job was more annoying than usual: a week of soaking rains had turned the bags – stored outside – into sodden sacks that must have weighed 80 pounds a piece, and I felt my back shriek every time I threw one into the Element. But I got them in, got them out, hauled them up the stairs, ripped them open, spilled the chips on the ground, and staggered back to the house with my spinal cord pinging bright white sparks. No pain the next day, though. I credit a nice, long, hot shower –
but we'll get to that.

Sunday I wrote and rewrote novel, but left the house just to leave the house. Mostly because I know I won't leave the house Monday. When you work at home a lot you have to plan these things to keep yourself sane. Jasperwood is a capacious compound, but you have to go out and be elsewhere now and then. It's not where that counts as much as the fact that it's not here. So I went to the antique store, and, God help me, bought matches. I'm doing a book, as I may have noted, an ebook that will probably sell in the dozens, unless I can convince a publisher to print the thing – but even I think that's pointless. As an ebook, it works – 400 pages, pop 'em like peanuts. Anyway, I have enough matches. But I found some more.

On the way out, I found a stack of 1953 magazines, Better Homes & Gardens, and American Home. A buck a pop. Damn. I bought the lot, and spent a pleasant hour marking pages with Post-It notes for future scanning. The ads are the American Testament of Happiness, and there was nothing like them before or since. The quantity of glee that could be purchased by fiberglass drapes – Godfrey-endorsed! – or formaldehyde-infused faux-pine paneling was quite remarkable, and stands as a merry, amused rebuke to the modern ads that have disaffected aging hipsters standing adrift in aloof antiseptic rooms with one carefully-selected brand-in-a-vase under a halogen light, setting off the abstract painting just so. The ads always have a little boy in a cowboy suit running around with a gun, being a boy. Fringed gloves and a plastic hat and a plastic gun. Somewhere out there is a sixty-plus guy who was the last kid to play the obligatory cowboy kid, and he has no idea the genre died with him. No one does.

Didn't take the usual 30 pictures, but a few things stood out: an old Copenhagen display . . .
Sportsmen with rakish mustaches have faded from favor, and we’re the poorer for it. That’s a Captain of Industry ‘stache. That’s Tony Stark’s dad. Also, denture adhesive with a blunt, effective name:
Proprietary misspelling is your guarantee of effectiveness!

Since I started blogging at the new site I've been adding as many entertainment RSS feeds as I can find. Today the newsreader – Vienna, by the way; nice little program – served up a post titled “Losers & Long Showers,” from Hollywood-elsewhere.com. Clicked. Read:

I was reminding myself this morning that it's a sign of weak character to take long showers. Anyone who does this is a soft sister — a person looking to hide inside the warm amniotic fluid of his mother's womb, which is what a nice hot shower feels like. This realization goes back to when I was in my early 20s. If I happened to notice that a roommate or some guy or girl who was staying over was taking ten- or twelve-minute showers (or worse), I would instantly write them off.

Does this sound like anyone you'd want to know? For a minute, let alone ten? Some people make the Shower = weakling connection late in life, but he had this insight in his early 20s, when all great insights into human nature are
formed. Even then he was the sort of chap who’d check his watch, waiting for the tell-tale ten-minute amniotic-retreat moment. Then he’d write them off. *Instantly.* He’s just that sort of fellow. Even then, in his early 20s, people marveled at the speed with which he could just – snap! – write people off.

Might there be a justification for a long shower? When I had the deadly chills from pneumonia, I think I was in there for half an hour. *No! Guilty of amniotic nostalgia! Off-writing in progress!* But I’m betraying myself here. It’s obvious I like to take long showers. I think in the shower; I relax. I value the time away from the keyboard and the ever-throbbing network of invisible gristle where I spend my day. I don’t time it, but it’s possible they last as long as seven, eight minutes. May not be soft-sister territory, but it’s certainly puts me in the pliable-niece range.

He goes on:

> Those who take extra-long hot showers are the same people who take extra-long breaks or lunches in order to get away from office drudgery, or who hide away inside an alcoholic or nicotine or drug cave.

So you might as well go home over lunch, have a cigarette in the shower, then shoot heroin; all the same.

> Your average enterprising, disciplined, hard-working types take four- or five-minute showers, at the longest. If you're really hard-core you've finished in less than three. No exceptions, no excuses — either you get it or you don’t.

If you’re really “hard-core” you don’t use the term “hard-core” to apply to shower duration, but obviously I do not GET IT. The comments are interesting, since nearly everyone disagrees. BECAUSE THEY ARE WEAK. The first comment says “I prefer baths, myself.” A perfectly fine statement, and one that deflates the hard-ass posturing of Mr. Three-Minute Hard-Core “I Use Sandpaper as a Loofah” ShowerFuhrer, but that leads to another outburst:

> Same difference. If you take extra long baths, it’s “Mommy, mommy, I feel safe and secure in here...can I stay longer?” You can’t be afraid of or avoid the natural sting and chill of life. A strong attachment to feelings of liquid warmth and serenity in a bath or shower is definitely a womb trip thing, and being neurotically attached to prolonging or extending that experience as much as you can means you’re a loser, plain and simple.

Wow. Blogging does this to some people, I think. You get an idea of your audience in your head, and you know they’re with you – you know it, man –
and they love you for the truths you deal. But it's just shouting at the mirror. He might see how ridiculous he looks, but it's fogged from the shower.  

**Bio:**

_A resident of West Hollywood, Wells has two great sons (Jett, 19, and Dylan, 18) whom he doesn't see enough due to a distance of 3,000 miles._

No way to get around _that_, what with the big wall they built in the middle of the country, with the barbed wire and the guard towers and the anti-aircraft guns. I was reminding myself this morning that it's a sign of weak character to take long breaks from seeing your kids, and so I _instantly wrote him off_. Perhaps he'd find that odd and unwarranted, since I don't know anything about his situation. But _soft sisters always have an explanation._

Anyway, nixed that feed, so if has a Scoop, and I miss it, well, there are reasons.

**Later today:** motels around noon! See you here, here, and here.

82 RESPONSES TO _short weekend, long showers_

**DryOwlTacos** says:
May 17, 2010 at 1:10 pm

_I think the 'stasched sportsman has a Bruce Campbell thing goin' on. And the supposed problem with the length of one's shower actually screams TMI about the blogger._

**Brisko** says:
May 17, 2010 at 1:10 pm

_To save even more water, pee while you shower it's a win-win._

@Di
Way ahead of you.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
May 17, 2010 at 1:32 pm

_George Costanza_

**AnnaN** says:
May 17, 2010 at 1:45 pm

_This is clearly a case of “the gentleman doth protest too much”. He's most likely been nailed for excessive water usage and is attempting to prove otherwise by addressing the issue in a roundabout manner._
I'd lay even money that he's 10-minute-on-the-pot pooper as well.

shesnailie says:
May 17, 2010 at 2:03 pm

@_v – get your day started lickity quick with the nonspecific voltaics 'tub-n-toast' in-bath toaster!

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
May 17, 2010 at 2:28 pm

Great new disciplinary threat for the kids: "you behave or I'm going to Write You Off! I mean it!"

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
May 17, 2010 at 2:48 pm

The thing about that ad in tumblr: that poor schmoe sorta kinda looks like he could be Paul Newman, doesn't he? If you squinch up your eyes just right? So that would be Jackie Gleason wielding the accusatory pencil. Turn that pencil into a pool cue, and... away we go!

BeckoningChasm says:
May 17, 2010 at 3:03 pm

I imagine most folks have some bizarre measurement by which they are able to adjudge themselves superior to everyone else. Shower-length sounds like one such. I wonder what he would say about someone who could take a ten-second shower?

fizzbin says:
May 17, 2010 at 3:12 pm

The nice/bad thing about the intertubularnets is it allows all of us to show the world just how much of an a**hole we are. The shower Nazi is priceless, as sh**thirds go. I must confess to my brother/sister BleatNiks that, in a fit of unforgivable Gia-ness in the early 1970's, I spent a day telephoning (how quaint) plumbing supply businesses in order to find a re-stricter valve for my shower. I found one and to this day revel in the fact that I can have full flow or 5% flow while I take one, OR MORE, showers each day... and, sometimes, I shower until the 50 gallon water heater runs cold, bwahahaha!!! Take THAT, shower Nazi (BLEEP)head 😎

Dan says:
May 17, 2010 at 3:19 pm

Feh. Mr 3 minute shower is a baby. I use a sandblaster for exactly one and three quarter minutes. Anything more would smack of coddling. Then I give myself a vigorous towelling off with broken glass, shave with a rusty butter knife and then use hydrochloric acid as both aftershave and mouthwash. Thus I am more manly and therefore better.

Seriously, why would anyone in their right mind think shower length means anything? The man doesn't have issues, he's got subscriptions.
I’ll bet there’s a good reason why his kids are 3000 miles away.

Joe Broderick says:
May 17, 2010 at 3:39 pm

I’m the kinda guy who instantly writes people off who instantly write people off. Trouble is, I had to instantly write myself off for being the kinda guy who instantly writes people off.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 17, 2010 at 4:00 pm

The odd thing is this guy is expressing that he could predict future success on showering habits in college. In college, drinking habits can’t even be used to predict future success.

I think the amount of sleep one needs to be functional can be an indicator of future success, that is, if you need less sleep you can do more work. Unfortunately I know too many people that use their extra waking time to do unproductive things.

It the same with the shower thing. So what if you spend less time in the shower, what do you do once you are clean?

Mojohand says:
May 17, 2010 at 4:09 pm

This hot-water hogging write-off notes with interest that Mr. Wells atates he was not able to attend his son’s college graduation this weekend. I believe he’s at Cannes, which is doubtless Very Important in his line of work. But I’m pretty sure they’ll hold another Festival next year; the graduation, no. So I’ll take my judgment over his.

Brian Lutz says:
May 17, 2010 at 4:17 pm

John Robinson:
May 17, 2010 at 9:46 am

If Mister Wells ever deigned to take a shower with his S.O., I guarantee he’d be in there more than three minutes.

Mostly because they’d probably need a crowbar to get him out.

swschrad says:
May 17, 2010 at 4:29 pm

@bgbear: why, get dirty and stinky all over again, of course!
us Real Manly Men, we dig in (!), we surely got no scruples we slave away in piles all day with stuff up to our pupils.

shesnailie says:
May 17, 2010 at 4:33 pm

_@_v – i’ve long ago written off people who eat snails… i mean really… we’re basically a sweaty foot with a brain in it…
go eat a cow, they're made of meat.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 17, 2010 at 4:39 pm

I could write off people who like “The Brady Bunch” but, they often make more money than me.

CJrun says:
May 17, 2010 at 4:42 pm

James, seriously, you need a simple, cheap, maybe even used lawn tractor, plus a lawn tractor cart. You would be amazed at the strength and traction a 10-to-20 horse lawn tractor has. It can do much else beside mowing, including pulling groceries, gazebos, and bags of mulch. You have to go straight up and straight down, on steep hills, to keep good traction and stability. Just go get yourself a decent, used lawn tractor, plus watch for a little trailer, maybe on craigslist. Places of a certain size need one.

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 17, 2010 at 4:44 pm

@shesnaile, if God didn't want us to eat animals, He wouldn't have made them out of meat.

In the same vein:

Meat is murder, tasty, tasty murder.

PETA: People for the Eating of Tasty Animals (Boy did that particular t-shirt annoy some people in the gym)

shesnailie says:
May 17, 2010 at 5:03 pm

_@_v – there's room for all of god's creatures... right next to the mashed potatoes...

just lay off the gastropods... unless you LIKE hepatitis

swschrad says:
May 17, 2010 at 5:33 pm

the P(eating)TA shirt doesn't get icy stares in my exercise joint.

tonight at home, I hear, it's BLTs on slightly toasted thick slices of homemade bread and lots of miracle whip.

this IS, by my decree, The Year of Bacon. celebrate it. eat all the hogs you want, they'll raise more.

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 17, 2010 at 5:46 pm

@swschrad, stop it! You're making my mouth water.

shesnailie says:
May 17, 2010 at 5:55 pm
_@_v – hamdingers and bacon! because kevin would want it that way…

Jeff says:
May 17, 2010 at 8:04 pm

My grandparents’ house had a well with rather limited capacity… so there was some rationality to being economical with water. Nuts to the pseudo-psycho-poop.

Nowadays there's no particular reason not to enjoy one of the few remaining havens from electronic connectedness, and in fact most of my more creative solutions to nagging problems come to me in the shower, and it's quite a productive spot.

rivlax says:
May 17, 2010 at 8:27 pm

Gotta say, snails are among my favorite foods. Nothing like escargot bourguignon with a nice baguette. Snails, butter, parsley. What's not to like. When I was in the Air Force my roommate and I would go to the French commissary in Kaiserslautern and buy a tin of 72 snails and eat them all at a sitting. Never got hepatitis once.

jwilson says:
May 17, 2010 at 8:42 pm

That blue tin of Klutch denture adhesive sure brought back memories. My mother used it. She would have such a sour expression on her face when she first popped her dentures in. Bet the stuff was gross. I miss my mom, she passed away two years ago. She's in heaven now. With new teeth. Eating angel food.

MikeH says:
May 17, 2010 at 9:07 pm

A few years ago we had some PETA idiots try to ruin our annual parade for the Maine Lobster Festival. They got kicked out pretty quick. Lobsters, are basically the cockroaches of the ocean. They are NOT endangered. They taste good. They have really no brain whatsoever, THEY DON’T FEEL PAIN!! And finally, you will put a lot of people in the unemployment line if you banned eating lobster. Does PETA have a plan to put these people back to work elsewhere? NO!! Sure PETA has the right to voice their opinion. But in my opinion, they are a bunch of idiots.

I don't know where I was going with this, whatever.

swschrad says:
May 17, 2010 at 9:12 pm

@shesnailie: hamdingers (?) and bacon?

I think ham slices and bacon would be a good combination.

but we have to thaw and cook the ham first.

hamburgers, fried onion peelers, bacon, cheese, big freakin’ peppercorns… that’s a good start to a real meal.
Quintus Arrius says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:10 am

Dropping in on Jeffrey Wells to read some cranky post like that is hardly doing him justice. I read his column for years until he went so far around the bend with Obamania, hatred of the red states (Wells is state's exhibit A for the notion that there's no one as intolerant of others as a New York liberal) and disdain for normal folks (well, that one at least I can see, if you're a movie columnist and see the things that make big money some weekends; the box office for Old Dogs could make a fascist out of anybody). Anyway, Wells' nuttiness is truly of novelistic depth, trust me.

Defrost Indoors says:
May 18, 2010 at 1:30 pm

You reminded me, I had an ex-boyfriend write me off (or at least chew me out) for using…wait for it…scented bath products. Yes, he was very disparaging about my fondness for shower gels, floral soaps, etc. “It's decadent!” he'd sneer. I s'pose I should have just rubbed myself down with an old pumice stone or something.

jvon says:
May 18, 2010 at 2:48 pm

Let me just say that if I have to sit next to somebody on a plane, I always hope they've spent longer than three minutes in the shower.

Maybe this guy should ask just what bothers him so much about being naked? Or maybe it's being all alone that bothers him? I'm not quite ready to instantly write him off, but he sounds like he's got issues that go beyond being opinionated.

Ulysses Zweibel says:
May 19, 2010 at 4:57 pm

Reminds me of an interview with Scott Adams (I believe) where he was defending the occasional goofing off at work: yes, you're on the clock and “stealing time,” but you also don't get paid for the time you spent that morning in the shower turning over a work problem in your head, so it all evens out.
The sun! So much of it. Not as hot as I’d like, but it’ll get there. I bought a chez-long a month ago, and have been waiting for the opportunity to sit out back and enjoy a few photons. Tonight we had a guest over for supper, and ate outside while the waterfall ploshed and the birds chirped and the dog whined and the planes bore down overhead like screaming metal pterodactyls keening for the blood of Jonny Quest. After dinner I drove Daughter through the paces of duty, from math to piano to a little weight competition. I feel somewhat ridiculous telling her how to punch in the boxing sim, and the phrase “you box like a girl” gets the expected response, and she thinks I am being totally ridiculous when I get behind the TV armoire so I can work the kidneys, but she gives me grief for hula-hooping like an oak tree in an earthquake, so we’re even.

I took a few minutes off during lunch to go through the stack of mags I bought Sunday, highlighting the pages I’ll scan. Believe me, I take no joy in this:
Each one of those pieces of paper represents a page I'll scan, color adjust, clean up, and then do something with.

Ah, but what?

Wouldn't you love a magazine based on the Institute of Official Cheer?

I would, so I'm going to make one. You might wonder if it's madness to try a “humor” magazine, and it is. Recently I found a copy of “The Funny Papers,” an attempt to do a Rolling Stone-style mag – i.e., written for stoners – with lots of comics, old and new.
It had all the usual suspects, from Crumb to Vaughn Bode, with the rest of the space taken up by reviews. Everything about it says “it came out two months behind schedule, and never made it past six issues.” You wonder if everyone got paid. You wonder if the chief editors were frustrated with staffers who thought deadlines were the Tool of the Man, Man, I mean, relax, dude, it’ll get out, or whether the writers thought the editors turned out to be total, like, pigs, because they were like fascists about it when you turned in a piece that didn’t have punctuation of spelling. Hey it worked for e e cummings, and he was a genius, man. The illustration style has the hippie-era 20s style retread, and everything seems to suggest that if one is trucking, one should continue to truck.

I’ve seen many come and go, especially here in town; I remember “Machete,” which lasted a few issues, and “Sweet Potato,” which turned into “City Pages” – still around, and your dependable source for “everything is crap” stories about the world, with a non-crap exemption made for certain musicians and politicians who say the right things about the right subjects. For years we had two main free weeklies, City Pages and The Reader; since the latter seemed aimed more at people who wanted to enjoy life instead of marinate in the Trough of Suck, we called it “The Greeder,” assuming its target market to be
yups with suspenders and blue shirts with white collars. (I worked for City Pages.) City Pages was sold; the publisher started another local magazine, which glossed up the freebies stand for a few years before it repositioned itself as an online-only publication. In other words, it was hard enough then, and I can’t imagine how hard it is now.

But people will still pay for print. This is the subject of a lecture I have to give tomorrow, now that I think of it. The failure of print in the modern age has to do with the failure of content more than anything. I subscribe to the Economist, which is a weekly feast, and makes you feel terribly smart because you’re reading a small piece on East Timor and thinking, well, yes, East Timor, good to catch up. It never comes up at any point in your life, and you wish it did, and if by some ungodly chance it does come up you’ll have forgotten everything you read, but for a moment your brain will flash a small picture of a small article – the background had a light puce tint, and was in the upper-right-hand corner of the page, wasn’t it? Or was that a piece on Sri Lanka pre-election tensions? – and you will know that you knew something once, if only for a moment, and that’s certainly better than nothing.

All that aside, the Economist is one of those magazines you can take on a plane, and the flight’s over before the magazine’s exhausted. It is impossible to read an entire issue, but if you do, you know more about Things than you did before. But the experience of reading an object, as opposed to a simulacrum of an object, provides some sort of container for the information. Everyone on the web is dancing in the spray of the firehose. A good magazine is like the wood frame into which the concrete is poured.

This does not apply to Newsweek or other American newsweeklies not devoted to opinion writing, because they are simple-minded things that exist to reinforce the half-formed opinions you absorbed from your information streams last week.

What will my magazine be? You’ll see. It will be about $3.00, monthly, and since it’s printed to your order I cannot lose money on it. Time is money, of course, but my goal has always been to make hobbies pay, and this is just more of that. Look for an announcement in a couple weeks.
97 RESPONSES TO *the persistence of print*

**bgbear (roger h) says:**  
May 18, 2010 at 10:24 am

Another vote for Gilbert Sheridan as a talent beyond the “hippyness”.

Robert Crumb is also a extremely talented person who, in true artist fashion, does it mostly to entertain himself.

**Piers Penniless says:**  
May 18, 2010 at 10:26 am

I will subscribe, yea, verily. woohoo!
swschrad says:
May 18, 2010 at 10:26 am

if you like East Timor news, you will love sitting up an eagle feather away from Canada, eh, and all you can get on the radio when the skies are threatening is the CBC World Service.

you'll know more about the warts on the backs of obscure African country secretaries of domestic interference than their paramours knew.

@Marjorie J Birch: it's easy to drag a computer into the bathroom. it's hard to flush it.

Joe Broderick says:
May 18, 2010 at 10:33 am

Perhaps "Flotsam" will kick off a revival of Xeroxed zines that all the art-school types were doing back in the 80s.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 18, 2010 at 10:39 am

I think I'll start the “Ursine Times”.

Our motto:

It was the best of times, it was the Ursine Times!

hpoulter says:
May 18, 2010 at 10:42 am

Robert Crumb is a talented artist with a deep, deep vein of creepiness. Shelton was always refreshingly sane. I think it's a remnant of his Texas redneck/drag racer background.

winterhawk says:
May 18, 2010 at 10:42 am

Woot, magazine! Sign me up too, please!

Bonnie_ says:
May 18, 2010 at 10:43 am

I'll buy, too. The only print magazine I continue to subscribe to is First Things, a dense chewy wad of written thought that takes a full month to get through, and the beautiful Sunset Magazine. Pictures of gardens, homes, recipes, travel destinations, it is gorgeous eye candy from end to end.

There's room for one more in the pile.

John says:
May 18, 2010 at 10:50 am

I don't know if the allusion to East Timor was wild or if The Economist really did have a piece on it, but I know from having checked that the Internet will tell you nothing interesting about East Timor...so there's an opening for any competitor to the Internet. Print can survive, if it will only stop Biting The Big One. Print has luster; the Internet does not. Print can look and even feel
cosmopolitan; the Internet is mostly housebound and backward-looking and will be “done” once the 1970′s have been scanned into it in their entirety.

East Timor claims to be one of the eight lusophone countries – at least the other seven play along with it. I’ve done my Web bit for some of its obscure African quasi-colleagues. But all these places represent opportunities that print, I think, can handle better than the Internet. I think print can prevail if it dares to be funny, and about places and things you never heard of. Print has the professional-seeming edge, which it should exploit. Jokes are better, more memorable, more informative even, when delivered by those possessed of an unimaginable competence. I loved the Jonny Quest allusion, but the work of a blogger, it must be admitted, is chiefly to wisecrack about long-familiar stuff.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 18, 2010 at 10:54 am

oh yeah, Shelton, I do always that and then wonder why I can't look him up on Google.

Yeah, luckily most of us are not on the same page as R.Crumb, I mean I like sex as much as the next guy but, I keep my koo koo thoughts to myself. If you have ever seen the documentary “Crumb”, it is strange seeing that he is the sanest person in his family.

Susan says:
May 18, 2010 at 10:56 am

Ooooo! Sign me up!

hpoulter says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:03 am

@bgbear – you may be thinking of Dave Sheridan – who sometimes collaborated with Shelton. He was from the creepy side of the tracks, though.

swschrad says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:06 am

@bgbear: one hopes the Irritable Bear will write the editorials. it seems editorial writers are generally out of touch, surly, patronizing, and semi-educated with none of the useful lessons of life learned being retained.

The Burger Family will be sure subscribers.

Roger Wilco says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:16 am

As far as scan ads and stuff. Has anyone else seen this?

Front page sucks but it is a collection of scanned ads from the 1900 (few) to the late sixties. Click on a link, click on another link and then from there on click on Random Ad.
bgbear (roger h) says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:18 am

The Ursine Times will probably avoid a sports section due to the number of losers who pick bears as their totem animal and then disappoint the fans: UCLA Bruins, Cal Berkeley Golden Bears, Chicago Cubs & Bears, Vancouver Memphis Grizzlies, Boston Bruins (closer this year).

Go pick on another carnivore . . grrr.

kc says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:19 am

You let me know when and how, James, I WANT IT! I have given up all my subscriptions, because if the articles may still be relevant and decently written (that's a big 'IF'), the advertisements are overwhelmingly the major part of the magazine, and the price has gone out of my range. But My Chief (Retired) recently got a raise, and he appreciates your talent nearly as much as I do! So, we're in! WooHOO!

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:20 am

hmm, the strikeout code did not work, how about this this?

RKN says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:48 am

That feeling of feeling terribly smart after reading some highfalutin punditry of the antipodes, I totally know that feeling. On reading it you feel the knowledge swell the brain but weeks later when someone drops the name, you leap to opine eruditely, but the recall just a i n ' t t h e r e . . Never liked that about the way the brain works, or doesn’t, at least mine.

swschrad says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:51 am

strikeout code:

function strikeout() /* called by all foobars */

var team1[bool]
var team2[bool]
var maroon[str$]

if team1 (Twins) and team2 (Yankees)
maroon ::= “Ya maroon, fannin the breeze, yer out!”

return;

Erica says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:51 am

I'm in. Can't wait.
tterrace says:
May 18, 2010 at 11:54 am

Actually, the “Funny Pages” banner has a very 1910s Sunday comics front page look to it. “Little Nemo in Slumberland” wouldn’t look out of place below it.

Marjorie J. Birch says:
May 18, 2010 at 12:10 pm

Magazines … there are a couple local mags here in Lancaster County, PA that remind me of what the David Letterman show has been for most of its duration — a series of advertisements interrupted by commercials. Oh, there’s a token article or three, but by the second paragraph, you learn that the so-called article is just an extended advertisement for someone’s local business.

Obviously, ads pay the printing bills, but they aren’t always that entertaining. And I do eventually feel as if someone is flogging on the head with a rubber chicken.

I think a magazine along the lines of “Flotsam” has the potential to be funny, interesting, and more than just a Remembrance of Magazines Past or Within the Budding Advertisement. The ad industry dominates our waking and subconscious lives. Where do we get our values and social cues? Church? School? I’d like to think so, but I fear that the logos are winning.

Ads tell you who you should want to be, what you should want, and offer you something in a jar or a box, for a price. Life in America has become continual shakedown or hold-up. (perhaps it always was!) The message: “give me some of your money for this stuff in a jar and maybe I’ll leave you alone for a minute.”

here endeth the rant.

rick mcginnis says:
May 18, 2010 at 12:36 pm

Jay – The New Yorker and Harper’s were always liberal, but after 9/11 they seemed to take a vertiginous swing to the left. (I have a liberal friend who insists that one of the reasons that he hates George Bush so much is that he turned Lewis Lapham into a crazed, incoherent crank. Interesting logic.) Or maybe it was just that I started noticing more. There was probably a time when they reflected my worldview more accurately, but there was a time when I read the Village Voice religiously as well. (A time that ended abruptly, when a feature by a “gay-identified” straight woman bemoaning her conventional sexual preference in the light of her fabulius friends made me toss the paper across the room in exasperation.) Those days seem so very long ago now.

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
May 18, 2010 at 12:56 pm

@tterrace, actually, Little Nemo is in place, above (& within) the word “Papers.”

Borderman says:
May 18, 2010 at 1:00 pm

@Marjorie J. Birch: “Where do we get our values and social cues?
Church? School? I’d like to think so, but I fear that the logos are winning.”

When I read that I remembered riding in a convertible in June, 1965 on the way to the rehearsal dinner for my sister’s wedding and the song lyrics on the radio,

“…about some useless information
supposed to fire my imagination…”

Yeah baby, and I still can’t get no satisfaction, all these years later.

-0-

Please Mr. Lileks, put me down for Flotsam. I would very much enjoy getting such a magazine. And yes, that cover is hot, a mom posed like a pinup, a salute to the Vargas and Elvgren. But with no failed elastic or visible celery; we must assume Frahm is not included.

**buzz** says:
May 18, 2010 at 1:44 pm

We luvz us some Vaughn Bode*. A great but troubled artist who never really made it out of the 1960s (he died in 1975, but like a lotta folks at the time was still living the counter-culture dream; his death was particularly creepy even for a cartoonist: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaughn_Bode%C3%A9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaughn_Bode%C3%A9)). In addition to his work in underground comix, Bode’ also did comix for CAVALIER and NATIONAL LAMPOON as well as numerous sci-fi mag covers. Ralph Bakshi’s WIZARDS is pretty much inspired by (i.e., “ripped off from”) Bode’s Cheech Wizard, Da Machines, Junkwaffel, and Cobalt 60 comix.

**madCanada** says:
May 18, 2010 at 1:48 pm

The great thing about vintage adverts is that their manipulative bag of tricks seems, in retrospect, so lame & heavy-handed. They make us realize that today’s advertisers are doing the exactly the same things, only with more polish.

FLOTSAM sounds great, and I don’t think it’s flotsam.

**JohnW** says:
May 18, 2010 at 2:31 pm

“Auto-erotic asphyxiation is a lonely way to die.” – Clyde Bruckman (Peter Boyle)

**Mike Mistele** says:
May 18, 2010 at 2:33 pm

I am *so* subscribing! I still maintain several magazine subscriptions, most of them are for niche/geek hobbies of mine (RPGs, guitars, model rocketry). “Flotsam” should fit right in. 😎

**Joe Broderick** says:
May 18, 2010 at 2:53 pm

“The American Home Ironizer”. Now THAT’s a magazine I would
subscribe to.

http://www.lileks.com/institute/history/brochure/index.html

swschrad says:
May 18, 2010 at 3:04 pm

would have thought *The American Home Ironizer* would have been some shameless shill rag for the Ironrite presser folks.

instead, they have some smarmy pretty boy blocking a good drawing of a TK-14 orth camera with a full turret of C-35 mount lenses.

eritorially bankrupt, those goons.

Joe Broderick says:
May 18, 2010 at 3:08 pm

“You’ve got a lot of living to do. Make sure you’re Iroline Fresh!”

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 18, 2010 at 3:22 pm

Ralph Bakshi, thanks a whole bunch for bringing that name up. I’ll never forgive him for the WORST Lord of the Rings animated feature to burn my retinas. Colossally bad on every level. Worse even than Clutch Cargo.

Terry Fitz says:
May 18, 2010 at 3:59 pm

I’m in. And hoping to see it become so successful that it spawns “Jetsam”.

Bill McNutt says:
May 18, 2010 at 4:20 pm

Hmmm . . . making hobbies pay. Now I need to find a way to get someone to pay me to eat rich food, drink expensive alcohol, and look at pretty girls.

Blog of Much Holding » Twitter Updates for 2010-05-18 says:
May 18, 2010 at 4:22 pm

[...] is getting into the magazine business… Awesome.
http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7075#comments [...] 

swschrad says:
May 18, 2010 at 4:53 pm

@Bill McNutt: become a Celebrity. the price you have to pay is merely insane photographers screaming around like mosquitoes. so every time you barf, pick your nose, or run off with the Cheetah Woodys Girl ‘O’ The Moment Club, you are the mostest from coast to coastest.
BeckoningChasm says:
May 18, 2010 at 5:22 pm

Definitely sounds like a magazine I would buy. And one I would love to contribute to, as well.

Julie says:
May 18, 2010 at 5:33 pm

Sign me up. I'm a magazine junkie and I can't resist a new addition.

Di says:
May 18, 2010 at 6:50 pm

I like this magazine idea. Actually, I feel wee bit guilty for getting all these goodies for free.

I, too, used to get ton of magazines. Last subscription to go was Smithsonian *sigh*
Budget constraints.
But I can still get most from public library, even though they might be month or two behind.

Shamus Young says:
May 18, 2010 at 7:47 pm

You are an unstoppable content-generating dynamo. I am feeling gratitude and envy in equal measure.

bkd69 says:
May 19, 2010 at 1:24 am

Dear Sir:

Your ideas intrigue me, and I wish to subscribe to your newsletter.

Kim says:
May 19, 2010 at 10:05 am

Flotsam has my subscription! : )

Mr_Hat says:
May 19, 2010 at 10:19 am

Wahoo! Best news I've had in a long time. But what's this noise about taking stuff into the can? Anyone who's in the can long enough to read . . . ./snark

Mikey NTH says:
May 19, 2010 at 5:03 pm

For my flight to North Carolina (via Atlanta) to see the little brother and family over the Memorial Day weekend, the reading material will be a treatise on Oil and Gas Law.

Because there is no other way I will be able to force myself to read it.
Nivaya says:
May 20, 2010 at 11:56 am

If you'd be so helpful as to dispatch to this scepter'd isle I call my home, DO WANT SUBSCRIBE.

Blog of Much Holding » Twitter Weekly Updates for 2010-05-22 says:
May 22, 2010 at 1:19 pm

[...] is getting into the magazine business... Awesome.
http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7075#comments [...]
I'm going to try an experiment: Wednesday will now be Perfect Day. If possible. I'm looking at the weather forecast, and it looks perfect; why not try to live up to it on my side? So: I will wake with a song in my heart, thanks to the fargin' song the fargin' cardinal belts out every morning half an hour before I wish to get up. I will have a perfect breakfast: a delicious, crunchy cereal with enough fiber to equal the effect of having a Chore Boy dragged through my digestive tract, with a small sausage from which all nasty useless fat-juice has been squeezed out, decorated with a bright red ribbon of Rooster sauce. Already it's all good.

I will make breakfast for my daughter, launch a few wide-awake comments that only serve to irritate a still-drowsy child; if she gets ornery, I will note that she is owly, a word my mother used, a word that cheesed me off to no end. It annoys my daughter, too. Circle of Life! Win! Or I will just hold my tongue in the interests of Perfect Day, give her a hug and send her off to the bus. Then I will pour a big steaming cup of coffee and head upstairs to the studio.

The computers will be waiting. The screens will spring to life. My 9 AM post will be written already: perfect! Edit it, make it more perfect. Listen to an old radio show, work on the Matchbook book; when Nine strikes, FILE THAT PUPPY. For the next eight hours I will prowl the wires, assemble pieces, write. But at eleven I will take a Wii break, and get high score on the Super Hula Hoops. Perfect. At eleven thirty I will have something that seems like lunch,
but really just says “it’s eleven thirty,” and I will polish the noon post.

I will go outside and sit in the sun and work on my laptop. I will open the Twitter program and marvel that Tumblr has already fired off three posts, queued the night before – perfect! I will have a small cigar and a Coca-Cola, make the first trawl through the blogs (I avoid all non-work blogs before noon) and assemble ideas for Friday’s column.

*I will turn on the waterfall.* As Smoove B might say.

For the next three hours I will post and write and poke at some ideas that might turn into the Friday column. The dog will sit in the place where he sits, the spot by his tree, and he will be content, Mr. Dial Tone, stirred occasionally by a passerby or the airborne scent of a dog or a squirrel or some spectacularly unique urine profile. When Three finally rolls around I will head out to the porch to watch for the bus. Once upon a time I met the bus. I am not required to do so anymore, but my daughter still looks up and scans the parapets of Jasperwood to see if I’m out there. I am. She waves. Up the stairs; how was your day? Fine.

You mean PERFECT, right?

I guess.

I’ll push a post through the system, work a bit more, set the alarm on the computer and hit the bed for a nap. The world turns into silk and marzipan; I’m gone, daddy-o, I’m way gone. The computer in the next room, its alarm set to a loud wet sonar sound, wakes me up when it’s time. I’m rested. Perfect.

Off to Karate; child does the hi-YA and I read the web. I get up midway through the lesson to order the Chinese food from next door, because having it ready when you’re done with Karate is perfect. Later wife and I will have a glass of wine and cheerful banter with Mr. & Mrs. Giant Swede – great! Haven’t had an old-married-couples-night in a while – then home to finish the column, prep the next day’s web work, and . . .

Pour a Reyka, on the ice. Pop a bag of 110 calorie popcorn. Watch the second episode of “Life on Mars.” File a Bleat, check the doors, set the alarms, head upstairs.

*Perfect!*

Some days you look at tomorrow, and you know everything about it, and you wish life had surprises – but then you realize what’s coming next is perfect, absolutely perfect. That should be surprise enough.

**Went to a school** to give a speech today at Providence Academy:
Looks like it's been there since Ben Franklin taught, but it's only ten years old. Out in the burbs, too, a place where you needn't go into the city for anything at all. (And so they don't, unless they work there.) Everything was clean and neat. Which reminds me: the lawns in this neighborhood are well-maintained and beautifully landscaped; people put a lot of time in their gardens. There's one plot that's overgrown and full of dandelions and rubbish, and it's owned by the city. In the olden times Jasperwood incorporated that spit of land; I've seen old maps. A street was cut through the land many decades ago, and created the triangular island. It belongs to us all, I guess. But since October it's had a barrier the city brought for a block party, and never picked up; since November it's had a busted warning light that was left for no reason and abandoned. It's never moved, as far as I can tell. Years ago someone tried to beautify it with flowers, but a pinch-faced sourheart called the city, and they came and dug up the plants.

We have beautiful parks and lakes and pathways and such, but often the ugliest things are the ones everyone – which is to say no one – owns.
Anyway. Now I have decided I want to be a teacher for the last third of my working career. Talking! It’s the best job of all. I mean, I mean, carefully guiding students along the path of knowledge, and ruthlessly extirpating deviant thought. I MEAN the joy of imparting knowledge, and seeing people actually not fall asleep when you speak. It was a good group; they listened without seeming listless, there were a few of the fully-engaged expressions that always give you hope, and they laughed in the right places. The subject was The Media, Newspapers, Internet, and so on. One student intended to go into journalism, and wanted to know if there was any hope – I said yes, if you can do all the things that were never part of journalism before. Know how to make a website, code a page, keep up on all the new social geegaws, shoot and edit video, narrate a studio. You have to be the entire operation yourself, if need be.

Some get it, some don’t; I saw a student page the other day that was bursting with pride and accomplishment, but it was a mess to look at – bad navigation, autoplay videos, busted links, and ugly to boot. All it needed was a glitterbling animated gif to complete the trog design. The person will get a degree, but not a job. Journalists were never required to have a feel for visual aesthetics before – just look at their desks and wardrobes – but now you have to know your way around a color wheel, too. This is good. How can it be bad?

**Today:** Out of Context Ad Challenge, but this one is easy. Up around 11 or so. Tumblr starts at 10 AM; PopCrush starts at nine AM and goes all the live-long day. Lots more coming this week – I’m backloading everything for Thursday and Friday, it seems. See you in a bit!
CatCalloway says:
May 19, 2010 at 4:39 am

I see James still has the screamapillar in the tree to wake him yup every morning.

http://simpsons.wikia.com/wiki/Screamapillar

crossdotcurve says:
May 19, 2010 at 6:35 am

$14,000/year to go to school. Oooh.

Tom says:
May 19, 2010 at 7:05 am

My daughter was in the class you spoke to yesterday and found it interesting, no eye rolling. Thought the ipad you brought to class was very “cool”

wiredog says:
May 19, 2010 at 7:49 am

the ugliest things are the ones everyone – which is to say no one – owns.
Classic example of the tragedy of the commons.

GardenStater says:
May 19, 2010 at 8:03 am

Laxatives!

Figured I’d get a head start.

juanito - John Davey says:
May 19, 2010 at 8:23 am

Funny, but when most folks consider their perfect day, it’s seldom the routine tasks, more frequently the exceptional occurrences. Very few people consider perfecting what they already experience daily. Kudos to you kind Host.

Lars Walker says:
May 19, 2010 at 8:56 am

I don’t often toot my own horn here (which helps account for my monumental obscurity) but I like to think that I may be the only novelist in the world to use the word “owly” in a novel. Certainly in a Viking novel, my _The Year of the Warrior_, to be precise. One reader noticed too, and I experienced a perfect moment of smugness.

Ron Ramblin says:
May 19, 2010 at 9:12 am

I bought the Reyka over the usual Sky, for the reasons you promoted it, and found it to be slightly less abrasive than Gilbert Gottfried.
Mark E. Hurling says:
May 19, 2010 at 9:40 am

Why not have Clabber Girl assist in keeping Chore Boy company? Since we're in this yesterday channel, thanks for the info on who and where you got the use of the word owly from. I only heard it used once almost 50 years ago but it has stuck with me ever since.

rbj says:
May 19, 2010 at 9:53 am

"autoplay videos,"
Those are downright evil.
Did that student also have blink tags?

browniejr says:
May 19, 2010 at 9:59 am

@GardenStater:
Booze!
(My headstart guess for the Ad Challenge…)

Jordynne Olivia Lobo says:
May 19, 2010 at 10:11 am

A cardinal? Good thing it's not twins!

swschrad says:
May 19, 2010 at 10:13 am

@GardenStater: radium! the tonic properties of radium emanation are well known to clinics world 'round.

William Lasseter says:
May 19, 2010 at 10:25 am

Thanks for coming to speak the other day. Students certainly enjoyed your presentation and were indeed, how did you put it, carefully guided along the path of knowledge. You'd be a fine teacher.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 19, 2010 at 10:45 am

$14K/year not bad really, I hear there is a certain private school in DC that is $29K/year.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 19, 2010 at 10:52 am

A perfect Saturday for me is to be awaken by the song of the Steller's Jays. Get started on quiet yard work and work up to the power equipment around 10 AM. Take a break at noon to cool off and eat lunch. Get back out for a couple more hours fighting back nature and entropy. Knock off around 3:00, take a shower. Lay down and watch a movie. Get up and start dinner. Greet wife home. Eat. Sit on
couch with wife and catch up with the week's TV from TiVo.

**Borderman** says:
May 19, 2010 at 11:16 am

As juanito – John Davey points out, one person's perfect day is another person's perfect hell, but you do, Mr. Lileks, amaze me with your ability to compartmentalize your prolific day. And prolific doesn't seem a strong enough word for what you accomplish.

A publisher I know sold off his magazine business and at age 57 went, bright-smiling and exuberant, to teach math at a high school in a low income neighborhood, ready to make a difference in the world. Tried to talk me into joining him. Heh. Two years later he was worn down to the nubs, exhausted. Had the thousand-yard stare of combat vets and low-income neighborhood teachers. His attitude was lower than tar balls in the Gulf and said he felt like he made his living swimming in the sewer.

Good luck with teaching, and I mean that sincerely. It seems like tempting fate to just go ahead and smash your enthusiasm upside the head with one of those aluminum softball bats and get it over with, but then, that's just me. I wouldn't give up working from my house with my dog and watching my daughter get off the bus until time pried them from me. Maybe that's when you would actually *want* to teach, when what you have now has moved into the overgrown traffic triangle with the abandoned warning light and you sink or swim, sewer or not.

All the more reason to savor those perfect days when they come along. *Carpe momentum.*

**Droptma Styx** says:
May 19, 2010 at 11:56 am

Your future-tense narrative reminded me of some early Zappa:

First I'll buy some beads
And then perhaps a leather band
To go around my head
Some feathers and bells
And a book of Indian lure
I will ask the Chamber Of Commerce
How to get to Height Street
And smoke an awful lot of dope

– excerpt from “Who Needs the Peace Corps?”

**Droptma Styx** says:
May 19, 2010 at 11:57 am

I copied that from a web page, so the misspellings aren't mine. Just sayin'

**Eric J** says:
May 19, 2010 at 12:18 pm

[http://www.boingboing.net/2010/05/19/overheard-in-the-new.html](http://www.boingboing.net/2010/05/19/overheard-in-the-new.html)

Thought this was right up your alley.
swschrad says:
May 19, 2010 at 12:18 pm

perfect day here: the cardinals let us sleep past 9 am. let the cat in
for a half-hour cuddlefest. get up after the third nose nip and do
breakfast and morning salutes to nature. read the dead-tree paper,
get in grubbies, and go off to the garage workshop or the garden.

putz about for about a couple hours. BLTs. sunny and 70s out.

putz about for a couple more hours. check Da ISH, move to the shed,
work on radio projects with the windows open and the iPod cranked
through my first Heathkit and the homebrew speakers.

roast or steaks. check Da ISH, mow the grass if needed, watch TV if
not (DIY or TLC) and snooze off.

that's usually a Saturday schedule.

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 19, 2010 at 12:27 pm

@swschrad, jeez! Enough with the BLT's already. You're making me
hungry again.

Spud says:
May 19, 2010 at 12:38 pm

“The computers will be waiting." That is the start of my work day,
though I wouldn't consider it perfect. Hmmm, I wonder if our
Genial Host has a KVM switch?

Teaching would be an interesting career change. I’m content to just
have a 3rd grade SS class at church for now. You have that difficult
choice of the “ideal” age for teaching: younger kids who are easier
to control but you're stuck with simple curriculum, or older kids
who are sullen/bored but you get more interesting subject matter.

James Lileks: Adjunct Multimedia Perfesser.

browniejr says:
May 19, 2010 at 1:44 pm

@Mark E. Hurling: Perfect season for BLT's- even better later when
the home grown tomatoes come into season! As a refugee from the
Midwest, best sandwich I EVER had was a breaded pork loin, deep
fried with mayo and lettuce on a sandwich roll- tomatoes optional.
(currently living in the land of Fruits and Nuts, aka California).

swschrad says:
May 19, 2010 at 1:50 pm

@browniejr: hmmm, eminently worthy of consideration.

mayo: yet another white meat 😁

Kurt says:
May 19, 2010 at 2:12 pm

You know, I tried to watch “Life on Mars” on BBC America, and
couldn't keep on. They would edit out about 15 minutes or more of
each episode to accommodate commercial breaks and still maintain
a 60-minute run time. I should go back and look at the DVDs, as it really was a well-done show, and faithful to its concept and period.

**Kurt** says:
May 19, 2010 at 2:15 pm

Forgot to add that I'm already jonesing for “Mad Men” later this summer and intend to watch “The Good Guys” pilot on Fox tonight on the strength of Colin Hanks (heard him on the Dennis Miller radio show today) and his very likable persona. He played Peggy's priest on MM, you may recall.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
May 19, 2010 at 2:17 pm

Will you guys cut it out! I'm going to need to spend another hour under the iron for the next month in order to justify my BMI with appetite you two are inducing.

**browniejr** says:
May 19, 2010 at 2:34 pm

@Mark E. Hurling: OK, OK... To kill your appetite, think “Tofu Turkey,” immortalized on a “Everybody Loves Raymond” Thanksgiving show.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
May 19, 2010 at 2:44 pm

Or along the same line, the Larson cartoon where the lion is shown spitting out the tofu antelope. Meat, it does a body good. Got meat?

**Gina** says:
May 19, 2010 at 4:54 pm

Oh my gosh, someone outside my family says “owly”! I never knew!

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
May 19, 2010 at 5:53 pm

@Gina, another one? Huh. Are you from the Midwest too?

**Joe Sixpack** says:
May 20, 2010 at 6:39 am

Duh.

That Matt Drudge character sure does know his way around a color wheel.

It's my paradigm, therefore it must be everyone else's too!

**Terry Fitz** says:
May 20, 2010 at 8:21 am

MMMMMMM...BLTs. Two of 'em, and maybe a half if there's enough bacon. “Enough bacon”...perhaps only a theoretical ideal? We're looking forward to tomatoes from the Topsy-Turvy. It's become something of a rage here in the western 'burbs of Chicago. Seems
like just about everyone has one, and we are jumping in with both feet. We have the tomatoes dealie AND the peppers dealie, and have finally gotten around to planting some herbs. No...not that kind of herbs. The day we harvest the first of the Beefsteaks for BLTs will be a perfect day, indeed. If only they had a Topsy Turvy for bacon...

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 20, 2010 at 9:42 am

Pigs hanging upside down like bats!? Seems to me there'd be some kind of issue with waste disposal.

Seattle Dave says:
May 21, 2010 at 6:17 pm

Coca-Cola? I thought I once read here that you don't drink soda pop. (I'm glad to hear you do. An occasional soda — in a glass bottle, preferably — is one of the inexpensive joys of life.) I hope it's Mexican Coca-Cola, with the cane sugar rather than the HFCS.
Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Very little here today; a smidgen at the tumblr, and PopCrush, and a late afternoon post at the Strib blog. Combine a nice evening out with friends with a morning school track-and-field judge appearance, and it meant that tomorrow morning's work (blog posts, revising a giant Sunday “Lost” piece two columns) had to be done in the evening, ergo, none of this. Looks like big boocoo linkage and updates on Friday to end the week.

So, open thread. When I was a kid I hated gym class. But I was a fat kid; I hated to run, I was teased, was lame, feared gymnastics because I thought I would break my neck. One day in junior high we played Battleball, which I liked almost as much as kick ball – more so, perhaps, because you could hide in the crowd. Battleball, for those who grew up in the post-aggressive era of gym class, was a game whereby the class split into two tribes, occupied two halves of the gym, and threw inflated cylinders at the enemy. Once struck, you sat down. By some horrible turn of events I survived the onslaught, and was the only guy left on my side. On the other side, Ted Gerke, one of the Jocks – a gladiator, a killer. He stalked back and forth, grinning, savoring the moment. The other kids, I recall, wanted me to die quickly, so we could get another game in. He loaded up, fired – perfect aim – ouch, and I was out.

It was nothing but humiliation, gym class. I'm glad my daughter likes it, and
I'm glad I'll be there tomorrow to support the whole running-sweating-jumping idea. But deep in my heart, I'll always be the Fat Kid. And you? Any gym class memories you'd like to share?

See you ASAP.

112 RESPONSES TO gym class memories and/or nightmares

MaryIndiana says:
May 21, 2010 at 2:51 am

God I hated gym class. I was a very active & fit kid, but gym class didn't start until middle school. You know when you are basically a klutz b/c you grow 2 inches overnight every two weeks? When you are feeling SUPER CONFIDENT about yourself anyway...gym class. Ick.

We had two evil gym teachers who were trying to get me/us to do incredibly dangerous things on regulation gymnastics equipment. One of the teachers tried to bully me into doing some impossible stunt on the vault thing. From a mini trampoline yet. Run, bounce and then hand spring onto the... anyway... I said ABSOLUTELY NOT. I just had a feeling she wanted someone to get hurt. She was just malicious.

I refused, she said “You're getting an F for the day!” (Yeah, like I cared) The next girl attempted the stunt and the teachers failed to spot her. Broken collar bone, broken ankle.

Trust your instincts kids! You have them for a reason!

Suze says:
May 21, 2010 at 6:51 am

I could write a book. There was no “gym” class in my parochial elementary/middle school. Hence, I entered HS with no knowledge whatever of any games or their rules. I think I was the only female that was “indisposed” in a female way for every gym class throughout HS. They must have thought I was a scientific freak.....

C. Wingate says:
May 21, 2010 at 7:40 am

I got lucky in high school: I ended up at a private school where there were sports that required no coordination, so I even managed to get a letter (in cross country, like my brother, my brother, and my sister). Elementary school, though, was hell: ball sports and more ball sports, and I was scrawny and terribly klutzy.

Dave says:
May 21, 2010 at 8:03 am

James, your story is almost identical to mine, except that I caught the ball and won the game. Nobody could believe the fat kid won. In NJ we called this ritualistic slaughter bombardment.
Angie Bee says:
May 21, 2010 at 8:11 am

I always disliked gym/P.E. In the fifth grade, we had a unit on gymnastics, which I particularly hated. I ended up failing that unit because I couldn’t handle the risky business of going upside down, required to do a forward roll. The teacher announced in class that one person had failed. I was not the fat kid, but everyone looked over at the fat kid. The guilt I felt later over not correcting my classmates’ misimpression made me hate P.E. even more. Never did learn to do a forward roll, either.

RNB says:
May 21, 2010 at 8:23 am

At my Catholic high school, we hacked our gym teacher off sufficiently one afternoon that he announced we would run wind sprints up and down the gym until someone threw up. My unsteady stomach served me well that day — and that is the only athletics-related memory I have of achievement or peer-group approval. Coach Wilkins instilled in me a lifelong aversion to physical exercise and a conviction that high school football coaches are assholes. Thanks, Coach!

gmann63 says:
May 21, 2010 at 9:57 am

I never minded gym class all that much – I wasn’t the greatest athlete, but could certainly hold my own and was actually pretty good at basketball and softball. No, what I hated was the “warm-up”, in which a sadistic, fat-bellied pig of a gym instructor made us do calisthenics for 20 minutes. And I didn’t even mind those – what I HATED were leg-lifts.

You lie on your back, your hands on your hips, and the instructor says “UP!” and you have to hold your legs straight and hold them there until he says – after an interminable time in which your legs start quivering and the inevitable fart builds up – “Down.” Try it sometime, it freakin’ hurts. And I swear, they would do this for much longer than the jumping jacks or squat-thrusts. Over and over, your legs getting weaker, your stomach muscles cramping in pain. I sincerely believe they enjoyed watching us writhe in pain. It served no other purpose.

TL says:
May 21, 2010 at 7:45 pm

I hated PE until 8th grade. Another chubby, nerdy kid with no coordination who couldn’t catch and (still) throws like a girl. In 8th grade two positive things happened for me. First, I realized that my long distance biking translated to an ability to run others into the ground. Suddenly I became king of the warm up run. Second, I had reached my adult height the previous summer. By some fluke of scheduling, I ended up in a class was not the norm. I still couldn’t shoot a basket to save my life, but I could out rebound anybody.

bobisname,mustbe says:
May 21, 2010 at 7:47 pm

While Coach Obese-O-Grease (we morphed his name, sue me) was
not as evil as Mr Gorilla Dick, he was certainly just as stupid, and
the mention of PE always prompts my favorite memory.

He had herded 20-30 of us outdoors and started reading the rules
for today's activity off a clipboard, when he looked up to the sky and
paused mid-sentence. There was silence as he paused for a time
much longer than you have spent reading this sentence. Finally a
voice from somewhere in our group broke the silence, saying loudly,
"It's a plane, sir."

Steve Biddle says:
May 22, 2010 at 11:05 am

Yup... I hated gym class too. I wasn't the fat kid, but I was the small,
uncoordinated kid who was born without the sports gene. I was
humiliated to be chosen last, but hoped to never be chosen at all.

I was one of those kids who, when playing softball, would take one
of the far outfield positions, and pray that the ball would never
come anywhere near me.

Gym class was usually last for me, and I dreaded it all day.

Whitney says:
May 22, 2010 at 11:06 am

I hated gym. I was chubby and uncoordinated. I did however like
and do well in archery in high school. I don't think the gym teacher
liked it, though. We only had it one year.

I remember in elementary school we were always punished for the
misbehavior of a few rowdy kids. Mr. Lamb made us hold books out
at arm's length until we collapsed.

Good times.

Kev says:
May 22, 2010 at 12:48 pm

In our school system you got a wavier if you played in the band.

Ours too, so I never had to take PE after eighth grade (and I got to
skip one semester in seventh for taking band and Spanish). Since I
ended up as a musician by trade, this worked out well for me.

I wonder if anyone else remembers having to do calesthentics to a
horrible record titled, “Go, You Chicken Fat, Go,” which was sung by
Robert Preston of Music Man fame? Thoroughly humiliating for all
participants, and fun for the teacher.

We did that in elementary school. You could even buy the record
through school (though I'm glad I didn't, because the ones they sold
were a cheap knockoff by some unknown lady instead of the
Preston version). I remember some of the intelligent, inspiring lyrics
to that song: “Give that chicken fat back to the chicken, and don't be
chicken again!”

One thing I haven't seen addressed here is what was done on rainy
days when you couldn't go outside for gym (unless that's when
everyone did dodgeball). In my Houston-area elementary and junior
high, we often did that most athletic of activities: Square dancing. It
was one of the few times that the guys' and girls' classes did
anything together. That was particularly stressful in elementary
school, when girls still had "cooties," so heaven forbid you'd actually
have to hold hands with one! And it didn’t get much better once the hormones kicked in during junior high; you hoped to get partnered with the really cute girl for dancing, while hoping that she didn’t mind getting partnered with you.
One of those timeless days devoid of the dreary details of modern life – no burbling phones, no BONGs to announce an email, no b’ding! from your DVR to warn you that it would like to change the channel and record something else, no meek triple-beep from the coffee pot to inform you it's shut itself off. So the power went out, you ask. No. Spent the morning at my daughter's track-and-field event as a judge, if you can call it that – mostly had to impose Rules, Ruthlessly, so that the teams could be ranked in order: First, Second, Third, Participant (loser) and Participant (other loser.) A perfect day to be outside – warm, blue skies, a few clouds scudding above like ships en route to foreign ports. The kids were all enthusiastic – everyone loves track and field day, it seems, and that's partly due to the great PhyEd teachers they have. Old-school male role models.

As I may have said before, I had two gym teachers who were figures of terror. The first was serious business, and swear to God his name was Mister Dick. I remember disappointing him in general, but he radiated general ire. The second was Mr. Garilla. Harry, as we called him behind his no-doubt hirsute back. Yes, Mr. Dick and Mr. Gorilla. My daughter's teachers inspire by example and a perfect combination of discipline and encouragement, and the result was a broad field filled with kids running their hearts out, leaping,
kicking, and having the best day in the best spring at the best school EVER. A joy to see. Timeless, too: change the shirts, and it could have been eighty years ago. Change nothing, and it could have been the 70s – when did kids start to wear their hair like characters from the Hey Mikey commercial?

DID YOU KNOW MIKEY DIED FROM EATING POP ROCKS? TRUE

No, I never believed that. But some kids did, just as my daughter was convinced that Invader Zim was cancelled because the animator snuck something into the show and Comedy Central got mad and cancelled the show. I said no, it was rating. No, she said, I read on the internet -

Stop right there. I showed her some pages on the internet that contradicted the assertion, and reminded her that Yahoo Answers was not exactly the last word in these matters.

Anyway, it wasn’t entirely modern-world-free – in order to do this in the morn I’d written a bunch of posts, queued them up in the Strib system, and fired them off via iPhone between heats. The game was simple: the team had to run to the cone carrying a blanket, pick up an item, put it in the blanket, run back, put the item in a hula hoop, and repeat until they had all the items – and then put the items back in the blanket, return them, run back, and sit on the blanket. Enthusiasm was high. I had to disqualify one team for not getting everything in the hula hoop, and another for sitting on the ground instead of the blanket. When it’s close, these things matter.

Everyone is not a winner. The kids know it; they always know it. That’s why they tried a hard as they did.

Spent the rest of the day writing in the backyard and arranging this and that. After supper we went down the street to a neighbor’s house for a school fundraiser; came away with a custom shirt that said MPLS – Natalie wanted it – and an iPod-charging clock radio she can use to get up in the morning. Made her night, even though it means the Hello Kitty radio has to go.

“It doesn’t have to go all the way out,” she said, clinging to childhood just a bit more. “It can go in the closet.”

She had a moment of tearful recognition the other night that life was going fast. Came to sobs over not being a kid some day, and some day SOON. It was wrenching, really, and I don’t know where it came from, but in a way it had to have come from happiness, from wanting these good simple times to roll on and on. She has a point. It was wacky hat day at school this week, and you just don’t get these in the workplace:

–

Earlier this week I pointed you to the Duke commercial archives, and noted how I’d fallen on the Texaco ads with particular devotion. Where, you ask, are the screen grabs? Okay then. Here’s the classic Texaco station my dad had:
Recognize the pump jockey? No? How about this:

Don Adams. The logo changed – and so did the spokesperson. Rowr:
Who is she? More on that next week.

–

**Linkage:** BleatPlus is up, and I fully intend to send passwords for those who need them by noon.

100 Mysteries is [here](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7111).

A few new ads in the 30s section, [here](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7111). (It dead-ends at page 8, so don’t write me about that, I know.)

Finally, I was going to debut the 39 World’s Fair site today, but all I have is the introduction – so I might as well put it here.

Here you go. I’m using home-movie color footage of the Fair, correcting the
hues, cleaning up what I can, re-editing it, applying some filters. This isn’t the final version, but it’ll do for now. The ’33 Fair was interesting, a spasm of optimism in the middle of the Depression, but the ’39 Fair has always haunted me: it was supposed to be the future, but it was the end, really. The architectural vernacular that emerged after the war was much more vibrant, American, and individualistic. But there was so much hope in this clean white world.

Have a grand weekend! See you at Tumblr, and PopCrush, and back here on Monday.

68 RESPONSES TO the star. you can trust your car to the man with it

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 21, 2010 at 5:00 pm

@swschrad: I assume you are correct. I would not have much patience explaining copyright or trademark infringement to a bunch of stoners.

On the other hand, I assume the alignment folks traveled in such different circles as Deadheads that by the time they found out, it was too late to make a complaint.

browniejr says:
May 21, 2010 at 5:22 pm

The old switch the corporate spokesperson trick! Really, who is she??

bgbear: The stuff about “explaining copyright or trademark infringement to a bunch of stoners” reminded me of the old Simpson’s episode where Homer needed to smoke marijuana for medical reasons, and they tried to get it legalized in an election. The only problem was, they had their “get out the vote” rally the day after the election, because they “spaced out on the date.”
JamesS says:
May 21, 2010 at 6:16 pm

Chuck:
May 21, 2010 at 6:00 am

Would you believe a buster muffler?

Gym coach story – [snip] I was falling behind and the coach yells over, ‘Hey, Lastname, you blah blah blah these exercises?’ I said ‘What?’. He yells, ‘You think you blah blah these exercises?’. I yelled, ‘what?’. The guy in front of me turns around and say, ‘He said, do you think you can do these exercises?’ – so I yelled back, ‘Yes!’. He stomps over and I get the personal drill sargent ‘drop and give me 20!’ routine.

Later on I found out what he actually said was, ‘Do you think you’re too good to do these exercises?’. Have been negative on sports ever since, and grew up to be way out of shape.

Thanks, Mr Martin!

Why blame Mr. Martin? It was your “friend” that set you up for the fall. Sports — a distant finisher in this tale of woe.

NerveBag says:
May 21, 2010 at 6:20 pm

Okay… first, let me say that I have loved your site for years, and it’s one of the few I visit every single day. You’re awesome. Motel postcards have always been my favorite, BTW, but I love it all, and I’m glad to see you adapting and adopting (though I cringe at your Apple fetish — such a boorish, angry, frightening company). Anyway… everyone hates a pedant, so I try never to complain about grammar and stuff, but this is one of my biggest peeves, and I cannot let it skate by. You wrote:

“Everyone is not a winner. The kids know it; they always know it. That’s why they tried a hard as they did.”

If everyone is not a winner, then no one won. Everyone is not a winner. There are no winners. The appropriate thing to say is “Not everyone is a winner.” Not everyone is a winner, but someone was. People do this constantly, and I don’t get it. “Every dog is not brown.” By this they mean that there are brown dogs, but there are other colors to. What they are saying is that there are NO BROWN DOGS. Every dog is not brown leaves nothing to interpretation. Every single dog is some color other than brown. “Not every dog is brown” says that some dogs ARE brown, but not EVERY dog.

C’mon. It’s not that difficult.

And please tell me you don’t say “nucular.”

Love the site. Long-time fan, first-time… um… complainer.

Mediumwave says:
May 21, 2010 at 8:23 pm

#NerveBag: “By this they mean that there are brown dogs, but there
are other colors to.

“(t)oo”! “TOO”, Gol-durn it! 😊

Calvin Bird says:
May 21, 2010 at 8:31 pm

I think the ‘she’, in the ad is Marlo Thomas.

Geg says:
May 22, 2010 at 12:50 am

Great blog! It’s rare to stumble across something as engaging. Your film of the ’39 fair made me think of a great book, which given your interests you probably have already read. But just in case, check out “The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay” (Pulitzer Prize winner). There’s a great chapter that takes place in the ruins of the domed building featured in the film. Keep up the great work!

Dawn Biro says:
May 22, 2010 at 1:44 am

I hate to contradict you, but, we had wacky hat day in my workplace recently. I work for the Walt Disney Company and we had Wacky Hat Day when Alice in Wonderland came out. I wore a rare mouse ear hat.

Di says:
May 22, 2010 at 3:13 pm

I guess the intent is to raise kids to be graceful losers (ha) since there are more losers than winners in life. Keep working, persevering, etc. Best example is Olympics where it’s often all about gold or go home – well, at least as far as the media is concerned.

And who is Texaco lady? She looks like one of the post-Lennons singers on Lawrence Welk.

Bridey says:
May 22, 2010 at 5:05 pm

#NerveBag — I’m a copy editor, with a whole closetful of spelling, grammar, and usage peeves, but I’ve found that it’s best to wait to be asked (and ideally paid) before bringing them out to play.

And perhaps one should particularly resist the temptation to bring them out on someone’s personal website, and one on which the host is regularly providing vast amounts of high-quality content for free. Come on, it’s not that difficult 😊

jamcool says:
May 22, 2010 at 6:16 pm

The Texaco hexagon was supposedly brought out in the mid 60s to replace the red star and T – which was thought to evoke a “commie” image (this was the same time the direction of Mobil’s flying horse was changed from left to right)

For those interested there is a miniature animated version of the famous Texaco sign…

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7111
Gibbering Madness says:
May 22, 2010 at 8:32 pm

*And please tell me you don’t say “nucular.”*

Seriously. “Nucular” is a bizarre mispronunciation with no roots in spoken English, indicative of ignorance and incoherence. Because there certainly aren’t any English words (other than particular, circular, molecular, spectacular, ocular, or vascular) which end in -ular.

SeanF says:
May 22, 2010 at 11:27 pm

“People do this constantly, and I don’t get it. ‘Every dog is not brown.’ By this they mean that there are brown dogs, but there are other colors to.”

All that glitters is not gold, NerveBag. It’s a long-standing, perfectly logical, combination of “all” with the negative. Might as well get used to it.

Philip Scott Thomas says:
May 23, 2010 at 7:51 am

Oh, dear, NerveBag,

If you have a problem with “All dogs are not brown”, you’d best take it up with Shakespeare[1] and then get back to us. The problem, you see, is not with the construction, but with your understanding.

As for objecting to “nucular”, that comes down to nothing more than disliking the fact that someone else pronounces a word differently from the way you do. In American English there are at least two pronunciations each for “roof”, “creek”, “aunt” and “route”. The “nucular” pronunciation is no different, and while it may not be your pronunciation it has a long and distinguished history behind it. And by “distinguished” I mean Edward Teller and President Eisenhower. You may as well relax about that one.

[1] “All that glisters is not gold”, The Merchant of Venice, II:vii.

xrayguy says:
May 23, 2010 at 5:35 pm

Lee Meriwether?

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 23, 2010 at 11:33 pm

To All,

Since NerveBag is a first timer let’s all be a little more gracious. I had some of the same initial reactions to the comments. I may have been a little quick on the trigger a few times in the past, so I now spend more time looking at what seems to be intent of the poster. NerveBag, you seem like a nice person, welcome to the Bleat and posting here. We all have our hot buttons and I have some big ones. We all tend to be protective of our own little corner of Middle Earth here.
Dave (in MA) says:
May 24, 2010 at 1:07 am

I recall Jimmeh (History's Greatest Monster) saying “nookyer”, so NYAH.

DensityDuck says:
May 25, 2010 at 1:41 pm

Hey, it's Anita!

Hm, a woman wearing a short vinyl coat and a weird fireman's helmet? What kind of fetish-porn site have I found here? Actually, on second thought, she has a hairdo sort of like my Mom did when she was in college. EWWWWWWWW
The weekend begins, as it has for so many years, with piano lessons. Child grouses off the bus and grouses into the car, gets into a better mood en route as we fall into conversation. When we get to the old decommissioned high-school where she takes lessons, we make fun of things we've seen before or things that aren't there anymore, such as the peculiar graffiti – “poopdead” was written on a bulletin board in the elevator for years, for example. *It shall never be forgotten*. Down the hall. Hello, something new:
“Put that on FAILBLOG,” she said.

“How do I know if it’s a fail? Run the water for 30 seconds.”

So she did.

“It’s slightly better,” she said.

“So, win.”

“It’s a fail for admitting the water is bad.”

She had a point.

**Friday was**, of course, pizza night. Thus it has always been; thus it shall always be. I used Domino’s online ordering program, which allows you to launch the pizza at the time of your choosing. I could, theoretically, start the week on Monday by ordering the Friday pizza, but I prefer to do it after piano, then take a nap knowing the full, rich, unvarying panoply of Friday awaits, with the pizza arriving mere minutes after the alarm fish-hooks me out of slumber. And so I did. Dog woke me up after 24 minutes, barking his head off over someone or something, and that was that for the nap: now I had 45 minutes to fill before the pizza arrived. I scanned things and resized them and put them in a folder marked “Scanned, Resized.” Life is very tidy on my computer.

An hour and 15 minutes later the driver called to say one driver had called in sick and the other just plain hadn’t showed, but he was on his way, and sorry. “As long as it’s hot,” I said.

It was cold. And it was wrong. It was oh so very wrong. One of the pizzas was some . . . *thing*, some melange of Lovecraftian placenta, some unspeakable combination of ingredients that looked like it came pre-digested. It feels
wrong to get someone else's pizza. It's too intimate. Like using someone else's computer and having the autofill spell out some really grody sex-URL in the menu bar, it was a glimpse into what would otherwise be private. I called Dominos, and informed them of the situation. Cold and Wrong. The manager offered to remake the pizza, of course, but because they were down two drivers – "I know," I said, sympathetic – she couldn't say when it would arrive.

I offered to pick it up. Oh sure yeah you can do that. So I drove to Dominos to get a pizza, which just seemed like the complete inversion of the order of things. I really don't want to see where they make pizza. I really don't want to see who's making it, for that matter. But the place was clean and well-lit and the staff duly bent over their duties – I'm sure if I went again in a month the place would be staffed with an entirely different crew; it's rare I have the same driver twice.

The manager gave me TWO pizzas. I said the other one was just fine, and she said that was okay, so sorry. So I drove home eating pizza, starved, my Friday in RUINS.

Just kidding. Adapt, adopt, improve. Roll with the punches. Once home I had another slice – it was excellent, and as I noted on Twitter, the pizza they make to make up for a bad pizza is always better; I should just ask them to make that one first. I went upstairs to work on the website, as is the Law of Friday. Almost an hour later there was a knock at the door.

"DAD," said daughter. "It's Dominos."

And so it was. A driver had come by with two more pizzas. This made six. I said we were pretty much full up on pizzas, alas; I'd already picked up the remake. I felt bad for him, because I wasn't going to tip. I mean, I'll tip the guy who has to bring the remake, but I'm not tipping the guy who brings supernumerary 'za an hour and a half late after I've driven to the store.

The evening went on: the movie I watched for Black and White World was a grave disappointment, but we'll get to that later this week. Watched "The Empire Strikes Back" while I worked, because it was the 30th anniversary – as I've noted before, I saw it the first night, and no one knew what was coming, and that was the best solar-system-plexus-punch I'd ever experienced. Now I see all the flaws, including the strategic incoherence of the Hoth battle (never mind dropping top-heavy spindly-legged tanks on an ICE planet, and landing them a mile away so everyone can feel them coming; never mind a space-faring civilization digging trenches, as if it's Ypres all over again; never mind the fact that they couldn't just blow the rebel base to pieces with a laser from space; never mind that the secret to escaping an armada in space consists not of flying in the other direction then kicking into hyperspace but flying right at them while someone shoots over your head; never mind the fact that the walkers have about four guns in the front with limited mobility, and Genius Skywalker decides to line up all his attack vehicles on the same plane and fly directly at the Walkers instead of coming
up from the sides and behind.) Doesn't matter. The last half-hour was still a great piece of space opera, and I'll never forget sitting in the theater, realizing the movie was ending, right now, and it wasn't going to end with a parade and an awards ceremony, and everyone had just gotten their butts kicked or their hands lopped off, and we would have to wait years before we know what happened.

That was as good as it got.

Around midnight on Fridays I take to the couch, where I watch another movie as long as I want, something modern. But there was nothing modern I wanted, so I watched a silent film called “The Crowd,” which is good ‘n’ depressing, but Friday night concludes with a promise: a nice bowl of ice cream.

It had ice crystals.

Woke up to the warmest day of the month so far, at least as predicted. Cold and rainy. Daughter was already up and finishing an animation for her YouTube channel, her “200th subscriber” tribute. It was good, but I asked if she did it in Paint.

“Yes,” she scowled, knowing was coming. We had an argument about Paint. We have this from time to time: she has Photoshop Elements; why use Paint, for heaven's sake? Why content yourself with those jaggy lines?

She said: “When I work in layers I always have to flatten everything before I use a glossian blur!”

“So flatten! It's one simple command!”

Not a keyboard command, of course. Oh, no. Can't spare a keyboard command for that. I've been working in Photoshop CS3 and Elements 8 for a while now, and I want to weep. CS3 has no menu option for rotating layers. Why? Who knows. You can't drag a layer just by clicking on it; you have to select it from the palette. But when you save for web, it uses the compression setting last used. Elements lets you click and drag a layer, and rotate-layer is in the menu. But every – single – fargin- save-for-web experience defaults to ZERO QUALITY, even if you've saved the last 900 files at 45 percent. Oh: drop shadows in CS3 is a menu option. Not so in Elements, requiring an extra click. It – drives – me – mad. It's like the two teams are playing out a bet over which feature will drive people the crazier if it's removed.

Anyway. These arguments get rather heated, and we both end up huffing off: FINE THEN. OKAY THEN. But I apologized and she apologized. I took her to a friend's house, then sped off to Target to do errands. En route I realized my mistake: I'd had but one tiny piece of wife's French Toast for breakfast, and I was brain-schmozzled with hunger, light-headed and floaty. The entire goal of the day was simple: get the errands done so you can get home and microwave some pizza.

I was pretty sure we still had some.
This I did, and all was fine. Daughter returned with friends, and they wanted to play Sims 3 on the Windows side of the laptop, so could I fix the sound? Because there wasn’t any sound. I investigated, and sure enough: somehow the audio drivers had vanished. I tried to reinstall Windows while running Windows, which had the effect of rendering Windows inoperable. Tried to reinstall it via Boot Camp, only to find that the program had expired. Yes: expired. It was a beta with a self-destruct mechanism. Sigh. To the internet, Robin. The only way to reinstall Boot Camp to reinstall Windows was to upgrade the operating system. Spent half an hour backing up daughter’s files. Tried to install OS X10.5. “Not enough memory.”

Weep. Well, not Snow Leopard, but Plain Old Leopard, then.

Couldn’t find the install disk. Gave up. “Sorry hon, no Windows for a while.”

“That means no Paint?!?!”

Why yes. Yes, I believe it does.

Not intentional, but, well, these things happen.

**Sunday**: worked.

Had leftover pizza for supper.

**Later today**: Motels around noon, Tumblr after ten, and PopCrush – with the last Lost piece – at 9 AM or so. See you around!

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Pass it along, if you wish

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**53 RESPONSES TO there goes the weekend**

**Susan** says:
May 25, 2010 at 12:16 am

It’s the quality of the ingredients they use. I disagree that they’re made the same as anyone else. Can’t argue with taste buds -other pizzas taste better with fresher, better quality ingredients.

**polymathamy** says:
May 25, 2010 at 10:48 am

Perhaps the water fountain sign would be better suited to http://OddlySpecific.com rather than failblog.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
May 25, 2010 at 11:06 am

@susan; OK, so your back to taste and you theorize it is the ingredients used, I can understand that.

The individual ingredients are the same as most restaurants, the cheese high quality. The dough is made at the commissary and
distributed to the restaurants and kept refrigerated up to 3 days, I believe it was not a yeasty as some and suffered from whatever leavening they relay on. The sauce is canned and probably one of the weakest links.

**How** a pizza is made is another matter and I got the impression you meant they were put together in some bizarre fashion like injection molding in a factory or tossed with the feet rather than hands.
HOT. FONTS. ALSO, LOST.

on MAY 25, 2010 · 65 COMMENTS · in DOMESTIC LIFE, POP CULTURE

May in Minneapolis:

140 OR SO

Error: Twitter did not respond. Please wait a few minutes and refresh this page.

CLICK – AND SAVE!

A BOOK I RECOMMEND

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7153
It got warmer. It was 90+ most of the day, with humidity and a breeze: just what I want out of summer. Not for the entire summer – had enough shirt-soaking summers in DC, thank you, and that was during a mandatory-tie period of my life. But you have to have this to have a summer. And summer’s not even begun.

Just had another little dust-up with daughter about . . . font choice. I don’t know if there are any words that stab me like “it’s just a font.” May she marry a typographer and pull that crap on HIM. At least it’s not Hobo or any other wretched system fonts, but it’s a retro-type font that’s supposed to look like bitmap typeface. Now I realize why she likes it – gives the project a Nintendo DS style, I suppose. It’s a slideshow for a class project that involves celebrating all the states in the form of floats or cakes; she chose a cake, but wants to do a multimedia presentation in iMovie. I advised: draw it in Photoshop, don’t use iMovie’s text tools. She thought that was a great idea. Animate the stills with transitions. I am bracing for star wipes, and will not fight that battle.
While she was practicing piano I noticed that she’d put a red star for the capital in one frame, but left it out of subsequent frames. Wanting to be Helpful, I quickly added the star. Told her what I’d done. DAD NO, she said, then showed me what she wanted to do: when the frame with CAPITAL: MADISON came up, there was a star, and then the next frame had a slightly bigger star, so it would throb a bit when she cut it all together.

Utterly abashed, I apologized. But I will continue to press the font issue. Fonts are visual inflections. People who know nothing about fonts still respond to them, often for reasons they couldn’t quite name. Fonts are arguments made before you’ve said the first word.

–

Okay, lots of Lost now. Sorry.

Read a lot of recaps and comments today, and smart observations were swamped by dullards, haters, anal-retentive beard-picking dorks, and other varieties of internet termites. In my search for the finest comment from the Hater crowd, I found this:

I am sooooo glad that I never got sucked into this.
The few times I watched (rather late in the series) I realized that I couldn't appreciate what was happening as I didn’t know what went before.
Turns out NOBODY could figure out what was happening because it was all a figment of a dying man imagination.

Secular writers screwing with everyone's heads.

jcw46 on May 24, 2010 at 11:22 PM

That’s perfect. That’s just perfect. Flat broad dismissal from someone who never watched: check! Admission of occasional viewership complicated by coming into the story in the middle of things: check! Mischaracterization of the finale’s message: check! Blaming “secular writers” when the entire thing was explicitly not secular, but it HAS to be secular because Hollywood is full of Commies: check!

I swear I spent half the day thinking about the “Lost” finale. I did not think I would be surprised last night. I was surprised. I did not think I would be particularly moved; I was reaching for Kleenex about half a dozen times. I did not think I would learn all the answers; I was right on that point, but I’ll take ignorance about the numbers over learning “here’s really what happens when you die, and it’s awesome.” One comment over a particularly bitchy threat said the island wasn’t explained, dammit! It was Chekov’s gun and it didn’t go off! (“If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired. Otherwise don't put it there.” Chekov, noted hard-boiled action writer.)
But the island wasn’t the gun. The coffin was the gun. In the first episode the coffin was in the jungle, and it was empty. In the last episode the coffin was in Purgatory & Sons Funeral Home (“Service worth waiting for”) and it was empty again, but for a different reason. Ken Tucker said “If there was any big surprise last night, it was how overtly Christian in its imagery and message the series proved to be.” Well, yeah. And by “overtly Christian” could might note there was a guy named “Christian,” and he was the one who was supposed to be in the coffin, but wasn’t. There were some ecumenical sops in the stained-glass window, but otherwise, that was Western Religion FTW – perhaps, if you want to go this route, it was the vocabulary of Jack’s cultural spirituality, the way his soul would assemble the setting for his departure.

I never expect TV to handle metaphysics with any grace, but this was just lovely. And the dog. Oh, the dog. (If he’d been in the purgatory sequence, we would have thought he was Old Yeller.)

Just to play with everyone, the credits ran over the wreckage of the plane. In 50 years there will be religions based on that detail. Two, since they will have split over what it meant.

PS Ken Tucker also said it wasn’t one of the great all-time finales, citing “The Mary Tyler Moore” show as a better send-off, saying it had more punch and snap. I love the MTM show – hell, I’m in Minneapolis because of it, did a TV show about it – but it wrapped up a comedy show that didn’t exactly have a lot of loose ends to tie together. Will Lou get back together with his wife? Not an issue, and no, and he’ll probably start drinking more. Will Murray be anything other than a snide, failed little man? No, and now he’s jobless. Will Mary get married? Probably not. Will Rhoda come back? No, she has her own show, and she’s destined for divorce anyway. And so on. The premise had one great punch line – everyone’s fired but Ted, and then they sing a song and hug and shuffle out the door. It was a good finale, fitting for a very smart and funny show, but putting in the same league as Lost would be like comparing the end of “The Little Engine That Could” to the end of “24.” They both have similar motivations – Jack, too, thinks he can – but that’s about it.

So now to watch the “24″ final; thoughts up at Popcrush in the AM. Tumblr’s retro panoply starts at 10 AM – full load of top-of-the-hour stuff today. Comic sins in the afternoon. See you around!
wondering how he will get out of this one, was it a trick, etc. … No trick, he was dead, end of series.

**Wagner von Drupen-Sachs** says:
May 25, 2010 at 3:46 pm

No one has yet mentioned “The Fugitive.” So I will: “The Fugitive.”

**D Palmer** says:
May 25, 2010 at 3:54 pm

Well, there was the series finale for Deadwood... oh wait, THERE WASN'T. Instead we got the wholly unsatisfying scene of Hearst managing to leave town unharmed after raining death and destruction.

Damn you HBO.

**Bridey** says:
May 25, 2010 at 4:36 pm

Best series finale I can recall was for “The Shield,” which spent seven years building up to a confrontation between two characters, and the confrontation never happened. And it was the perfect ending.

And then there was the obscure syndicated series “Forever Knight,” where, in the last few episodes, five of the six main characters died violently, including the title vampire (this was before the current massive vampire fad, though).

The show wasn’t good — at best, it was really uneven. But it deserves commitment points for following through on that last messy arc. (As opposed to, say, Highlander, which blew its own mythology to smithereens at the end. And yes, I am a total geek.)

**browniejr** says:
May 25, 2010 at 5:32 pm

@Wagner von Drupen-Sachs: Nice catch on “The Fugitive”. I vaguely remember that series as a kid, and the fact that it was the most watched television series finale/show for a long time (until the “Who shot J.R. episode of Dallas, I believe.) I wonder if they have comparable stats for shows like Lost or 24, and how they would compare.

**GardenStater** says:
May 25, 2010 at 5:38 pm

@Joe Broderick: “How did the characters in “Lost,” trapped on a desert island for so many years, manage to stay so well-groomed?”

I often wondered the same thing—like why the fat guy would stay fat, given the restricted diet one would get on a desert island.

Then again, I wondered the same thing about Gilligan's Island.

**Dave in California** says:
May 25, 2010 at 6:52 pm

I missed the whole “Lost” phenomenon, mostly because we hardly
watch any series TV anymore. When we are curious about something, we generally will rent the whole batch on DVD. It sounds like “Lost” might be worth that effort, once we get season three of “Mad Men” out of the way.

One of my favorite series enders: the original (British) “The Office.”

Our Boom With a View says:
May 25, 2010 at 7:50 pm

Temperature: 94 in Wisconsin in May. Can’t ask for more and YAY!

FONTs: Fight to your last breath. Fonts matter. Chiller needs to be deleted. Have you seen the PBS presentation on HELVETICA? It’s excellent.

LOST: Sigh. Christian Sheppard!!! Come on! and how did I miss it for 6 years? As for the nay sayers I have one question: “Were you watching?”

jamcool says:
May 26, 2010 at 1:33 am

Most overused font today...A tie between the Highway font (and its variations)-everywhere in publications, yet being replaced on the highway by the British-looking Clearview font.

And the “Obama” font, the Gill Sans-ish design seen everywhere today.

Seattle Dave says:
May 26, 2010 at 1:48 am

Fonts: There are some I hate. But as a teacher, when one of my students picks an inappropriate or just plain awful font, I explain to him or her why it's inappropriate or why I (and presumably others who share elements of my background) react negatively to it. Once I've explained it, it's up to them to decide whether to use that font or not.

My favorite series finales:
1. M*A*S*H. Even though I thought the show was a bit lame in its last few seasons, the finale recalled all that made the series great when it was at its best.
2. “My So-Called Life.” What turned out to be the series finale was written as a cliffhanger when it was thought the show was being renewed for a second season, which makes it all the more poignant. (Best series ever made about high school, hands-down.)
3. “Friends.” Could easily have sunk into bathos and mawkishness, but didn't. Leave 'em laughing.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 26, 2010 at 10:14 am

anyone still following this?

Certain people Hurley, Jack, Kate etc (the Oceanic 8) were not on the island that long, less than four months by the time of the final episode. So weight loss and grooming not a big problem.

The air dropped food was for the ex-CIA man (Clancy Brown) in the Hatch (Swan station).
yes, it all did happen as we saw it and it was not someone's dying
dream although an interesting theory. No time in “Heaven” so that
was just their acorporal selves after they died or eventually died
after full lives.

swschrad says:
May 26, 2010 at 10:40 am

accidentally caught two minutes of Saturday's Lost extravaganza
waiting for the news to come up in Fargo. ee-freaking-nough,
flipped the dial for a forecast, we had a lot of trim painting to do.

several weeks ago, I postulated that nutty timewaste would end as a
kid's snow globe again. apparently it was more like a piece of what
the kids call “chronic glass.”

_Holmes on Homes_ is much more enjoyable. goes someplace. gets
something done.

PS — there is a chance we might have a sale of Mom's estate house
on a pocket listing, we just got the car packed from a furious day of
final cleanings and fixings when they drove up for the showing, a
week before it went listed. who says there isn't a God?

Amanda from Michigan says:
May 26, 2010 at 11:18 am

“l never expect TV to handle metaphysics with any grace, but this
was just lovely”

That's the best response to the finale I have read yet.

Ah, the dog. He broke my heart with his tenderness. He was there
just when Jack needed him.

Dana W says:
May 26, 2010 at 11:50 am

I was going to wait till the series was over and watch it start to
finish, but from what I’m seeing everywhere including here, it ends
with a big plate of confusion with Christianity sauce.

You clinched it for me. Its not worth the bother. If I want to watch a
strange and confusing show that ends in a big ball of theology, I'll re-
watch Life on Mars “The British one, not the confused and silly
American re-do.

Chris says:
May 28, 2010 at 9:12 am

Probably late in the game to leave a comment, but I just read your
post, so….

Terrific to read. I was genuinely surprised the finale wasn't
universally loved. It gave us the answers we needed, and was an
emotional powerhouse–rattled around my head all day, too. I
sometimes get a little frustrated with reading misguided responses
to it, but that's OK. I suppose in some ways it makes me feel better
about leaving posts on message boards now and again. I feel stupid
on some level ever doing it, but then I realize I READ a lot of them,
and I should try and, if I can, help the conversation.

Anyway, the Lost finale was awesome.
Still not finding what you're looking for?
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!
The entire night was devoted to constructing Wisconsin in cake form. Tomorrow's Parade of Edible States is the highlight of the waning days of schooling, and we're all set. The cake is decorated and ready, festooned with flags announcing the Official Mineral and other pertinent details. She made a multimedia presentation to show to the class, and it was nicely done. Famous people: Houdini!

“How did he die?” she yelled from downstairs, prepping for her presentation.

“A guy punched him.”

“No, that's not right.”

What is she, Little Miss Snopes? How does she know these things? A little research backed up my punch / abdominal-burstage theory, so THERE. Main problem: can't find her movie on her computer. Looked everywhere. Wednesday morning should be . . . interesting.

–

Some notes to follow up on recent posts.

To those who wonder why I ordered Dominos: my child insists. Every Friday, en route to piano, I torture her with the possibility of different pizza. We pass a place called “Michelangelo's,” and I say this will be the weekend we try it. NOOOO! We pass another joint I frequented for years. And let me
tell you about my life and pizza: one day the box had a message written inside asking me to mention the pizza to a friend who has a national radio show, and has me on every Thursday. I thought this was perfectly fine; couldn’t blame the owner a whit, and was glad to know he listened. It wasn’t bad-odd, but good-odd, a delightful collision of things.

My wife won’t let me order the pizza, because she had it once while she was pregnant and it laid down a marker, the sort of thing men cannot understand. My daughter thought it had too much cheese. I miss it, but as the years go by I remember how the joy of the excellent sauce was always tempered by the thick, dense, inch-o’-cheese in the middle – never managed to eat that; always put it in the fridge; out it went on Monday.

But when the family’s out of town on a Friday, sometimes I call the old number, and it’s like old times.

Now we have a Carbone’s in the neighborhood, and if I remember their pizza, it’s classic post-war burb-za – flat crackery crust, greasy cheese, savory sausage, tangy sauce. Now and then you need one of those. You need it with a fierce intensity that frightens you.

If Dominos was unacceptable, I wouldn’t submit, but the new recipe suits everyone. The only way I’m going to get a Carbone’s would be to lie: Dominos burned down! But we drive past it now and then, and I don’t want my daughter to think I lie. So I’ll have to burn it down. Sorry. I’m not just saying that, guys: really, I’m sorry.

—

Writing about Lost – and you all know this site has just been pathetically obsessive about Lost, what with daily updates and screencaps and all that – inevitably brings on those who note that “it’s just a TV show” and hence I have exceeded the number of words and/or emotional photons one is allowed to expend on a fictional enterprise. This also goes for writing about any fictional construct with a degree of enthusiasm not shared by the critic.

Hah! You know, in the olden legends, trolls stayed under the bridges, instead of lolling around topside and acting like they built the thing. It’s amusing: the time I spent on Lost over six years was less than the time some people spent on pro sports in a season. Everybody has A Thing. And the more Things, the more interesting your quotidian week.

—

One of y’all mentioned my Wii Fit BMI might be off because I have shrunk. I’m still FAT, according to Wii Fit. If I’d shrunk I’d be even fatter. So I tried to measure myself today, and it seems I’m actually taller than I thought. By half an inch. Taller than Napoleon. Wii Fit says I’ve lost 1.8 pounds, which is nice, but I need to get down to 129 pounds. As I said before: the last time I lost that much weight people thought I had replaced my entire intestinal tract with a tapeworm. But I flailed around on the thing as usual tonight, including some hellish pushup exercises that build muscle . . . and add weight? Right? I
mean, am I fat to Nintendo because I have pectoral mass?

Okay, that’s it. Tomorrow I post a picture, and you get to judge: fat or not fat.

–

Mentioned a while ago I’m reading “Last Call,” a history of Prohibition. I still am. Reminds me that I never was taught why it happened; it just . . . did. All of a sudden, according to my education, it was taps off, and then Al Capone did the jitterbug on a flagpole, and then during the Great Depression it somehow went the other way. Never mind! (There: a Simpsons reference and an SNL reference in one paragraph. I’m dating myself.) The coalition that made it possible was, to use the modern terms, quite diverse: The Klan (They’d have their own ‘shine, but they could use the image of the Drunken, Feral Negro to advance their cause) the Suffragettes (When women had the vote, they’d close the saloons) busy-body progressive brainiacs intent on Uplifting people via Federal law, anti-immigration race-purists (the dirty furners drank wine, and the Huns drank beer) and so on. Page 213:

There may be no clearer demonstration of the drys’ pragmatic acceptance of every variety of ally than a comment made my Mabel Willebrandt – a federal official, a feminist, a progressive – when she was asked about the faithfully dry Ku Klux Klan: “I have no objection to people dressing up in sheets, if they enjoy that sort of thing.”

The single biggest backer of the Anti-Saloon League: S. S. Kresge, whose empire survives in the form of K-Mart.

So far this may be my favorite passage. It’s about President Harding.

He both smoked and chewed tobacco, and at times would grow so desperate to calm his raging anxiety that he’d grab a cigarette, rip it open, and stuff its contents straight into his mouth.

This is a delightful book, and a solid piece of history. Read it!

As for today? See you at tumblr. Out of Context Ad challenge – a doozy, trust
me – up around 10:30.

58 RESPONSES TO loose ends

juanito - John Davey says:
May 26, 2010 at 12:37 pm

I suspect that ZA is a NorDak phrase. I've only encountered one other person who calls pizza ZA, and that would be Jamestown North Dakota's very own Mitch Berg

My wife's family is from Minnesota, and not one of them has ever called pizza ZA. Her Dad was Minnesota born and raised (1929) and he's never heard it either.

Bizarcane says:
May 26, 2010 at 12:43 pm

I'm reading Last Call at the mo', but you're ahead of me so I always have to skip that portion of the Bleat when it pops up.

Re: LOST talk – at least we had a few seasons of thought-provoking television, ending with a big debate. The airwaves are, unfortunately, glutted with shows akin to “Dancing With the Stars.”

GardenStater says:
May 26, 2010 at 1:05 pm

My best pal calls pizza “za,” and I have no idea why. He's not the type to jump on the slang bandwagon. I've always thought it was kind of silly.

RPD says:
May 26, 2010 at 1:36 pm

When I went to college in southern Ohio in the 80's, many students there referred to pizza as “za”. It's also where I first encountered proper deep dish Chicago style pizza, and realized just how poor a substitute New York style fertilizer was. A few years later I had the opportunity to try pizza at a few places in Italy. Ugh. Surprisingly the “za” was better I Saudi Arabia of all places.

DryOwlTacos says:
May 26, 2010 at 2:10 pm

I like my za with roni and shrooms.

Borderman says:
May 26, 2010 at 3:23 pm

At least Lost made you think, about why this or that was happening or how it might reflect on real life. That's what quality narrative fiction is suppose to do–make you think. Or so I was taught in 8th grade. But that was in 1966, and as any troll busting in here can tell
you nothing worthwhile could have been taught back then. I've noticed in my circles this week that certain colleagues in my office are having big problems with the religious-spiritual context of the last 10 minutes of the final Lost episode. “But WHY,” they whine. Because Jack's father is named Christian Shepherd, that's why. My chiropractor completely missed seeing the symbols for the world's major religions on the stained-glass window behind his father's coffin when Jack walks around it, and was just “so disappointed with the entire sixth season.” Yeah, it took so much energy to actually look at the screen, I know, then all that thinking stuff. So totally icky. For my two bits, I thought the Lost finale was terrific. Made me think. But that's where I came in.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 26, 2010 at 3:49 pm

@Borderman: you are so correct sir.

Also, Lost was about the journey not the destination. The life they had before the crash, the experience on the island, even a glance at life if it was different. The only thing we did not see was the lives of those who left on the plane with Frank*

The person yesterday criticizing the story telling was focusing on the big story arc and was forgetting that the bulk of the show was made up of the stories of their lives outside/before the crash and was a key to the show's success.

*OK, who would not like to see a cop show featuring James “Sawyer” Ford and Miles Straume (Chang)

Borderman says:
May 26, 2010 at 8:18 pm

who would not like to see a cop show featuring James “Sawyer” Ford and Miles Straume (Chang)

Count me in, as in “I would like to to see it,” especially if it were done in sort of a Starsky & Hutch meets Miami Vice style.
Another perfect day. This is getting so OLD. I lie, of course. The weatherguy in the paper today the long-range forecasts call for a cooler, wetter period – “June through August.” Which is also known as “summer.” I doubt it’s true, but if so -

Well, nothing. But nothing is sadder in these parts than the onset of fall after a miserly summer. We’re owed. We know when we’ve been paid.

This, however, goes a long way towards the balance owed.
Ah, but are we really owed anything, says the tiresome philosopher with his every-day-a-gift spiel. No, we say, because that's the answer we're supposed to give, and speaks of a zen-like detachment that helps us deal with loss and sorrow and places where they should have wifi but don't. Any day the Great Municipal Arboreal Inspector could come around, paint an orange line around our trunk, and that's it, so enjoy the fluttering of your leaves in the clement breeze while you may. But I have to work! Yes, you do; you have to be productive. But that leaves no breeze-appreciation time. Find a balance. Oh, so I should leave the office at 2 and sit on the roof and ommmmm for a while and let the messages pile up on my phone? No, but neither shall ye spend every night bent over the machinery of your craft, lest you become unbalanced. But there's a meeting tomorrow morning. OKAY, FINE, WORK, THEN DIE LATER. Okay, good. So it's okay to save for my retirement? IF YOU MUST. JEEZ.

It's quiet now; the clouds have passed over; the dog is sitting in the grass by his tree, and I'm trying to come up with a column instead of playing Half-Life 2 on the Mac or Red Dead Redemption on the XBox. I look forward to the latter, even though I am horrible at console games. Can't aim. Suffer from Imprecise Thumb. Off to work on the column, and do some other things; back in a bit.

**BACK**

Well, still not even halfway close to getting an idea, but that happens. Tomorrow will be a long grind of blog-posts and columnizing, and I have to—nay, am delighted and honored and lucky to—attend my daughter's Parade of States event at school, where some states will be displayed in the form of floats, and others as cakes. Which might make you think the floats are soda-and-ice-cream variety; nay. Which reminds me: I think the root beer float has come to define the float genre. If you ask kids today if they'd like a Float they don't really know what you mean, although they'd suspect root beer was

I’m sure the Float was once many-splendored, and involved all flavors of phosphates and iced cream, but now it’s down to one style, and even that one is a bit suspect. But the Root Beer Float is as close as kids will get today to anachronistic flavors, I think; the bite of the root, the caress of the cream, the fizz of the seltzer – these things seem to belong to a Eugene O’Neill version of America, with boys tending hoops with sticks, dogs with black circles over one eye, girls . . . doing something, I guess.

There was an attempt to rebrand the Root Beer Float in the 60s, I think – the basement cafeteria at DeLendrecie’s department store in Fargo had a soda machine that advertised the Black Cow, and it was integrated into the soda dispenser with a modern picture of an angular cow, eyes closed in contentment. This memory is inextricably bound with the smell of hamburgers, the happiness of being downtown shopping with Mom, and the nausea I incurred when I spun around on the red-vinyl stool too many times. Never had a root-beer float since.

Wikipedia informs me that this was actually the original name for a float, but this strikes me as booshwa:

The origin of the name “black cow” has always been of interest to food and beverage experts and allegedly dates to August of 1893 in Cripple Creek, Colorado. The only source of this story is the great grand nephew of Wisner, who has popularized it through advertising on his soft drink products and website. Frank J. Wisner, owner of the Cripple Creek Cow Mountain Gold Mining Company had been producing a line of naturally flavored, naturally carbonated premium soda waters for the citizens of the then booming Cripple Creek gold mining district.

He had been trying to create a special drink for the children of Cripple Creek and came up with an idea while staring out at his properties on Cow Mountain on a moonlit night. The full moon’s glow on the snow capped Cow Mountain reminded him of a dollop of vanilla ice cream floating on top of his blackened Cow Mountain. As he told the story later, he was inspired by this view to hurry back to his bar and add a big scoop of vanilla ice cream to the one soda water he produced that the children of Cripple Creek seemed to like best – Myers Avenue Red root beer – and served it the very next day.

Uh-huh. I suspect all these forms of origin mythology – but wouldn’t it be nice if it were true? Mining company exec is looking at the mountains one night, thinkin’ about the kids of Cripple Creek, and the moon rising on the fresh breast of the mountain snow done gave him a eureka moment. But I love how people are compelled to invent these stories for the most prosaic of earthly delights, as if moonlight must attend the birth of a humble dessert. It speaks to our need to mythologize everything, doesn’t it? Even though we
know almost nothing in our lives works this way, we like to think that surely some things are born of midnight inspiration and poetical synthesis. Some things are, yes - which is why these stories ring true with the credulous. I know I repeated many such tales in my 20s, because they were good stories to tell in a pub, an anecdote that spoke of one's great store of behind-the-scenes know-how. There would always be someone at the table who thought he was clever because he knew Coca-cola used to have cocaine, man, but telling him about the real origin of the Black Cow, or the suicide on the Wizard of Oz set, or Walt Disney's frozen head - well, he'd hold his tongue. I am in the presence of like master knowing-things dude.

Later today: Black and White World. And maybe that picture. I was too busy to shoot myself yesterday, and may that always be so. Words to live by, those. See you at tumblr and PopCrush!

48 RESPONSES TO perfect, con’t

ken j says:
May 27, 2010 at 1:29 am

The black cow story is one of the reasons I enjoy reading The Bleat so much. When I was a kid my dad told me floats were also called black cows. I haven't heard of it or thought of it since, but somehow it remained attached to one of my rapidly decaying ganglia for 35 years. Amazing.

vanderleun says:
May 27, 2010 at 3:08 am

“DeLendrecie's department store in Fargo had a soda machine that advertised the Black Cow,”

Been there. Had the drink. Twirled on the stool.

Modern float variant: Coke float made with Mexican coke. That's the Mexican coke...NOT the current fructosed crap.

Homemade? Place the classic float glasses in the freezer at least an hour before making. Serve while the froth turns to flakes in the glass.

Ross says:
May 27, 2010 at 3:52 am

That story is almost certainly apochryphal; as Cecil Adams says about word/phrase origins, but the principle's the same, “The cuteness of the story is in inverse proportion to the likelihood of its actually being true.” Whatever the truth about the original meaning of the term, I recall at least one fast food chain(Arby's, I think) back in the late '60s-early
'70s offing a “Black Cow” which wasn’t much like straight root beer. I think it might have been a commercial product from (or licensed by) the people who made Black Cow suckers. There was kind of a mocha taste to it. Pretty good, as I recall it.

Ross says:
May 27, 2010 at 3:53 am

Of course, I like sarsaparilla better than root beer as a kid, so what do I know.

inhocsig says:
May 27, 2010 at 4:02 am

A “black cow” is what we called floats made with cola when I was a kid growing up in central Massachusetts during the 60's. It meant we were out of root beer.

No One of Consequence says:
May 27, 2010 at 6:00 am

I grew up in Illinois in the late 70s/80s, and that’s my recollection as well. Floats were made with root beer. Black cows were made with Pepsi, Coke (or even RC if that was what was on sale). Since we didn’t often buy root beer, we mostly had black cows.

ed in texas says:
May 27, 2010 at 6:41 am

Personally, I preferred chocolate ice cream and Dr Pepper, but then I’m from the south. The ‘black cow’ story is a touching vignette of an altruistic genius toiling away for our betterment; much better than the plebian notion that anyone working at a Dairy Queen might have had the same idea. BTW, the first time I heard of a black cow was when Steely Dan sang about it.

Cambias says:
May 27, 2010 at 6:50 am

Chocolate ice cream floated in RC Cola is a treat for the gods — and I’m a hardcore Coke drinker who would never consume RC otherwise.

Chuck says:
May 27, 2010 at 6:51 am

Agreed – A mouse makes much more natural feeling firearm aiming device than a console joystick. Wonder how a child who grew up with joystick console games would do on an actual firing range? (“I’m trying to point dad, but it keeps stopping!”) Also as a model airplane pilot, the up/down is usually reversed from what it *should* be – you pull back to go up.

Gene Dillenburg says:
May 27, 2010 at 7:32 am

Born in 1960, grew up in Chicago, and it was *always* a “black cow.”
I remember going to an ice cream social in the church basement: everyone in our family was placing complicated orders, specifying what kind of ice cream to place in what kind of drink. I ordered a black cow off the menu, knowing exactly what it was, but was taken a little aback when the waitress didn't ask for any clarification. I asked my Mom, why didn’t she ask me what kind of ice cream or soda I wanted? And Mom replied, because a black cow is always vanilla in root beer. I got what I wanted, but was disappointed I didn’t get special attention. A lesson in there somewhere.

I don’t think I even heard the phrase “root beer float” until I was in college.

Gina says:
May 27, 2010 at 7:32 am

Mr. Lileks, did you mean a Norman Rockwell version of America? Because in a Eugene O’Neill version . . . well, they’d all be drinking something, but it wouldn’t be root beer floats. 😊

(And yay for root beer floats! Love ‘em!)

Aaron in Cincy says:
May 27, 2010 at 7:42 am

Here in southwestern Ohio, everyone know that “pink cows” are the best float. Barq’s red creme soda and vanilla ice cream is what I grew up on.

DrBear says:
May 27, 2010 at 7:50 am

In small-town Wisconsin, our root beer stand (always referred to in that way) offered both a root beer float and a black cow. I always was told the black cow had the ice cream in the bottom with the root beer poured on it, and the float had the ice cream put in the root beer after pouring. Who knows?

I do remember seeing ads for Coke floats and 7-Up floats, and I am sure they were nice, but there is something about the classic RBF. Just had one last week, not at that small root beer stand, but at a Sonic. Still good, though.

Jennifer says:
May 27, 2010 at 7:55 am

Never cared for them. I like my ice cream to be free of bubbly liquid, thank you. I’ve never heard of them being called a black cow, though. They’re called floats here in NYC.

Jimbo says:
May 27, 2010 at 8:09 am

Black Cow has always been one of my favorite Steely Dan songs but I was never sure exactly what the title was referencing. Somehow, with Donald Fagen and Walter Becker, I suspect it may have been something more potent than root beer and ice cream.

It's over now
Drink your big black cow
And get out of here...

Jerry Ray says:
May 27, 2010 at 8:29 am

From what I’ve read of Red Dead Redemption, your aiming issues shouldn’t be a problem. It’s got 3 levels of aiming: full manual, normal (where the crosshair locks on to bad guys automatically for a brief period), and easy (where the crosshair locks on to bad guys automatically for a longer period). Combine this with a slow-motion “quick draw” shooting ability, and the reviews have been saying that shooting is almost too easy.

Geoff says:
May 27, 2010 at 8:30 am

A&W has been advertising orange floats recently – sounds like it would taste like a Dreamsicle, so I’ll be having one this summer.

Brisko says:
May 27, 2010 at 8:44 am

I remember Dr. Pepper floats as a kid. I think my mother made them for us kids, annoying the crap out of her on a hot summer day, to shut us up for a few minutes. Mom was like that, and she LOVED Dr. Pepper. I am quite fond of it myself.

Actually, a Dr. Pepper float sounds really good right now, even though it’s not even noon. Mental note: make this happen today.

browniejr says:
May 27, 2010 at 8:49 am

@DrBear: Courtesy of our genial host: http://www.lileks.com/institute/gallery/sevenup2/11.html (go back one for 7Up in Milk!)

@Geoff: Best Orange drink out there- would be GREAT in a float: Henry Weinhard’s Orange Cream Soda.

Bob W. says:
May 27, 2010 at 8:56 am

Well Geoff beat me to it, though I didn’t know A&W had it in their advertising.

Root Beer floats are still #1, but Orange pop and vanilla ice cream... mighty good.

juanito - John Davey says:
May 27, 2010 at 9:00 am

Last day of School for the kids today – this week’s treat in the classrooms to celebrate: Root Beer Floats.

Root Beer floats were my late Father’s absolute favorite summer treat.

For variety, I really like Orange Crush Floats.

Black Cows have always included either Cola, or Dr. Pepper in our
neck 'o the woods.

Now I'm thinking that I want a blackberry malt from DQ or a Lime Rickey from a soda fountain. Or a raspberry lime rickey....

**AtH2O Kent** says:
May 27, 2010 at 9:39 am

Also from Illinois, but with Wisconsin heritage–Black Cow all the way. Any other beverage than root beer, and you had a float. I can't remember what the Brown Cow variant was, maybe Coke & ice cream? Root Beer & Butter Pecan ice cream? 7Up and raspberry sherbet was the best of the lesser floats.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
May 27, 2010 at 9:57 am

Lot of Illinois folks here today. I remember the black cow they had at the A&W root beer drive in at Watseka, IL as a kid. Mom would always stop at it on the home from the swimming pool there.

@Gene Dillenburg, ice cream social and Chicago. Funny, our little church had them too. I figured it was one of those old time social artifacts that hang on in the little towns. So they had them in the big city too? Neat.

**swschrad** says:
May 27, 2010 at 10:14 am

ad challenge: 9 out of 10 doctors recommend Camels for your throat, and Norton sandpaper for your toilet needs. the 10th is through laughing at you rubes and banking your cash, and is sailing on his sailboat in the caribbean.

RBF: best ones at home were made with Hires back in the day. out, have always loved the old-style A&Ws. definitely second putting mugs in the freezer for frosty mugs, either for barley pop or RBFs. I'd think Sprecher root beer would make a dandy float, too. 1919 is so smooth already that the ice cream might take all the RB edge off the float.

now you've got me going, dang it. a fine warm Spring/Summer holiday weekend to make floats in.

**RebeccaH** says:
May 27, 2010 at 10:20 am

Oh my. Reading that, I could actually *taste* the root beer and Dr. Pepper floats I used to have at my grandmother's house. If I had one today, I'd probably choke over the too-sweetness, but what a memory!

**Jeff** says:
May 27, 2010 at 10:21 am

In my opinion the best Float is Lime Sherbet and 7-Up. Used to be Lime Sherbet and Bubble-Up, but I can't find that anymore. Anyway, perfect cooler for summertime kids.

Nowadays, however, I would opt for a Gin Fizz...
Glenn says:
May 27, 2010 at 10:27 am

“Eugene O'Neill version of America, with boys tending hoops with sticks, dogs with black circles over one eye, girls . . . doing something, I guess.”

Was also wondering about the Eugene O’Neill reference! hehe

And, yes, the lacuna that is the history of girlhood in America is perfectly captured in that sentence as well…

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 27, 2010 at 10:55 am

Well now I know what special treat I want at our little memorial day weekend BBQ.

It was always Coke floats at home because we always had Coke around. Root Beer floats at A&W. Now a days root beer seems to be the standard. never heard “black cow” heard of egg cream.

Last year I was at Johnny Rockets and was pleased to order a Pepsi Float without them blinking an eye. Yummy.

swschrad says:
May 27, 2010 at 11:07 am

@Jeff: discovered in high school a diabetic-killer that tasted great. Smuckers fruit syrup (fave: blueberry) poured into 7-up.

which reminds me… it's time to make my regular appointment.

the one thing that might get me across town, in traffic, in unfamiliar territory and at the back of a line, would be a cherry/lime soda. I hear Sonic makes a specialty of them.

GardenStater says:
May 27, 2010 at 11:26 am

@Gina: “Mr. Lileks, did you mean a Norman Rockwell version of America? Because in a Eugene O'Neill version . . . well, they’d all be drinking something, but it wouldn’t be root beer floats…”

O’Neill wrote one play that’s a lovely story, and if Norman Rockwell had been a playwright, he would have written it: “Ah, Wilderness!” A beautiful, funny, and touching story about a loving family.

Some say that “Long Day's Journey Into Night” is what O'Neill's family was really like, and “Ah, Wilderness!” depicts the family he wished he'd had.

If you ever get a chance, go see it.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 27, 2010 at 11:59 am

Here in Bay Area CA it is raining again. I don't think we are going to dry up and blow away this year.
**Spud says:**  
May 27, 2010 at 12:00 pm

I prefer the taste of Diet Coke to regular, but it feels funny to order a float with Diet Coke. Kinda like eating a big ol' honeybun with a Diet Coke.

I wonder if the root beer float had a special attraction to folks early on when root beer (soda pop!) was not served cold, so the ice cream helped to cool the drink.

**Borderman says:**  
May 27, 2010 at 12:06 pm

My grandfather (1896-1979) made them once a week or more, Wednesdays and Saturdays usually, and called them all Frosties, regardless of contents. Frosty for singular. His favorite was always vanilla ice cream over Frostie root beer, which is still made in Dublin, Texas by a local bottling company with cane sugar, but I don't think it's available anywhere else. His secondary fave was Coca-Cola over vanilla ice cream.

He made ones for me with vanilla ice cream and Dr. Pepper (mmmm-mmm I can taste it now) because when I stayed with my grandparents I was a Dr. Pepper person. Today I am a Coke Zero person and can come close to but never really capture the same flavor with Coke Zero and no-sugar added vanilla ice cream. That lime sherbet and 7-Up sounds real tasty, and Smuckers blueberry syrup with 7-Up sounds completely wicked, but Frosties are, as swschrad called them, diabetic-killers and I ain't ready to go. Yet.

I learned a float was a Frostie in Cub Scouts. Never heard the phrase “black cow” until I had a girlfriend in college who was originally from Wisconsin. She called all Frosties black cows, regardless of ice cream flavor or what you poured over it, sort of the opposite of my grandfather in that respect.

@Mr. Lileks:

nothing is sadder in these parts than the onset of fall after a miserly summer.

As a former Omaha resident I know that sadness. Do I ever. It also can be the motivation to get the heck out of Dodge and find work in warmer climes.

**grs says:**  
May 27, 2010 at 12:23 pm

Nobody's mentioned chocolate sodas yet? Chocolate sodas are like root beer floats, only with Chocolate! And soda water instead of root beer, of course. Long ago, back in the ‘90s, they were still on the menu at Baskin Robbins, but none of the teenage employees knew what they were or how to make them. They do take a bit more skill to make than a root beer float. You have to add just the right amount of chocolate syrup. You also have to mix a “base” of chocolate and ice cream or whipped cream to give the drink a bit of creaminess. Finally, BR removed them from the menu. Probably too labor intensive—although recently I was in a BR and was surprised to see them on the menu again. Hopefully they aren't a lost art yet.
bgbear (roger h) says:
May 27, 2010 at 12:26 pm

the chocolate soda sounds close to the egg cream.

Kurt says:
May 27, 2010 at 12:32 pm

Thanks, jimbo! My middle-aged brain immediately went to Side 1, Track 1 of “Aja,” a veritable smorgasbord of illicit, adult pleasures I myself was NOT enjoying at age 14.

Joan says:
May 27, 2010 at 12:39 pm

@Gina
Well said. I thought the same thing about Norman Rockwell vs. Eugene O’Neill. Great minds and all . . . . An entire era evocative of Eugene O’Neill makes me less than nostalgic.

Joan says:
May 27, 2010 at 12:43 pm

I’m referring to Desire Under the Elms, Strange Interlude, and Mourning Becomes Electra.

Pencilpal says:
May 27, 2010 at 12:45 pm

Anybody ever had A-Treat Birch Beer? I don't know if it's sold everywhere or just in the Lehigh Valley, PA. We used to buy it from the corner store up from my grandparents' rowhouse in Allentown. They made cream soda too, and they were both ja gut.

The Chick Voice says:
May 27, 2010 at 2:26 pm

As a Colorado native I feel compelled to tell all of you, that if you should find yourself this summer in our fair state, and see Cripple Creek on the map, and think back to this post……..don't be deceived. Whether the story of the Black Cow origins is true or not……..you won't find a quaint Colorado mining town in Cripple Creek. Though the surrounding scenery is lovely, the town itself is one of several destroyed by the scourge of “limited stakes gamblings”. It is a shell of it's quaint, historic self, and is now filled with the sound of penny slots from every door. An embarressment really. Now back to our original train of thought.

wawona says:
May 27, 2010 at 3:23 pm

re the Tumblr reference to the Avengers title sequence: I think we have our unnamed Texaco gas-goddess! Diana Rigg's identical American cousin??

GardenStater says:
May 27, 2010 at 4:11 pm
Oh, and speaking of phosphates: I was on vacation in New Mexico a few years back. We were traveling from Albuquerque to Santa Fe, and decided to take the Turquoise Trail (a “scenic byway”) instead of the Interstate. An excellent decision, as it turned out—not only is it a beautiful ride that didn’t add much time to our trip, but we stumbled across the fascinating town of Madrid, where we discovered an old drug store-turned-art gallery that served phosphates. What fun!

hpoulter says:
May 27, 2010 at 7:01 pm

Eugene O’Neill’s “Strange Interlude”, eh?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNkUtBa3_RI

Groucho’s most erudite bit – undoubtedly written by S.J. Perelman. the O'Neill bit starts about 2 minutes in.

jamcool says:
May 28, 2010 at 12:51 am

Another hard-to-find ice cream beverage? The root beer freeze-vanilla ice cream and root beer flavoring blended into a thick shake.

Pam-EL says:
May 28, 2010 at 5:31 pm

The Cripple Creek story is suspect. In the many years between the silver rush and legalized gambling C.C. had a population of about 11. And that was on a good day.

Kev says:
May 29, 2010 at 11:04 am

Weird—I’ve had two comments go unposted for the first time, and I don’t think I used any of the Not-So-Magic Words. James, if you’re moderating these, my previous comments to this post were two different attempts at the same thing, so if you approve, please discard the first one and keep the second one, which has a link to a Black Cow candy ad.

Lileks says:
May 29, 2010 at 12:45 pm

Lots of stuff gets tossed into the spam bin, which I don’t always get to every day. Sometimes multiple posts in a single day make the filters twitchy. Stuff that gets put in my moderation Q is usually pushed through by your host a few times a day. Unless I totally forget and wander off and forget, which has been known to happen.

swschrad says:
May 29, 2010 at 1:17 pm

@Lileks: like a, perhaps, black cow? seeking shade on a hot day?

alas, but whee, I have a timber roof over my head the next two hot days, doing OT. I could be in the garden, but then I’d be dying in the heat, too.
LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?

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Still not finding what you're looking for?
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

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A few highly recommended friends...

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

ARCHIVES

All entries, chronologically...

July 2013
June 2013
May 2013
April 2013
March 2013
February 2013
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August 2012

Please install and activate the “Twitter for WordPress” plugin to use this section.
Went to child’s “Parade of States” event at school. Auditorium was rockin' with the sort of glee you only get when school ends next week and this afternoon's been devoted to a show, cake, and kickball. Natalie came running up once she saw me, and announced she would be . . . the announcer. Pride! Sure enough, she took the mike, described each float according to a questionnaire each kid had filled out (Number of hours spent on project. Favorite part. One kid said he'd spent 30 hours on it, and his float was a cereal box in a wagon.) There must have been 60 floats. Well, good thing I had plenty of space on the camera card . . .

CARD DOOR OPEN

CARD NOT INSERTED

Yesterday I'd taken a picture with the camcorder, and removed the card to transfer it to the web. In the future – the near future, I expect – you'll be able to touch the picture on the camcorder screen and sent it where you want it, right down to the directory, right down the desired size, and then you can call up the WordPress file on your iPad and drag it right in. For now, though, if you don't have those magical wifi cards, you have to walk the disk over to where it's supposed to be and move it by hand.

But even that was magical, once; tiny cards! Slots! No paper, just images! Magic's greatest foe is familiarity, not the revelation of its secrets. If you didn't know how Houdini freed himself from a tank of water while encased
in chains, but he did it every day on your front lawn, you'd stop marveling. Yea, we have lost our sense of Wonder; we no longer even bother to wonder how things work. We just expect that they will, just as our hands respond to thought.

Speaking of which: I've been playing with the iPad Wired magazine, and that's the right word. People are bitching about the cost, and I will bitch if every issue is a separate application, but I've enjoyed the thing tremendously – partly because of the ads. After a short month of living with the device, I've come to expect that the ads will do something, and they usually do – they launch a browser, or play a video, or something. Ads that don't do anything are frustrating – you tap and tap, and say that's it? Just a picture? We're already finding ourselves trained to engage with ads because we expect added entertainment. The possibilities are endless. Advertising will be revolutionized more than content, perhaps. Advertising might even be more important than content. Old and busted: paying for eyeballs. New hotness: paying for fingertips.

Anyway. I used my iPhone to snap pictures and capture audio. When it was done I had cake with daughter and friends at their table; they told me this was where they always sat. Good to know.

Back home to finish a column and blog and then the day was done.

Played some “Red Dead Redemption” last night. I’m still somewhat new to this sort of game – consoles with many many buttons – but it was lovely, and interesting. Marred so far by intro scenes that had people on the train talking in tropes that betrayed a rather sophomoric understanding of the Old West: a Preacher Man was talking to his daughter about saving the Heathens, while two old biddies – one named “Mrs. Bush” – talked about Heathens and money. Seemed to be the game designers’ way of showing that they were 21st century people, which gave them full license to sneer at 19th century ideas. Well, lads, your time will be duly slagged by those who’ve moved far beyond your petty concerns, and if you’re cryogenically frozen, rethawed in 2300, watch a HoloGame where people in 2010 are riding an SUV the size of a Greyhound Bus, having earnest conversations about thwarting research on bio-fusion electro-DNA plasmareactors because it's God's Will, you’ll say hey, now wait a minute, that's not how people talked.

It's just a game, and yes, I have built a side-career out of mocking cultural values inferred from bygone jetsam, but I’m not trying to set up our modern ironized culture as superior just because we can't pump out happy-clappy imagery to sell soup. I kid because I love, as the saying goes. When the imagery is egregiously stupid and betrays an idea whose offensive nature should have been apparent to any civilization capable of flight and penicillin, yes, slap 'em. (More on this in the morn at Lint, the Institute of Official Cheer's daily blog.) But it's boring to criticize the 50s for not being as “enlightened” as the 70s, or think that “progress” doesn't have trade-offs. I put “progress” in “quotes” because the term is generally used to describe the devolution of social strictures, and while I think many such erosions had
salutary effects, civilizations often mistake change for progress. Any change premised on the mutability of human nature usually ends up being a mistake. Not the mutability of people; we’re quite pliable. Our natures, however, are fixed.

Did I mention there was cake? The cake was great.

** Anyway, the evening has been taken up with this and that – yes, I have no Black and White world this week. We’ll live. It’ll wait. I wanted to do many things this week but was gripped by malaise and hypochondria, to be frank. (The problem with hypochondria is knowing that hypochondria is no defense, which only encourages hypochondria.) So we just have a BleatPlus and a 100 Mysteries. There’s always next week! And there’s always the tumblr blog Lint, rolling out around 10 AM as usual, and a Strib column, and the weekend to restore things . . . except it doesn’t, really. The week charges the batteries, because the week is work. The weekend, alas, is often a fitful state: waiting to work. But the weekend is different from Friday; today is the perfect blend of work, quasi-work, and not-work. Enjoy! See you soon.

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Pass it along, if you wish

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** 93 RESPONSES TO the parade of states **

** browniejr ** says:

May 28, 2010 at 12:37 pm

your not you’re… oh for a buzz-worthy editor.

** bgbear (roger h) ** says:

May 28, 2010 at 12:53 pm

If I survived the crash on the Lost Island, I assume I will either be the guy sucked into the jet engine in the first episode or, be Neil, the up to now unnoticed guy, taken out with flaming arrow in season 5.

** swschrad ** says:

May 28, 2010 at 1:55 pm

@browniejr: have you missed the armchair psychologists, we are all of the island.

which makes this the crash😊

--- you are here. you can’t get there. lagbolt it and enjoy the weekend.

@bgbear: typical filter words are () () and of course () and (). anything that is not PC and has no flowers and unicorns and Hello Kitty on it will trip an autodisposal. all of which suits Our Gracious Host's political leanings well😊
bgbear (roger h) says:
May 28, 2010 at 1:13 pm

@swschrad: well that's pretty () and () and thanks a () lot.

Borderman says:
May 28, 2010 at 2:44 pm

@Mr. Lileks:

I have built a side-career out of mocking cultural values inferred from bygone jetsam

Thanks for the explanation. I have had a devil of a time trying to tell others what it is you do, and why you are so much fun. This almost covers it.

@shesnailie:

I'm pretty sure Joe Dimaggio would've busted a cap on him if Oswald hadn't...

Over Marilyn? Could be. The story is Joltin Joe was going to sue Paul Simon over the mention in “Mrs. Robinson” (a nation turns its lonely eyes to you, woo-woo-woo) until someone convinced him it really was a tribute. And then Joe was very pleased.

Hmm. Let's see... JFK goes beserk on the Johnny Rebs, provokes Civil War II, then gets waxed by the Yankee Clipper. There's a Turtledove novel in there somewhere.

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 28, 2010 at 2:47 pm

@Borderman, did you ever look at Turtledove's photo and get the sense he had been to a few too many Grateful Dead concerts?

juanito - John Davey says:
May 28, 2010 at 2:47 pm

#bgbear (roger h):
May 28, 2010 at 11:45 am

anyone figure some of the magic filter words that can share by misspelling or linking?

Socialist is the one that has blocked comments for me about 4 times. Not that I'm obsessed, or anything...

Borderman says:
May 28, 2010 at 2:49 pm

@bgbear (roger h): Just because you axed... the thing some accuse the president of being that begins with soc and ends with ist written together as one word will get your post blocked here on Bleat street. Don't axe me how I know.
Borderman says:
May 28, 2010 at 2:54 pm

@Mark E. Hurling:

did you ever look at Turtledove's photo and get the sense he had been to a few too many Grateful Dead concerts?

Either that, or he was the original casting for the Travelocity gnome, I'm not sure which. Yeah he probably is the proto-Deadhead now that I think about it. He turns out highly entertaining books, whatever his true identity.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 28, 2010 at 2:55 pm

Thanks, I figured it out and was surprised to find out “b—–ist” ala Monty Python is also blocked.

browniejr says:
May 28, 2010 at 3:02 pm

So you don't want to be filtered
One way to do this is to always toe the line
Citing long dead philosophers may be dangerous
I hope this post makes it
Always mind your language
Look lovingly at past ephemera
Insist on the validity of all points of view
Save those matchbooks!
To each according to his need; From each according to his ability

There. I feel better now.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 28, 2010 at 3:06 pm

ARTHUR: Cut down a tree with a herring? It can't be done.
KNIGHTS: Aaaaugh! Aaaaugh!
HEAD KNIGHT: Don't say that word.
ARTHUR: What word?
HEAD KNIGHT: I cannot tell, suffice to say is one of the words the Knights of Nee cannot hear.
ARTHUR: How can we not say the word if you don't tell us what it is?
KNIGHTS: Aaaaugh! Aaaaugh!

Borderman says:
May 28, 2010 at 3:10 pm

“b—–ist” ala Monty Python is also blocked.

Now my foot's tapping pert' near uncontrollable like on the floor 'cuz I can't decipher what this is and the folks downstairs are banging on the ceiling. Cops will be here soon, I reckon. Can you give us another clue? Just so we'll know. Not to use it here. I hear sirens. Oh me. My left eye is twitching.
bgbear (roger h) says:
May 28, 2010 at 3:35 pm

@Borderman: use Google to search for “The North Minehead Bye-Election” or are you just joshing me ❄

madCanada says:
May 28, 2010 at 3:44 pm

YES, I totally understand. The Blogmaster wants to run a light n' breezy blog here and partisan mudslinging is not the spirit of The Bleat (and I applaud him for that, seriously) … BUT I made a real funny sarcastic joke a while back about Daylight Savings Time being a schmm**shulmust idea (because it is) and none of you good Bleatniks got to enjoy my little jibe.

On the other hand, if I was running a blog, I'd filter out many of the same words myself … better safe than sorry.

madCanada says:
May 28, 2010 at 4:03 pm

Sarah Palin.

What? That name's not on the filter menu???

Never mind, I'm tired of goin' there.

madCanada says:
May 28, 2010 at 4:12 pm

@ bgbear / borderman

Boci*list.

Oh that's hilarious. What a silly bunt.

juanito - John Davey says:
May 28, 2010 at 4:12 pm

In my rush to complete a series of Server Migrations today (6 down, 2 to go!!) I neglected to comment on the Campbell Kids….

My younger brother and I were fortunate enough to be receive PERSONALIZED Campbell Soup Bowls as toddlers. I believe my mother still has them.

To further confuse, my bowl had a shortened variant of my middle name printed at the bottom, since that is what my family called me (both my father and I shared the same first name). When I started the first grade, there were 4 other Michaels in class (one of whom became my closest and oldest friend) my teacher looked at me and said “we're going to call you John.” My six year old response – That's not my name!!!!!!!

Shortly thereafter, my similarly named best friend has lunch at my house and noted “hey, you got a bowl with MY name at the bottom of it.”

Story of my life.
Borderman says:  
May 28, 2010 at 4:21 pm

@bgbear (rogerh):

are you just joshing me

No, not joshing. Just having fun describing my not knowing. I do get kinda jittery when I can't solve a puzzle. Use to work as a knee-capper for Joe DiMaggio but that was years ago. As it turned out, easily convinced the cops it was that white trash over yonder by the trailer park making noise anyway. (These are not the hillbillies you want.)

Thanks, I found the reference via Google. It's like Herr H___r is from the party that's like what people say the president is that begins with soc and ends with ialist (although browniejr's verse is so much more creative) but with a B. Yes. Quite.

I love the Pythons, have been a fan for 30+ years, but don't have much verbatim dialog committed to memory and certainly didn't know this sketch. Hilarious! Will have to look for it. For some reason it reminds me of the Mr. Neutron sketch and the CIA guy disguised as a dog having to go walkies all the time. Cleese must have had a thing about Herr H____r of the B____t party. There was a Fawlty Towers episode about uh, tourists of Teutonic descent, staying at the hotel and a nervous Basil keeps letting slip, Fruedian style, comments about Normandy, Eva Braun, invading Poland, etc. It was the second hardest I ever laughed. Hardest was at the Marx Brothers' A Night at the Opera on first viewing. I guess Groucho, Chico and Harpo's surname is OK for here. I'll find out when I try to post this. After all it was no-relation Karl who started all the trouble for the czar with soc ends with ialism back in the day, and not the beloved brothers.

bgbear (roger h) says:  
May 28, 2010 at 4:27 pm

@madCanada- it is funny that variation is included. Do you know you have the wrong sketch? I got them mixed up as well.

Mark E. Hurling says:  
May 28, 2010 at 4:28 pm

I doubt anyone will be surprised to learn I have been blocked or filtered out a couple of times also. It only happened when I had submitted multiple lengthy posts on some recent hot topics. I was careful as always to avoid bad language and overt violent attack language. I understand that a few may disagree with what I deem such language, but so be it. I thought perhaps I couldn't post because I had exceeded some total character limit.

Since then I have limited some of my comments so as not invoke this limit and even self-censored to make sure I was on the right side of the offensiveness line. Today for instance; I contemplated commenting on the whole desegregation topic, but thought, well perhaps I might go beyond the pale. I've made some brusque comments here, but only in defense of this genre our Genial Host provides and to discourage those who transgress.
madCanada says:
May 28, 2010 at 4:32 pm

@ browniejr ... you are hilarious.

@ borderman / bgbear ... whatever our diffs, Python unites us. Cool. (BOCIAL*STI)

@ Bleatmaster. (Speaking for self) I honour your parameters ... but as Will Hayes found out, Free-Speechers are slippery eels.

That said, Bleatmaster sets the tone, and I doff my cap to the Bleatmaster. Have a great weekend, everyone!

madCanada says:
May 28, 2010 at 4:40 pm

@ bgbear,

Yes, i know those are two different sketches. But I'll never forget Eric Idle's "I was attacked by a bat" ... The Bocial*st skit must have been written the same week!

BTW, both Cleese & Idle have loudly commented (on YouTube) about Michael Palin not being the most pervasive Palin anymore. I'm still waiting for Michael to speak up. Lots of potential fun there.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 28, 2010 at 4:44 pm

because of of similarity of my last name I was called “Hilter” by friends so I remember the sketch well.

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 28, 2010 at 4:45 pm

I still call the Sunday paper the bolor supplement.

swschrad says:
May 28, 2010 at 4:58 pm

the “slow down, cowboy!” notice if you post too fast and too often (it's somewhere around 3 posts within x minutes) on Da Bleat is not implemented. your post just feeds... the Wolverines.

knowing these things exist and exercising a rare restraint has prevented me from finding out if the blogware feeds your fingers... to the Wolverines.

browniejr says:
May 28, 2010 at 5:01 pm

Here is the sketch— http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVxM5iBLeU4

bgbear (roger h) says:
May 28, 2010 at 5:07 pm

@madCanada: a few more speaking gigs for Sarah and Michael may not be the richest Palin either.
madCanada says:
May 28, 2010 at 5:13 pm

@ bgbear
Michael will always be the most-travelled Palin.
And I daresay, the one who gave the world the most happiness.

JamesS says:
May 28, 2010 at 6:21 pm

#
browniejr:
May 28, 2010 at 12:35 pm

@bgbear: Just make sure you're in the middle section of the airplane before it crashes on The Island... you're chances of making it to the end of the series are much better 😃
#

browniejr:
May 28, 2010 at 12:37 pm

your not you're... oh for a buzz-worthy editor.

Actually, you had it right the first time. “Just make sure you're” is a contraction of “Just make sure you are,” so the “you're” is the correct choice.

browniejr says:
May 28, 2010 at 7:29 pm

Remember folks, we're just visitors here at Mr. Lileks' site. Let's not act like this!: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GH7pfVvCII

@JamesS: I'm never sure what is correct...

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 28, 2010 at 7:54 pm

Thank you browniejr, I'll henceforth try ever so hard to keep this in mind, and act in more civil manner.

madCanada says:
May 29, 2010 at 1:59 pm

@ browniejr
“This is my wife Audrey; she smells a bit, but has a heart of gold.”
LOL.

Neen says:
May 29, 2010 at 2:05 pm

Regarding the Campbell Kids on BleetPlus, all I can say is do NOT read the recipe for the Pow Wow Chow on a full stomach. You've been warned.
fizzbin is trying to incite a riot. I will call the guards.

Omnaris(tm)! To the nose!

that'll teach ya.

1. There is nothing wrong with my nose….that a machete can't fix.
2. I'm a lover not an agent provocateur.
3. Note to self: buy more bullets. If a gun fight breaks out, I don't want to be standing there with my (CENSORED) in my hand 😈

in which case, happy Memorial Day.

in case of riot, carry a small hatband badge that says “I'm with the local political committee.” you will be considered irrelevant and passed by, even if you have Molotov cocktails in both hands.

frankly, can't see wny Molotov bothered. all the proof is gone by the time you get the thing stirred.

seen on the Intertubes, offered for your consideration…

why can't BP stop the oil well leak?

they sent the guys who clean the bathrooms.

Let me echo swschrad here, fizzbin. Happy Memorial Day, and thanks for your service to our country and to those you were sworn to protect and serve.

get up early and set that flag up.

you're doing it for a million who died so you could sleep in.

and millions more who sacrificed.

And lest we forget, the realities of life: George Orwell “People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf.”
swschrad says:
May 30, 2010 at 9:12 pm

they didn’t start as rough men, and God willing, return to normal life.

but difficult duty creates difficult circumstances.

thank you to all who have served, and still serve.

Mark E. Hurling says:
May 30, 2010 at 10:42 pm

@swschrad, as always, a good conclusion; summing up the light overcoming the dark. You have a gift for that. Thank you, too.
Permit me a brief vacation. The Bleat returns tomorrow. Strib Memorial Day column here. Rest assured this will not be a truncated week, though – the entire rich panoply of updates is finished and ready to roll, so it will be a busy week.

Subjects for discussion:

What you plan to grill. (You are grilling, right? Or will have something grilled on your behalf?)

Who comes to mind on Decoration Day? For me it’s this man: laid on the field of Gettysburg for days, wounded. Got up. Walked away. Kept going; headed West, as so many did. Crossed the Red River, and stopped. Staked out his place. His descendants still farm it. Charles Newton: GAR soldier, Farmer. I own a piece of the land he was the first to break.
PS Yes, I know, Memorial Day is for those who died in service, but no one in our family died in the service. He came the closest, being grievously wounded.

---

28 RESPONSES TO memorial day, 2010

**Rick in Mexico** says:
May 31, 2010 at 4:10 am

I'm re-reading “The Killer Angels,” for at least the fifth time. I always choke up at Pickett's Charge, and I'm a damn Yankee. What was Lincoln's phrase? “The last full measure of devotion.”

May all our veterans, living and dead, rest peacefully today.

**Paradise** says:
May 31, 2010 at 5:23 am

5:30 a.m. Ribs on the smoker.....for lunch at noon
**GardenStater** says:
May 31, 2010 at 6:22 am

Paradise: I'm right there with you, except that the ribs will go on at 8:30, so we can eat around 4:30-5:00.

I'm also making skillet corn bread, and maybe some cole slaw.

But the ribs are what will be the centerpiece of the day. Gotta love low-n-slow BBQ.

**Chuck** says:
May 31, 2010 at 7:05 am

Here's a little Internet serendipity – I'm watching the movie 'Midway' Saturday, like anyone of the 'American Race' (their words) would do when, I swear, that Japanese bishot sounds just like Paul Frees. Check the all knowing imdb and sure enough, he's the uncredited voice of Admiral Yamamoto! But while you're looking at his list of movies, you see something a few years later called 'Hardware wars' and find out it's a parody of Star Wars, and it's on youtube! Complete with the characters Fluke Starbucker, Ham Salad, the robots 4-Q-2 and Artie Deco, etc. It's worth checking out just for the ‘Wookie’ 😊)

**Patrick** says:
May 31, 2010 at 7:15 am

Don't know if we're grilling today. Keeps threatening to rain. If we do grill, it's usually hamburgers and hot dogs, and maybe a few chicken breasts. One of these days we'll grill some steaks.

Spent most of the long weekend working on my new laptop and old desktop. Removed some programs (Primarily Office 2007…don't EVER let anyone install it on your machine, or their machine. JUST SAY NO!), and installed others. Plan to sell my desktop in a couple of months and use the laptop as the new computer.

**teach5** says:
May 31, 2010 at 7:41 am

Definitely ribs-dry rubbed on Sunday, oven roasted at for about an hour, then onto the grill, low with hickory smoke, about an hour. Sauce optional,homemade sides mandatory-cheddar dill bread, potato salad, slaw, baked beans. After that, we watch ‘Gettysburg'. God Bless all who gave their last full measure of devotion.

**bgbear** says:
May 31, 2010 at 8:01 am

Spent a good part of weekend cleaning the garage, many rat/mouse nests. I am tempted to grill the cat, I mean film noir style with the hot lights and all. I think he is excepting bribes.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
May 31, 2010 at 8:30 am

When I started this I thought of my father, but then your simple tintype of Sgt. Newton drew my mind to Gen. John A. Logan also from the Midwest and of our first Civil War. Logan was born in
Jackson County, IL and I was surprised to learn, a major influence during the post-war. Logan Heights in San Diego was named for him, who knew?

He started what we now know as Memorial Day by organizing a parade of Union veterans. When some confederate veterans began to gather in places along the route to watch, Logan invited them to join the parade, saying that this was to honor all the fallen during that dark time. They did, and so the event grew. It being southern Illinois there were a lot of confederate sympathizers and copperheads all around the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, so this was no idle gesture on Logan's part. The cemetery where this parade ended is in Carbondale, IL, where I was a policemen. There is a flagpole there, and a standing order was to raise that flag every morning. It was a quiet, very tree grown place with dark deep shade and had a great sense of solemnity about it.

May we all remember and be thankful to those who served and continue to do so.

---

Ryan says:
May 31, 2010 at 9:00 am

Sadly, I'm enjoying Memorial Day at work, as I'm Canadian. :/ But then, we had last Monday off for “Victoria Day”, where we celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday by getting hammered and going camping. 😄

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JohnW says:
May 31, 2010 at 9:21 am

Damn right the first thing that goes up is the flag. In my case its the last flag owned by Staff Sgt. Maurice G. Williams, US Army Air Corps. Rest in peace, Pop.

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RebeccaH says:
May 31, 2010 at 9:49 am

My Memorial Day thoughts always go to my dad and uncles, WWII veterans all except for the one who was a farmer and the one who was too young. They're all gone now, God rest their souls.

And I always think of our military overseas right now, not just on Memorial Day, but every day.

---

Jeff says:
May 31, 2010 at 9:59 am

Grilling, yes, of course. Pork loin this year.

I have many in my family that are honored on this day, but I will mention two: Louis W. Brock (my Grandfather) and Delmar Pachl, my Great Uncle. Delmar was an artist who studied art at the Kansas City Art Institute in the '30s, with Thomas Hart Benton as an instructor. He was teaching art at the college in Arlington, Texas (now UT-A) in '42 when he decided to join the US Army to see if he could help. He became a Pacific Theater sketch artist, of all things, and managed to do a handful of charcoals before a shell hit him, killing him instantly. He is interred at the Punch Bowl, Hawaii.

My Poppy Luke, as Grandpa was known us, landed at Normandy, fought all the way across Germany and through the Bulge, without...
harm. He came home, married his sweetheart, and farmed in Greene County Missouri, as well as working for The Frisco. He died in his easychair, in front of his fireplace in December of 1983.

Two men, two stories, one America. God Rest, and God Speed to all our fallen men and women.

Philip Scott Thomas says:
May 31, 2010 at 10:58 am

One thing I’ve come to love about this site is the amazing writing. Not just from Our Genial Host, but from the commenters as well. Well done, guys, and thanks.

browniejr says:
May 31, 2010 at 11:19 am

May God bless all those who gave, including my father and several uncles, and are still giving, like my nephews, so that we may have not just today, but many days, to remember.

Will spend the day in quiet reflection of the gifts they have bestowed on all of us.

ghost_repeater says:
May 31, 2010 at 11:39 am

Ribeye steaks, medium rare, smoked over hickory chips, with lots of grilled vegies. And a six-pack of Heineken. Yes, Heineken. I’m %@ that Pabst Blue Ribbon s@#.

Neen says:
May 31, 2010 at 1:06 pm

No grilling as it is solid rain here in Seattle. My thoughts today are with my brother who is in the Naval Reserves and just recently activated. He served during the Gulf War aboard the USS Missouri. I’m so proud of him and thankful for his service.

Kev says:
May 31, 2010 at 1:22 pm

@Jeff: So I assume that your late great-uncle Delmar was the namesake of the also-late Pachl Hall at UTA? That building was right next to the Music Building, where I’ve had some business over the years, so I passed by it all the time.

Pachl was certainly showing its age in later years, but it still seemed functional, and I was surprised when it was torn down and replaced with a building that looks like one of those portables they have at overcrowded public schools. (Although what they put in there—a “Smart Hospital” that lets nursing students work on simulated patient manikins—is certainly a worthy addition to the campus, so I guess what it looks like on the outside doesn’t really matter.)

Our Boom With a View says:
May 31, 2010 at 2:31 pm

My father was a WWII, Nazi POW, B17 navigator who was blown form his plain in the Battle of the Bulge.
He did not perish

He was awarded (among other medals) the Purple Heart. He always said the Purple Heart only meant he was dumb and slow enough to get hit. We I was a kid the knuckle deep shrapnel scars in his arms felt an awfully lot like bravery.

We will be having chicken and ribs and be together and remember that this is stuff that dying warriors wish for.

We will also hope that one day we stop sending them to die.

Our Boom With a View says:
May 31, 2010 at 2:32 pm

I mean plane! Stupid auto-correct.

chrisbcritter says:
May 31, 2010 at 4:33 pm

Dad was a little too young to be in WWII but served in the Air Force during the occupation of Japan in ’48-’49. He got shot at one time by some guy on a fishing boat (there was some Communist rabble-rousing among the Japanese populace when Mao took over in China) but wasn’t hit, fortunately.

ghost_repeater says:
May 31, 2010 at 4:49 pm

My Dad was also a WWII vet. He got drafted into the infantry while attending Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. He wanted to be a Vocational Agriculture teacher. His two younger brothers got agriculture deferments, since they were farming the home place, so the U.S. Army sent my Dad right up to the front lines in Germany. If there was ever any poor s.o.b. who was going to die for his country, it was my Dad. He told me that the only reason he survived was that he learned how to type in high school, so when the commanding officers learned of this, they sent him back to the rear where he typed out orders and payroll checks for the rest of the war. He was a great Dad to have, but he hardly ever talked about the war.

Pencilpal says:
May 31, 2010 at 6:29 pm

My 91-year-old dad never saw combat in WWII but was an airplane mechanic for the Air Force, mostly around Nottingham, England. On the rare occasions that he talks about it, he tells of watching pilots leave the hangar on a mission, and he tears up when he relates how he felt when some didn’t return.

Jeff says:
May 31, 2010 at 7:02 pm

@Kev: Indeed Delmar was the namesake of good ol’ Pachl Hall. Interestingly, UT contacted our family prior to the demolition of Pachl Hall, and said they were mulling some alternative ways of honoring Delmar. I was surprised there was anyone left there that not only remembered Delmar, but cared! We understood the ways of brick and mortar. One idea that was floated was “Pachl Park” in which the students could relax and study. But I suppose space there
is at a premium. I do hope that somewhere on campus is a nice reminder of who Delmar was… our family was one of masons and stonemasons, musicians and artists. Delmar was a bright, young man when he signed up, and deserves a little memorial. Thank you for noticing!!

juanito - John Davey says:
May 31, 2010 at 11:30 pm

Memorial Day reminds me every year of my Dad as a 17 year old Marine, hitting the beach at Okinawa, or my uncles, wounded in the Philippines, or my other uncle, who served in the Occupation forces in Japan after the War.

I also think of the thousands of Americans who have given their last full measure in the most current conflicts in Iraq, and Afghanistan.

But then it comes back to my Dad, and what was lost to him and so many other boys after saving the world in 1945. Sure, they came home, but what did they lose? Innocence, mainly, I imagine.

So every year on the last Monday of May, I just remember. Isn’t that what we should do?

Oh, and Tri-Tip.

Stewart says:
June 1, 2010 at 1:08 am

My father is also a WWII vet. He did not make it overseas, as he was selected to be a Drill Sergeant for the duration. Growing up in his household, I could see from an early age the wisdom of that decision; if ever a man was made to be a top non-com it was Dad. My brother and I could march before we entered first grade. He kept working on National Guard scholarships until a few years ago, certain that without his effort the program would end. (I don’t know if the program lasted without his involvement) It was an enormous amount of paperwork and Dad refused to use any machine other than a manual typewriter for his work.

C. Wingate says:
June 1, 2010 at 7:46 am

My father was too young for WW II and barely missed Korea, but my grandfather went Over There in WW I. No damage, though.

As for grilling, I fired up some lamb loin chops I had been saving for the occasion, plus some sausages because the chops wouldn’t be enough for the teenagers. And rain? Well, we didn’t get any, but rain never stops my grilling. Heck snow doesn’t stop it unless it’s too deep to get to the grill.

Finally, for Charles up top: “You’ll laugh, you’ll cry, you’ll kiss three bucks goodbye!”

swschrad says:
June 1, 2010 at 11:08 am

grilling: sirloins.

war: no, thanks.

dad: WWII, no thanks. seriously, he got one year of journalism
school in at ISU before Uncle Sam came along and told him to spend the next year sweating half to death in various Southern hellholes in a leftover wool army uniform. along the way, he got the BAR, which is a beast to pack. they finally shipped him overseas. third day we held Belgium, they sent the Checkerboard headed toward Germany. he did a little of this and that before he got parked with his outfit in the Ardennes as relief, where nothing was expected to happen.

well, something happened, Hitler's last gasp. Battle of the Bulge.

here's how the minister described it in Dad's eulogy. the minister being an old intern of Dad's who rose to General Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America…

“…He didn't tell storyes about the war. But I had realized he was a veteran. So I asked him about those years.

“He quietly told me of some of those experiences and about that terrifying day that led to the Silver Star. His squad was under intense fire from a protected foxhole up an incline. They could not advance without knocking out that foxhole. They could not retreat under the unremitting rain of bullets from that foxhole. Even though severely wounded himself, he crawled on his stomach. He crawled within feet of that foxhole. He crawled under fire, risking his life for the others who were with him.

“He had one chance, only one, to lob a grenade into that foxhole. He told me that he had never been that good an aim with a ball. But amazingly, he said, the grenade hit the ground on the edge of the foxhole and rolled into that foxhole. The grenade exploded. He had knocked out that machine-gun position. The troops with him under fire were saved by his courage.

“A short time later, when under counterattack, he kept fighting, even in spite of his own wounds and a grenade that exploded near his feet… .”

there were hundreds of thousands, millions, of stories like that one. picked out the last piece of German steel from Dad's back 50 years later, from a sore that reappeared once or twice a year in the small of his back.

the wife and I busted our butts gardening this weekend.

but it's nothing like our veterans in combat have seen.

you will never catch me without a flag up on the 31st.

never.

Richard says:
June 4, 2010 at 8:50 am


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