A perfect start to summer. Which means summer, once started, now imagines the Fourth, and once the Fourth takes shape in your mind – bunting, hot dogs, jingo toasts, fireworks – the summer has seen its end. I know, this is nonsense, and depressing nonsense, and proof I’m not 10: when you’re ten the summer is an interval of eternity somehow sliced into thirds. I used to thrill myself with the knowledge that 90 days minus one was eighty-nine days, which seemed damned near forever. But you get older; the summer no longer stretches out like an endless dappled field. It has its moods: sweet June, grown-up July, which you imagine as a month wearing a white shirt and long pants and a straw boater, mopping its forehead, and sedate solid August, which is summer in its last full ration. Honestly, if you’re satisfied with 31 days worth, nothing will satisfy you.

But here we are, halfway. But we’re always halfway to something anyway.

Since it’s summer, it means summer movies – next week Black and White World returns to the usual diet of 50s sci-fi films, which are always a joy. Drive-in fare. One hot night I’ll watch “Rear Window,” again, and imagine New York in the 50s, again. Friday night I watched “Blue Velvet,” because Dennis Hopper died, and I wanted to see if his performance was as unsettling as I remembered. Oh my yes. Time, and an endless flow of pseudo-psychos, may have blunted the force of Frank for people not around when the movie
came out, but I remember: nothing like that. DON'T YOU LOOK AT ME! Good Lord. Here's the thing, though: he wasn't real. Nearly everything in the movie was a dream, or so I now believe. Lynch does this a lot: Most of “Mulholland Drive” – a quirky TV pilot turned into an unutterably sad story – was a dream; the first half of “Fire Walk With Me” was a dream. So it is with “Blue Velvet, from the moment when the Clean-Cut Young Man goes out for a walk, and the camera goes right into an ear, to the moment at the end when the camera pulls out from his other ear as he wakens from a nap in the backyard. It was all in his head.

SATURDAY

Errands and book work. Fixed a sink – the second drain in the kitchen sink was sloooow, so I took out the trap and fished out foul gunk. But what to do with the gunk? Well, I put everything back together, poured the gunk into the disposal in the other sink, turned on the disposal, ran the water . . . and watched all the gunk come blarghing up the drain I'd just cleaned. Sigh. But it was temporary, and the drains now run smoothly. Given my general ineptitude at plumbing, I was pleased – and it made me realize why I don't like weekends as much as weekdays. On weekends I always have to do things that are outside of my narrowly-defined expertise zone. Drill this! Fix this! Work on the car! It's like I have to turn into Ward Cleaver just because it's Saturday. No one ever says “Hon, there's a Mahler symphony on the radio, can you come down and tell me which one it is? Also, I need a font identified, and the cookie-cache emptied.” No, it's always DO SOMETHING USEFUL AND PRACTICAL THAT HELPS EVERYONE IN A TANGIBLE FASHION. Boo hoo. Poor me. What's next, asking me to dig in the DIRT?

SUNDAY

I dug in the dirt. My wife wanted me to put in a trench so we could put in some edging to define the area between flowerbed and lawn. Let there be no doubt which is which. Let no one stop, confused, and wonder if the border twixt the twain is some strange never-land where flowers and grass mingle freely, or a paradigm shift where one manicured, artificial expression of the natural world suddenly becomes another. The trench was on a hill, which meant a certain amount of engineering was involved. I'm not good at this stuff, really, but, I managed to make it work, and it's fairly straight. That was the main accomplishment of Sunday.

Also played Half-Life 2, which is about an alien race enslaving earth and placing huge quantities of explosive barrels around cities. The Exploding Barrel is the video-game's great contribution to combat strategy, and it's a shame it has so few real-world uses. I remember the original Half-Life well, apparently – the minute I saw a tentacle hanging down from a ceiling, I froze. It had been ten years. But I knew what those were. And now, because I had Exploding Barrels, I could pick out up, let the tentacle draw it up, shoot the barrel, and blammo. Again, not a lesson for real life. Today's kids may make better soldiers because they're technically adept, but you can't really tell your squadron associates that you'll take out the terrorists by rocket-jumping over
the wall.

Also watched “Eagle Eye,” just to get it off the DVR. Good heavens, what a stupid movie. “North by Northwest” for people who have no attention span, and go to movies to be beaten. Super-smart computer is connected to everything and concocts elaborate plot all on its own. One of those movies where you get out the laptop and start reading reviews to see if everyone else hates it as much as you do. I love the reviews on imdb that say “I went to this not knowing what to expect.” Do these people put on a blindfold, have someone spin them around ten times then push them down the hall of the multiplex? How can you not know what to expect these days? “I went to ‘Indiana Jones’ not knowing much, and boy did I really enjoy it!!! Great film if you want to turn off your mind and be entertained!!”

The weekend’s entertainment was like that: obligatory. Have this, so should watch this. For some reason I watched “Three on a Match,” possibly because it was a 1950s musical with Jack Lemmon, the quintessential Man Made Anxious By Modern Things, like Modernity, and Ginger Rogers, a bit past per prime. (“She’s FAT” said many imdb reviews.) It’s one of those movies shot in Ultra-Pana-ToddAO-Cinerararound; when it’s on the screen it’s a mile wide and a inch tall, and it must have bedeviled the directors to figure out how to fill all that space. It’s one thing if you’re shooting a western, and it’s another if half the scenes take place in an apartment. People are constantly crossing the room.

MONDAY

Over to the Crazy Uke’s for Memorial Day, the first of the three get-togethers that define summer. Wesley drove his old turquoise station wagon . . .

. . . but for the last time, perhaps; he’s thinking of selling it. He has a new dog, a beautiful German Shepherd wearing the Cone of Shame to keep her from picking apart the fixin’ stitches. Theodore, the Uke’s old bowling-ball headed dog, suffered the puppy as old dogs will. Sometimes it’s as if they’re not of the same species, but of course they are; the old dog is what’s left after time burns off the exuberance and folly. Then again, wife just came back from a
walk with our old dog; he bounded in the back gate and barked and barked for something, because there has to be something more, doesn't there?

When they give up on Something, then they're old.

We had the most exceptional Polish sausages and bean salad and chips and cake, and sat outside identifying the problems of the world and fixing them with swift dispatch. The menfolk retired to the garage for cigars; the kids drew hopscotch boxes on the cement and bounced balls and tried not to be completely bored with a world that had so much OUTSIDE and so little glowing electronic rectangles. Daughter came over and sat in my chair for a while and listened to the grown-up conversation with what seemed to be keen interest. How they listen: on the way home the radio played some Frampton, and my daughter piped up from the backseat: He watches her when she's sleeping?

Yes, I said. He was arrested for that later.

Seriously?

No. I could have told her I won a trivia contest in 1975, in Iowa City, when I called into the radio station to identify Peter Frampton's earlier band. (Camel. Or rather, for legal reasons, I think, “Frampton's Camel,” since there was a prog-rock band by the same name. Should have just gone with Dromedary.) My prize was an album by “Mannheim Steamroller,” back before they became known for baroque arrangements of Christmas chestnuts. I could have told her about the talk-box controversy in the slow segment of “Do You Feel Like We Do” (quite likely, given the species’ lack of diversity in its sensory apparatus array) but no. I actually listened to that entire song on the road a while back, and was reminded why it sounded fresh: the tone of the guitar – bright and blown-out – and the simple melodic leads.

Anyway. We got home, and each went off to do the things each needed to do before the week, the real week, resumes. Wife actually went outside and planted some more; darkness fell, and still she toiled in the dirt. I looked up to see if Jasper was sitting by the door as always – if the gate's shut he barks; if it's open he sometimes wanders off on an expedition – and he wasn’t there. Aw, dammit. The search, the never-ending need for Something, like the smell of fresh squirrel poo or the infinitely subtle array of signals in a neighbor dog's marker-tree. He's usually on the other side of the block. Can't call him, since he doesn’t hear voices well, but he hears my whistle. Walked around the block in the last moments of daylight, too-tweet, too-tweet, waiting for him to bound out with an expression of interest: you? Here? Well, how about that. But nothing. Got home, expecting to find him on the steps, standing at the front door. No. Aw, dammit – so what now? Drive down to the creek? Make posters? He's old, his eyes are bad; could he make it back by snout-power?

He was inside on the rug, where he'd been all along, settling into the snug black night.
I know he has bad dreams; we've all seen dogs have bad dreams. Surely that means they have good ones as well. You wonder what those are like. You wonder who you are in your dog's good dream.

**Speaking of which:** in “Blue Velvet,” the hero's father is shown watering the lawn before he has his attack (heart attack? Looks more like a bee-sting reaction), and he's wearing a hat.

Only one other person in the movie wears a hat, and it's the same kind – Jack Nance, one of Frank's crew:
When Kyle wakes at the end of the movie, he waves to his father, now recovered; he's off in the distance:

No close-up. Same hat. Same man.

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Two updates today – Motels around noon, and Comic Sins around two. See
you then!

Pass it along, if you wish

46 RESPONSES TO summer and the great something

Dave (in MA) says:
June 1, 2010 at 1:42 am

_Camel … there was a prog-rock band by the same name._

What do you mean, _was_?

Terry says:
June 1, 2010 at 3:35 am

That style of hat is called a “trilby”.
Like a fedora, but with a short rim, turned up at the back.
It is humiliating that I know that.

shesnailie says:
June 1, 2010 at 4:45 am

_@ v – i remember seeing blue velvet on it's second run at the pittsburgh playhouse with a friend of mine who explained the symbolism of the tangled garden hose in regards to the aneurysm his dad subesequently suffers_

Crabtree says:
June 1, 2010 at 6:43 am

Terry,
I'm actually wearing one of those as I read this. That, and a Hawaiian shirt and shorts. Actually, I'm also sitting in a folding lounge chair on the back deck smoking a cigar and trying to finish writing a paper that I've been working on all night. Wait a minute…
I also drive a 1997 tan Lincoln Towncar… Good lord, I'm an old man! This is a very disturbing realization for a 29 year old writing an internship proposal….

madCanada says:
June 1, 2010 at 7:16 am

By god, great to hear from someone who eagle-eyes the films of David Lynch as closely as me.

Jack Nance, of course, was Henry in “Eraserhead,” the parent film to “Blue Velvet.” The first in a splendid line of wide-eyed, innocent protagonists who disappear into dreams.

Peter says:
June 1, 2010 at 7:48 am
I actually went to “Raiders Of The Lost Ark” without knowing what to expect. It was Friday evening of opening weekend at the Grandview in St. Paul. I had only seen minimal ads for the movie and those came nowhere near suggesting the roller coaster ride I had that evening. By the next weekend, the whole world knew Indiana Jones. It really seemed to come out of nowhere.

Brerarnold says:
June 1, 2010 at 8:18 am
Frampton at his best — and that means “Wind of Change”, “Frampton’s Camel” and “Somethin's Happening” IMHO, with a nod to “Frampton”, was very very good indeed. I don’t hold it against him that he decided to make some bucks (and get laid a lot or whatever) — if only we all could do something great and then follow up with commercial success.

juanito - John Davey says:
June 1, 2010 at 9:02 am
When a three day holiday weekend looms large before you, large and wide, teeming with that most precious of commodities, time, you envision all that you will accomplish, and the abundance of leisure that you can arrange around those tasks.

In reality, a five year old’s tea party birthday consumes Saturday, a visit to a friend’s new home wipes out Sunday, while yard work and house cleaning consumes Monday. Well, I did manage to replace a sprinkler valve, move some decking I had delivered from the drive way to the back yard, and get the cover on the gazebo.

But what happened to my leisure? Can I get that in bulk at Costco?

Dan Holway says:
June 1, 2010 at 9:08 am
“There was a fish in the percolator!”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AN7k-KjE8wI
I still have trouble reconciling the ‘Twin Peaks’ Nance with the ‘Eraserhead’ Nance.

AnnaN says:
June 1, 2010 at 9:24 am
Ah, Blue Velvet – so many quotable lines, so many skin crawling moments. Saw it with friends while at the U. Made myself a t-shirt that screamed out, “where's my bourbon?!”

Awww, I miss college.

gmann63 says:
June 1, 2010 at 9:27 am
Would the radio station have also accepted “Humble Pie” as the answer to the Frampton question?

Three words. Pabst. Blue. Ribbon!
Mark E. Hurling says:
June 1, 2010 at 10:05 am

I almost thought that second photo was Dennis Farina in the great (at least in the first season) TV show, Crime Story.

GardenStater says:
June 1, 2010 at 10:16 am

My weekend consisted of driving 13 hours each way to North Carolina for mom's 80th birthday. Fortunately, their town (Brevard) was holding the annual White Squirrel Festival, so my sisters and I had fun seeing the sights and drinking beer.

Got back Sunday night, and spent Monday cooking ribs on the smoker for eight hours. This of course required constant supervision from a seat on the back deck, beer in hand.

Man, were those ribs good.

Cristiane says:
June 1, 2010 at 10:17 am

The Jack Lemmon movie is actually “Three For the Show”, co-starring Betty Grable, not Ginger Rogers. (Betty was also past her prime in 1955, however.) “Three on a Match” (1932) is a very entertaining pre-code melodrama which packs an incredible amount of plot into 63 minutes. One of Bette Davis’ first movies, although all the dramatic fireworks come courtesy of the amazing Ann Dvorak.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 1, 2010 at 10:24 am

Flipping through channels I caught the end of Dune. Only many of the same actors as Blue Velvet betrayed it as a Lynch film, MacLachlan, Nance, Stockwell (so frackin suave), Dourif. Everett “Big Ed” McGill was also in Dune but, I don’t think he was in Blue Velvet but, is in other Lynch stuff.

See “The Straight Story” for a different kind of David Lynch film.

ArganikMark says:
June 1, 2010 at 10:32 am

One of the bands in which I play (Hazy Past) is fronted by a 28 year old who owns a talkbox and we recently worked up “Do You Feel Like We Do”. I’m 48 and remember this fun stuff from my youth but this guy seems to have it in his DNA. We’re playing tonight and I just printed out the set-list that he creates. We open with “Hush” (Deep Purple) and the entire second set is Rolling Stones. Also “Communication Breakdown” and “Misty Mountain Hop” (Zep), “Rocky Mountain Way” (Joe Walsh), “Bang a Gong” (T. Rex) and more like that. Playing outdoors on a deck at a sport's bar for Tuesday Biker Night. Keeping me young. And I miss Jack Nance as much as Dennis Hopper.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 1, 2010 at 10:50 am

Despite Frank's raving lunacy, the thing that I can never get out of
mind from “Blue Velvet” is Dean Stockwell lip-syncing “In Dreams”. It beats out the standing detective with the bullet in his head and a naked Isabella Rossalini.

**Bob says:**
June 1, 2010 at 10:53 am

I’m just the opposite when it comes to summer: it’s the most depressing season to me and I can’t wait until Labor Day gets here, heh. I liked summer when I was a kid, as all kids do (no school, etc), but now it’s just an awful, humid three month slog, and it doesn’t help that the population of the city I live in (30,000) actually *doubles* in the summer (big tourist/beach spot). Give me the cool (even cold) temps of October and November any day.

It’s always easier to warm up than cool down. There’s only so many clothes I can take off.

**Spud says:**
June 1, 2010 at 11:17 am

Juanito – most impressive weekend! Most of mine was spent working on (another) chicken coop and recovering from working in the heat. I also “worked” through about eight episodes of “Heroes – Season 1″ on streaming Netflix. They have “Dark Shadows” available for streaming, as well as a bunch of other intriguing possibilities to waste more of my evenings.

I was “Blue Velvet” with my in-laws many years ago after it came out on tape. In hindsight it was probably the worst movie you could see with parents, but it was their house and they chose the movie, so you sit through it. I thought it was interesting but the in-laws had a difficult time with it. Must be a generational thing.

**Spud says:**
June 1, 2010 at 11:21 am

oops – that should be “saw Blue Velvet” and not “was”. I don’t think I’d want to live that life.

Bob – dittos, except I’m not in a beach town, but in NC, where I’ll have to wait until September for some heat relief. Similar to GardenStater, I’ll be visiting Brevard next month for some cooler mountain nights.

**swschrad says:**
June 1, 2010 at 11:22 am

bunch of depressed wusses. Summer is a magical time. there are about two weeks scattered throughout in which it is too hot, close, and humid to do anything but lie around and belch, not being lakeowners.

and that’s sort of precious, too.

summer brings Spring’s promises to completion. great source of vitamin D. do projects in the morning, be lazy in the afternoon, and mow the lawn later before the mosquitoes come out in droves.

good camping weather. great canoeing weather. best time to head up the barely-tracked North in the BWCA.

no wonder this old landlocked Dakota boy took a shining to surf

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7208
music.

Cory says:
June 1, 2010 at 11:22 am

Dean Stockwell- ever seen a better sleazy defense lawyer defending Rick Masters (one of the all-time bad guys) in To Live and Die in L.A.?

dave from indy says:
June 1, 2010 at 12:13 pm

You're all talking about movies and skipped right past the important question – what year is Wesley's station wagon?

Sarah says:
June 1, 2010 at 12:28 pm

My favorite movie review was one for Rocky Balboa where the critic described the screening he attended as being full of critics, out for blood – and then the theme music started, and they all melted.

Chris says:
June 1, 2010 at 12:42 pm

“I almost thought that second photo was Dennis Farina in the great (at least in the first season) TV show, Crime Story.”

Man, did I love that show. Sadly, the first of only two seasons, and I agree, the second one wasn’t nearly as good as the first. Another TV show with a really bad ending. Did anyone survive the plane crash? Nose first into the Pacific Ocean at 300MPH? Was it supposed to be a cliffhanger like the “Luca and Paulie get caught in the nuke-test” ending of season one, or did Michael Mann know that the series would be cancelled, and decided to let us “come to our own conclusion?” with that ending?

Marjorie J Birch says:
June 1, 2010 at 12:50 pm

Always wanted to see David Lynch make his interpretation of “Night of the Hunter” with Dennis Hopper as the Preacher. Of course the Charles Laughton/Robert Mitchum version is a classic, but hell — if they can remake “Pride and Prejudice” every five years, then why not “Night of the Hunter”? One of the most frightening books I ever read, too — even in the Reader's Digest Condensed version.

Dr. Spyn says:
June 1, 2010 at 1:02 pm

I beg to differ: Dog's that have not been abused don't have bad dreams, maybe exciting ones, but not bad ones. It takes a human psyche to have or generate bad dreams.

Jennifer says:
June 1, 2010 at 1:11 pm

Those really wide films always remind me of the Carol Burnett Show skit where she was in a play with Harvey Korman. The play
moved from a tiny theater, to a cavernous stadium (because it was supposedly such a great play). The entire set was therefore wider, and it threw everything off. A tossed purse lands on the floor instead of the table, they have to yell to be heard, etc.

I watched “Vivacious Lady” over the weekend. Prime Ginger (and Jimmy Stewart!). Thoroughly enjoyed it. When Ginger gets in a fight with Frances Mercer, I laughed out loud several times. That, teamed with the great chemistry, makes it worth watching. (and that it’s directed by George Stevens).

**steven** says:
June 1, 2010 at 1:36 pm

What exactly was the “talk-box controversy” regarding “Do You Feel Like We Do?”

**GardenStater** says:
June 1, 2010 at 1:53 pm

@Dr. Spyn: “Dogs that have not been abused don’t have bad dreams”

How on earth would anyone know? I’ve owned dogs for years, and occasionally see them running in their sleep, or moaning, barking, etc. Good dream? Bad dream? Who knows? It’s not as though they wake up and tell me about it.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
June 1, 2010 at 2:51 pm

When I heard the lyrics to “My Little Runaway” being belted out at the opening to Crime Story, it was like a whole new song from the one I first heard in 1961. The energy with which it was delivered was stunning. Probably because I had only heard it over a cheap car radio back then. Coupled with the night time view of the drive in restaurant with the neon satellite and the period cars, wow! There was a drive in just like it in Kankakee.

Dennis Farina absolutely owned the quiet threat also. In a scene where he confronts some mope he says, “Look in my eyes, what do you see?” “Uuhh, my funeral?” He pulled the same routine several times as Det. Fontana in Law and Order. He just leaned in and fixed the other guy with a basilisk stare, and delivered his threat in a low monotone. This is the antithesis of the R. Lee Ermey method of behavior modification.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
June 1, 2010 at 3:13 pm

*When I heard the lyrics to “My Little Runaway” being belted out at the opening to Crime Story, it was like a whole new song from the one I first heard in 1961.*

I do believe they re-recorded *My Little Runaway* for the series just as Roy Orbison re-recorded *In Dreams* for “Blue Velvet”

**Terry** says:
June 1, 2010 at 3:56 pm
My God, Crabtree, you are Moondogg'y!

MikeH says:
June 1, 2010 at 4:29 pm

Except for Elephant Man, my reaction to any other David Lynch movie I have seen:

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE??

Call me unsophisticated, but I'm not a fan of his work.

Kurt says:
June 1, 2010 at 4:48 pm

“Frampton Comes Alive” was truly magical on 8-track, probably the format's finest moment. Was the controversy regarding “DYFLWD” the fact that you can't understand what the heck he's singing? Was it the '70s version of “Louie Louie?”

Chris says:
June 1, 2010 at 5:09 pm

“Flipping through channels I caught the end of Dune. Only many of the same actors as Blue Velvet betrayed it as a Lynch film, MacLachlan, Nance, Stockwell…”

Patrick Stewart was, of course, also in Dune. And there's today's Star Trek connection.

Dennis Farina, if I'm not mistaken, was a real-life police officer before he became an actor. That's what makes performances seem so natural for guys like him and R. Lee Ermey, because it's all coming from their real-life experiences.

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 1, 2010 at 5:15 pm

Yep, he had 18 years on Chicago P.D. They were more direct than mere threats. Phone books over the head or hanging out of windows by the ankles were (and from what I hear) still the method of choice for difficult interrogations. How many Chicago cops does it take to throw a suspect down a stairwell? None, he tripped.

Kev says:
June 1, 2010 at 6:38 pm

*That style of hat is called a “trilby”.*

So that oil industry analyst who's always on the radio news, Trilby Lundberg, is named after a hat? I wonder if anyone calls her “Hattie” as a nickname?

Re the heat of summer: I could understand people not enjoying the season if they have to walk around outdoors in business attire in the heat of the day. I had my one day of that in Dallas today with a short stint of jury duty, and now—barring an outdoor formal gig or something—the situation won't come up for me again until the beginning of the fall semester.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7208
browniejr says:
June 1, 2010 at 7:04 pm

Loved Crime Story- even in the uneven 2nd season. Also liked Ted Levine in it- and his work later in “Monk.”

If Farina was a cop in real life, what the heck was Pauli Taglia (John Santucci)?

Here is the Crime Story theme/ opening credits on YouTube:
http://youtube.com/watch?v=IsSo6H7zWnM&feature=related

madCanada says:
June 1, 2010 at 9:06 pm

@ Kev

No, the hat (and probably newscaster too) was named after a (fictional) girl. Trilby O'Farrell was the opera-singer heroine of the 1894 melodrama novel “Trilby”. Her evil hypnotist/mentor was named “Svengali” ... It was all hugely popular in its day, popularizing a hat, a derogatory name for creepy hypnotist/manager/mentors, a play version, several films, and ... sigh ... take it, Wikipedia.


Mark E. Hurling says:
June 1, 2010 at 9:54 pm

Thanks browniejr, that was a great trip down memory lane. You're right bgbear, that was a re-recording. Still great though.

Dave says:
June 1, 2010 at 10:40 pm

I've watched “Blue Velvet” a couple of times and the zoom into the ear and back out went right over my head. I have to watch it again now.

Rubo says:
June 1, 2010 at 11:30 pm

I liked “Straight Story” also, but I kept waiting for something weird to happen. Like a dancing dwarf or someone speaking in reverse.

Maybe David Lynch movies are a little on the strange side, but you can't say they formulaic.

Rubo says:
June 1, 2010 at 11:31 pm

Correction: should have put an “are” behind they.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 2, 2010 at 9:49 am

I liked “Straight Story” also, but I kept waiting for something weird to happen. Like a dancing dwarf or someone speaking in reverse.

There was a scene with a lady who ran over a deer and was all
upset. That was classic Lynch, it was similar to car crash scene in “Wild at Heart”.

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
June 2, 2010 at 9:52 am

Dean stockwell also has a Star Trek connection.
Piano recital Tuesday night, which meant a trip to Perkins before. Why? Because it is The Way of Things. Some pancakes before the performance, for that extra-special edge a mass of carbs gives a kid. I was pleased to see the Patty Melt had rejoined the ranks of the Melts; it is the Ur-Melt, after all, the only Melt that really matters. I’m not even sure what a Melt is, except that cheese in a semi-solid state seems to be involved – and if that’s the case, then please explain the hamburger I did get. It had melted Pepper Jack, on meat, and had a bun, and was as melty as they come. It was also drizzled with some sort of sauce, which may have moved it out of Melt territory. Ahh, they’re just making it all up as they go.

There’s always a new item that seems particularly appalling, and today it was a Zesty Shrimp Po’ Boy drenched in buffalo wing sauce (translation – We laid on the Tony’s Red Hot with a heavy hand, sending a stern message to all other flavors: STAND DOWN.) It came with fries, of course; coffee comes with fries if you ask. Fries come with fries. Would you like fries with those fries? Naw, I’m eating healthy. Make it a salad with a pound of crumbled bacon and some of that orange Island dressing. (Dressing, of course, is distinct from Sauce.) It also came with a layer of deep-fried onions on top of the shrimp, but since they were inside the sandwich they did not displace the fries. So you could double up on fries and tell yourself the onions were vegetables.

This I did not have. Eschewed the fries, too, since WiiFit tells me I am no longer overweight, but have lost enough weight to be normal again.
(Seriously: half an hour sweating on that thing all day has produced results, along with slightly less eating.) I had the salad, but couldn't resist the new dressing: hot bacon! On the side, please.

And so it came to pass that she handed me a cup of something that looked exactly like saliva. And it was a warm cup, too. I tasted it. Miserable. Sent it back. But nothing could save the salad – iceberg spines, brackish cheddar, gum-shredding croutons, and tasteless tomatoes. If I was a salad at Perkins I'd bring my A-game, because you're up against fries and pancakes, but they must have the attitude of a hamburger in a Chinese restaurant. What's the point? Who'll notice? Who'll care?

But I'm getting ahead of the story! Before the meal came we amused ourselves with the games on the kid's menu. One had mixed-up overlapping line-drawings of sharks, and you had to count the number of sharks. Shark jumble! The answer was ten, but there was also a fully-realized picture of a shark in the tank. So technically, the answer was eleven. Daughter was vaguely amused. I said I would point this out to the waitress. Daughter was slightly alarmed. “I'll get a free meal out of this,” I said. Daughter was now seriously alarmed. Dad don't.

Well, that's all the inducement I need. “Waitress?” She came over. I pointed out that the answer said ten sharks, but if you include this one, the answer was eleven.

“It could be a dolphin,” she said.

“I hadn't thought of that.”

She left. Daughter: “Dad why did you DO that?”

“Waitresses love funny customers! It brightens up their day. The ones that tell jokes, make puns, think they're the life of the party – waitresses can't wait for those.”

I got a skeptical expression.

“No, really, they fight over 'em, even thought they usually are bad tippers because they think they've tipped enough just by being so entertaining.”

She wasn't buying it. I told her no, that wasn't true, but the waitress seemed the type who'd enjoy a little banter, and since her section wasn't full at all there wasn't any harm.

Actually, waiters don't like ha-ha funny customers, the ones with routines, accents, stock phrases, and three other people who find them hilarious. (Or not.) These are performers. Waiters don't like people whose humor has an aggressive undertone – I'll have the horsemeat. Don't tell me you don't serve it, I've eaten here before. Banter is fine. Banter is a social lubricant. But it's my experience lately that half of the waiters do not listen to most of what you say, and my strongest evidence is my stock request for Coffee, Black, as if I'm tugging down the front of my uniform and commanding the Enterprise...
replicator. Half the time it's met with “Cream or sugar?” To which you want to say well, I think I’ll just have my black coffee black, thanks. Then the coffee arrives, and the waiter sets down cream and sugar. When I ask them to take it away, there's confusion – no cream? No sugar? Seriously? The last time we went out the waitress seemed peeved I didn't want the cream, as if I'd just sprung this on her at the last moment. You could have told me. mmmm

Before anyone tears into me for not understanding what waiters and waitresses go through, I waited tables for seven years, from a Pizza Hut to a college 24-hour joint, from breakfast rush to bar rush, and I was pretty good at it. I loved it, really. There's no feeling like firing up a new pot on the Bunn-O-Matic, starting a new kettle of popcorn, looking over your section and seeing everyone's content. Ahhh. Friday night. It's a party, and you're paid to attend.

**Off to the recital.** Gnat played her piece absolutely perfectly, then we did a duet; I screwed up a few notes. She shot me a look: oh thanks. Several classes were combined, so we got to hear pieces we'd played in years past. Memories! Misty water-colored memories! Of the arguments we had over these pieces! I know why people have more kids – besides the obvious joy of More Kids, there's a certain pleasure in repeating the milestones, the phases. One kid moves out of Playhouse Disney and two-finger piano playing, another slides right in. You can spent ten years in the same emotional bathwater, and the temperature's just right. Two years to six years is a wonderful time, and it's the great bittersweet sadness of parenthood that it passes unremembered by the very people with whom you share it. “Flowers for Algernon” in reverse: they get smarter, and forget.

Gnat probably won't have my fascination with the culture of her earliest childhood, because it’ll still be around. Everything is persistent, hence everything's unmoored from its era. What's more: kids today don't have the same relationship to advertising. They're more skeptical, perhaps; good. They fast-forward past it; fine. They have no need to sit through ads aimed at adults, so they don't get the second-hand smoke of commercial culture. As a kid I couldn’t care less about cigarette ads or dishsoap spots, but now a smearable YouTube video of Marge dunking a lady's digits in Palmolive is like Proust's madelaine. (It was a source of great mystery: why did ladies go to a place to soak their fingers? Is that what Mom did when she went to the Beauty Parlor? Later I would wonder whether customers thought Madge stark-mad for pushing their fingers into a cup of soap under the delusion that its mildness would somehow do . . . something, but that was Lady Stuff, and a young man would no more enter into that world to plumb its mysteries than he'd enter the temple of Kali with a red X over his heart.)

No, it's all omnipresent now. Or is it? One of her greatest delights last month was learning Invader Zim was coming out on DVD. YouTube clips wasn't the same. DVD somehow sanctified it. She's waiting for the disks as much as I waited for my Spider-Man plastic pillow (6 – 8 weeks, shipping and handling extra). In the meantime, there's summer ahead, and friends who call and say “come over” and off she goes, bouncing down the street. The main difference,
perhaps:

She always has a video camera in her hand.

When she goes to bed I archive the footage and store it away. Someday I hope it means something. The evolution, to coin a phrase, has been televised.

**Later:** Out of Context Ad Challenge at 10:30, and Black and White World at 2:30 – a rather surprising remake. See you at tumblr and Popcrush!

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**43 RESPONSES TO the recital**

Robert Ayers says:
June 2, 2010 at 12:55 am

“and if that's the case, then please explain the hamburger I did get. It had melted Pepper Jack, on meat, and had a bun, and was as melty as they come”

A paddy melt properly comes on rye bread, not a bun.

Bob

gotacook says:
June 2, 2010 at 1:34 am

Um, if you know “Flowers for Algernon” (either the novel or the earlier, superior novella version), you know that its last section IS “‘Flowers for Algernon’ in reverse.” Just sayin’.

gottacook says:
June 2, 2010 at 1:44 am

Sorry, it's late (east coast) but I realize now that by “in reverse: they get smarter, and forget” you mean either the reverse of the first part of the story (Charlie becomes smarter, and remembers) or the reverse of the last part (he becomes dumber again, and forgets). Oh well.

As for cigarette ads (off the air since January 1971, I think): Even if you paid no attention to them, you presumably have some of their jingles floating around in your head, as I do. I watched prime time shows as a kid in the late ’60s, and without effort I can call up at least one jingle each for Winston, Salem, Tareyton, Lark, and a few others.

hpoulter says:
June 2, 2010 at 5:17 am

I've had Invader Zim on DVD for years. That 2001 release is collectible and super-expensive now, so it's good that it's being re-released. What a wacky show. “TV’s Frank” Coniff was one of the writers, and Kids in the Hall fans will recognize the voice of Kevin McDonald as one of “The Tallest”.

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This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7234) for the full menu. Enjoy!
Doom doom doom…

**GardenStater** says:
June 2, 2010 at 5:23 am

Laxatives!

Just getting a head start.

**Rubo** says:
June 2, 2010 at 7:05 am

Aww GardenStater, you beat me to it!

**ed in texas** says:
June 2, 2010 at 7:39 am

Eewww. The Streisand reference.
Valium and a cold beer for Mr Lileks. He seems to need it.
Re Madge and Palmolive: I always wondered “Is it that the stuff is such a solvent that it’ll cut the old fingernail polish?”

**juanito - John Davey** says:
June 2, 2010 at 8:19 am

We recently have been testing our memory over PlayHouse Disney shows, and the characters therein, from the 2002 – 2004 era. Remarkable what sticks in the mind of a toddler. I know that those memories will fade for her, and only remain for me. But the fact that we share them for now assuages my lament of of her ever-growing independence.

Never understood why “Madge” was the final arbiter of skin care and fashion. She was kind of frumpy.

When she professed “you’re soaking in it” I always assumed she meant the customer’s misery. But that would have been “you’re wallowing in it.”

I can imagine a time and a place where Madge and the “Don’t Squeeze The Charmin” Storekeeper would align forces. I believe that they would do battle with the current iteration of the Charmin Rear Wiping Bears. They’d call in close-air-support from the Imperial Margarine “It’s Not Nice To Fool Mother Nature” Lady.

And carnage would ensue. Glorious, Rear Wiping Bear carnage.

May it be ever so.

**Brisko** says:
June 2, 2010 at 8:23 am

Arrgh, why are my posts not showing up?

**Rob** says:
June 2, 2010 at 8:40 am

“tugging down the front of my uniform”, “firing up a new pot on the Bunn-O-Matic”, “the second-hand smoke of commercial culture”, “The evolution, to coin a phrase, has been televised.”
Mr Lileks, you’re quite on a roll today. Nice work.

Patrick McClure says:
June 2, 2010 at 8:48 am

As the father of four I can say that people with more than one child have more because they want more. It’s not an effort to have a new toddler popping up like a replacement shark’s tooth when the old toddler is sent off to school. That’s just a perquisite.

GardenStater says:
June 2, 2010 at 9:35 am

Re: Madge and the Palmolive liquid:

Wouldn’t you think the ladies who came in for a manicure would have noticed?

“What the hell is that? Dish detergent?!? Hey, I can soak my hands in dish soap at home—that’s not what I’m paying you for!!!”

Uncle Joe says:
June 2, 2010 at 9:43 am

“The evolution … has been televised.”

Will it put a tiger in my tank, the giant in my toilet bowl and go better with Coke?

Gibbering Madness says:
June 2, 2010 at 9:48 am

That reminds me of the old joke for children:

Q. What do monsters eat?
A. THINGS.

Q. What do monsters drink?
A. Coke.

Q. Why?
A. Because THINGS go better with Coke.

browniejr says:
June 2, 2010 at 9:53 am

Madge… Anyone remember Mrs. Olsen for Folgers? Josephine the Plumber? Cora the Coffee Lady (“I’ll get you, my pretty!”)? John Cameron Swayze?

Normie says:
June 2, 2010 at 10:02 am

@ Patrick McClure – “As the father of four … It’s not an effort to have a new toddler popping up…” Yeah, you’re right, not much effort on your part. The mother of the four may have a difference of opinion. 😊
JerseyAmy says:
June 2, 2010 at 10:17 am

Aw, James, you just made me think I have to get out my video camera more often. JerseyToddler is at a cute age now, I need to capture more of it for posterity. I'm sure Natalie (or are we back to Gnat now?) will be glad to have the videos someday. When I was just a few years older than her, my five closest friends and I had a red notebook that functioned as a sort of group journal for all of us. Though we don't all get together as often as we once did, when we do it's a hoot to read through all the inside jokes we had. I'm sure Natalie will have the same enjoyment of her videos.

swschrad says:
June 2, 2010 at 10:27 am

John Cameron Swayze takes a lickin' and keeps on tickin'.

that's why you don't see him any more. that kind of Stuff has to be on after 10 pm, or on cable.

NostrilDrippus Predicts™ will divine the contents of this envelope... “a Tinkler and a Stinkler.”

Nat (the G was supposed to disappear, remember?) and Our Gracious Host on piano.

thanks, don't forget to tip the cows, I'll be here 20 to life.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 2, 2010 at 10:53 am

When i worked at the Board Walk amusement park here in CA and ran the roller coaster, there was always Ha Ha customers that could really start to get on your nerves but, they were better than demanding or angry customers.

I started to make up counter responses to the “funny folks” e.g, there was always some joker trying to scare a first time coaster rider and would ask “how many people have died on this ride?” hee, hee. I would respond “What, you mean today?”

swschrad says:
June 2, 2010 at 11:39 am

@bgbear: an even better response, assuming you were through with the job but hadn't been thrown over the fence yet, would have been, “Let me have your name, and we'll arrange for some history today.”

Andrew E says:
June 2, 2010 at 11:46 am

“...waiting for a Spiderman pillow” jogs a great memory of waiting for my Commodore monitor ordered from one of the ads in the back of Compute! magazine. I must have called every week for ten+ weeks. They grew very tired of me; or as Bart put it, “hey lady, where's my spy camera?”

xrayguy says:
June 2, 2010 at 12:01 pm

And for what it's worth, people working in medical clinics do not
really appreciate perpetual wisenheimers or married couples who think they need to do their old vaudeville routine everytime they come in. Just get on the damn scale, answer yes or no to most of the questions and the doctor will see you when doctor is done with the patient who has the appointment BEFORE you.

Geez, I could fill a blog site, if it weren't for the HIPPA laws.

**Paul in CA says:**
June 2, 2010 at 12:02 pm

I have to know more about that impossibly large back seat in the impossibly large two door car that the redhead in the yellow suit is sitting in. An old car ad? What car? When?

**Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:**
June 2, 2010 at 12:28 pm

@xrayguy: Most of your Jolly Jokers are not trying to be wisenheimers. Your clinic may be old hat to you, but it is an unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and sometimes scary environment for your subjects. If they engage in “nervous laughter,” it is just a common, natural mechanism for coping. Of course, your irritation is your own mechanism for coping with them. And so it goes.

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
June 2, 2010 at 12:37 pm

There was also a height requirement sign at the entrance of the coaster so of course 1 out of 10 adult jokers said “am I tall enough?”

ha, ha.

One day after staring at the sign for countless hours, I notice the sign maker (God rest his soul) had written “height limit” rather than “height requirement” or the friendly “you must be this tall”. Armed with the bad phrasing of the sign, every time someone joked “am I tall enough” I said “you are too tall” and pointed to the sign. One out of ten time they got the full meaning of the joke.

**Mrs.ME says:**
June 2, 2010 at 12:40 pm

Having had the pleasure of witnessing Natalie’s performances last night, all I can say is “WOW”! She is taking command at the piano. Having seen her play in 12 recitals thus far, this was her best ever! It is a joy to see her progress to this point. I wonder if she loves playing? She sure seemed comfortably at home sitting there. She bore with her duet partner very well and the 2nd time through the piece, you two were making music together. Can’t wait to hear her play the cello! Bravo to Natalie and her sidekick.

What I remember about Madge was this line: “more than just mild!”
Thanks, James, for your engaging work behind the pen (or keypad, as it were).

**wawona says:**
June 2, 2010 at 1:14 pm

Haha, bgbear — I worked there too! in “Area 3”, Logger's Revenge to the end. The thing I remember from ride after ride after ride after ride was climbing the stairs to take my turn on the “tower” (high point just before the final plunge) and hearing NEARLY EVERY JOKER raise both arms, look me in the eye and holler “…here we
gooooooooooo as the car tipped down the incline.

It doesn't sound so odd until you hear it 937 times in a row from 937 different jokers.
(I always wondered what the Loggers had to avenge, actually.)

**DryOwlTacos** says:
June 2, 2010 at 1:20 pm

“Coffee, Black, as if I’m tugging down the front of my uniform and commanding the Enterprise replicator.”

That would be Riker performing the Picard Maneuver. Picard would have ordered “Tea, Earl Grey, hot” as he tugged.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
June 2, 2010 at 1:39 pm

@wowona: small world, worked Loggers as well, supervised in area 3 a couple of years around time of the earthquake.

besides, “here we go”, I recall at loading “no seatbelts?!” being a common remark.

**wawona** says:
June 2, 2010 at 1:45 pm

@bgbear, you whippersnapper. I worked there when the Autorama was under a blue cloud of exhaust 13 hours a day…. I bet someone’s going over the flume saying “…here we go……..”, even as we speak.

(My favorite constant-question was during stints on the Tilt-A-Whirl: “Hey lady! Hey lady! what’s the hose for???”) You’ll find out.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
June 2, 2010 at 1:49 pm

@wowona: bet we still knew some of same people (doug h & John b, god rest their souls). Worked there 11 seasons and wife has been with the company since high school and after college.

**wawona** says:
June 2, 2010 at 1:56 pm

Sweet! I do know those names! Who can forget the dreaded Doug H. and stories of his infamy. Remembering his “scene” in “Harold and Maude”, of course: if you ever saw that movie back in the pre-video days you could count on at least half the movie theatre spontaneously groaning his name in unison. Everyone worked for him at one time or another — it’s how you earned your “local” stripes!
Sorry, everyone — seriously old times…

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
June 2, 2010 at 2:03 pm

With the ‘Walk having over 100 years of history, they have to cut us veterans some slack.

😊
JerseyAmy says:
June 2, 2010 at 2:18 pm

Hey, bgbear, with all the talk on here this past week of the Charmin Rear Wiping Bears, I'm surprised you haven't changed your gravatar to a picture of them yet.

swschrad says:
June 2, 2010 at 2:37 pm

@jerseyAmy: believe he said there was no way he was going down that road.

that's how you find Irritable Bears, in or out of the woods.

now, a Pope in the woods… .

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 2, 2010 at 2:50 pm

Toilet paper; why am I thinking of toilet paper now?

JerseyAmy says:
June 2, 2010 at 2:54 pm

@swschrad: Ah, I guess I missed that comment. I was really expecting a Charmin Bear appearance by now.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 2, 2010 at 3:21 pm

@swschrad: right you are oh wise one of the Non sequitur.

However, I reserve the right to use Snuggle the fabric softener bear if I feel my security is in danger.

NerveBag says:
June 2, 2010 at 3:47 pm

I, too, have had Invader Zim on DVD for years. That show deserved WAY more attention than it ever got. Sheer, absolute genius. The fact that your daughter enjoys it is very encouraging. Too many people today think The Family Guy is the be-all, end-all in comedic achievement. Ugh. That makes me sad and bitter.

Monty Python, MST3K/Rifftrax, Invader Zim, Frisky Dingo, Ren & Stimpy, Calvin & Hobbes, Stewart & Colbert… that's comedy, my friend.

DensityDuck says:
June 2, 2010 at 4:44 pm

Black coffee:

It's probably easier for them to just bring the whole service; that way, when the customer decides that they wanted cream and sugar after all, the server doesn't have to come back.

The problem is that “black coffee” doesn't mean the same thing to everyone. Some people mean “no cream, no sugar”. Some people
mean “no cream, with sugar”. Some people mean “with sugar, with a little bit of cream”.

Some people go all Meg Ryan with “black coffee with two sugars as long as they’re white sugars from the paper pouch but if you don’t have that then I’ll have it black unless you have Splenda in which case I’ll have Splenda but only on the side and I’ll have two tablespoons of cream but only if it’s dairy cream but if it’s nondairy cream then I’d like you to bring me three unless they're warm in which case don't bring any.”


Bob W. says:
June 2, 2010 at 8:26 pm

@ juanito – John Davey,

“I can imagine a time and a place where Madge and the “Don’t Squeeze The Charmin” Storekeeper would align forces. I believe that they would do battle with the current iteration of the Charmin Rear Wiping Bears.”

Well, somebody ought to!

bgbear says:
June 2, 2010 at 9:37 pm

@wawona: i may have been unclear Doug H is still with us, it is John Buse who is acorporal.

dustbury.com » Don't play with your food, either says:
June 13, 2010 at 3:33 pm

[...] is, however, a limit to how much of this you can do: [W]aiters don't like ha-ha funny customers, the ones with routines, accents, stock phrases, [...]
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?
Picked up Chinese food after karate class. The tireless guy at the counter—
it's his shop, he's always there—he pointed to my book and said “Titanic?”

I looked at the cover, and couldn't figure out how he got Titanic out of a
picture of a guy standing in a saloon. “No, it's about the years when alcohol
was banned in America.”

He frowned. “Nothing to drink?”

“Nope.”

Daughter asked me on the way out about this, and I told her about
Prohibition, how the criminals took over selling beer.

“Oh! Like—like, what's his name! I know this!”

“Al . . “

“Al something -”

“Al Ca . . .”

“Al Capone!”

“No, Al Kahol.” She scowled. “You're right,” I said. ” Al Capone. How did you
know about Al Capone?”
“There was that show the Othersiders were the kids look for ghosts? And they went to Al Capone’s old house and they thought they heard his ghost playing the ukelele.”

I would have done a spit take if I’d had anything in my mouth. “Al Capone,” I said, “did not play the ukelele. As far as I know. He did dance the Charleston on a flagpole, though.”

“Why would he do that?”

“It was a craze at the time. So you know about Al Capone, eh.”

“And he was in Night at the Museum too.”

“Right, right – in black and white, right?”

“I think so.”

How about that. The things that persist.

Anyway. New subject. What does this . . .

Have to do with this woman?
The building may look familiar for the wrong reasons – it was endlessly copied, duplicated with diminishing returns in cities all across the country. At the time it was built, though, it was the new face of corporate architecture, a clean break from the historical styles that dominated the Depression, the Moderne styles of the 30s – which never got the break they should have gotten; imagine if that style had been preeminent during the 20s – and the confused okay-what-now styles that followed World War 2. American commercial architecture went in two directions, from the stripped-down styles of the early suburban malls to the exuberant Googie of the car lots, bowling alleys, drive-ins and restaurants. But this building put down a marker: the future will be rational, technocratic, noble without sentiment, severed from the shackles of the past.

If you haven’t read Tom Wolfe’s “Bauhaus to Our House,” do so – he rips apart the building’s conceits with the usual deft sardonic skill, noting how it swapped one form of ornamentation (fizzy terra-cotta geeawas) for another (I-beams that served no functional purpose riveted to the facade), how the origins of the new corporate style were birthed in unpopular models of 1930s worker housing, places where the new modern man would come home from a day at the assembly line and sit in a steel chair and contemplate Mondrian. But it’s still beautiful. As I’ve said before: a city with a dozen of these is a dead place, but one is a marvel. (The closest we got in Minneapolis was this bank building, which is a modified Lever House, the modernist precursor to the building above.)

It was influential for other reasons: it broke the line. Buildings used to come up to the sidewalk and stand there, to paraphrase the Yes song; now they retreated behind a plaza, intended as a public space for cities that had few such amenities. When New York amended its zoning law, it added incentives for plazas, and since New York laws influenced New York styles, and New York styles were copied elsewhere, everyone got a tall building with a plaza, usually with a hunk of modern sculpture no one liked or understood. (Except for Calders, maybe.) This had happened once before: the Equitable Building in New York was so massive the zoning laws were changed to mandate set-backs in the upper stories, and once this style changed buildings in New York, no one would build a skyscraper that didn’t have set-backs. (In Minneapolis, it meant going from this to this.)

What does this have to do with the woman? She’s M. I. A., a singer who likes to be all dangerous ‘n’ stuff. She was expertly filleted in a recent Times profile. Today I read this:

[M.I.A.'s baby] Ikhyd was not, as she had repeatedly announced he would be, born at home in a pool of water ... “You gotta embrace the pain, embrace the struggle,” she proclaimed weeks before Ikhyd was born. “And my giving birth is nothing when I think about all the people in Sri Lanka that have to give birth in a concentration camp.” As it happened, Maya, who is 34, gave birth in a private room in Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles ... Maya and [fiance Ben] Bronfman
moved to Los Angeles from New York, buying a house in very white, very wealthy Brentwood, an isolated and bucolic section of the city with a minimal history of trauma and violent uprisings.

Zing! But: Bronfman? Yep: great-grandson of Sam Bronfman, the Canadian liquor baron who made his pile during Prohibition, who ran Seagram's, which build the corporate HQ above. And so a name from Prohibition, and the fortune it spawned, pops up in a profile of a singer in 2010 – because the effects of Prohibition are still around every single day in ways you might not know unless you read, and yes, I'm mentioning it again, Daniel Okrent's“Last Call.”

I finished it tonight. The best history book I've read since Simon Schama's “Citizens,” over ten years ago. Inexhaustibly fascinating and funny as hell, too – and full of the sort of thing I love in these books, connections. How this thing is related, to your surprise, to this thing. (Yes, I loved James Burke's “Connections” – interviewed him once, too. Wonderful chat. He's a Mac user, too.) Read it now, and the upcoming Ken Burns doc on Prohibition will be all the more interesting. Go! Now!

- 

Later today: oh, nothing, probably. Black and White World below. I think I'll wrap it all up in a giant link-fest for Friday. See you at the tumblr and PopCrush, and have a grand day.

63 RESPONSES TO al capone on a flagpole

Chris says:
June 3, 2010 at 7:57 pm

America: The Story of Us. Ditto. I'll accept Brian Williams or Brokaw giving commentary, at least they're familiar with the historical
events that they are commenting on. And bravo to Buzz Aldrin, a true American hero that actually made history. I'll even accept Al Sharpton giving his two cents about racial issues. But Michael Douglas? Sheryl Crow? Bill Maher?? I almost switched channels when Maher popped up..of all people to be commenting on a documentary about America, one of the biggest America-hating creeps that ever lived. I wonder how much of his “wisdom” ended up on the cutting room floor.

**TKL** says:
June 3, 2010 at 8:36 pm

Maybe the guy behind the counter was referring to ship designer Thomas Andrews who was last seen standing alone in Titanic's first class smoking room. It was essentially a bar.

**Borderman** says:
June 3, 2010 at 8:50 pm

@Chris:

> I almost switched channels when Maher popped up

You and me both. His appearance almost single-handedly wrecked it for me.

The shame is that the strong points of this series could have made it the best of its kind, but its flaws, especially those already mentioned in this thread, weakened it considerably. When I was watching the first few episodes I thought about buying it on DVD for our Cuban émigré friends to help with their citizenship classes in a way that volumes of written words never could. By the time Maher's ugly pan showed up, I realized this was just a more sophisticated version of the agitprop dreck they had worked so hard to escape.

**Borderman** says:
June 3, 2010 at 9:01 pm

@hpoulter:

> almost all of the airheads hail from the port (or sinister) side

And therein, as they say, lies the crux of the matter.

**Borderman** says:
June 3, 2010 at 9:24 pm

Looking at the cover of Last Call in the Amazon badge, maybe the tireless guy at the counter of the Chinese restaurant who asked if the book was about the Titanic saw the b&w photo of the bar which vaguely looks like those saloon photos from Titanic, and the title kinda sorta fits with the lifeboat thing, as in get in one now or become a Popsicle with Leo DiCaprio and the rest of the CG passengers. Just a thought. Why else would he have said that?

**Kev** says:
June 4, 2010 at 2:11 am
reminds me of an old character in the Tumbleweeds comic, the country singer Al K. Hall.

Al also had an appearance with his buddy Nick O’Teen in this song by Rolf Harris of “Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport” fame (in fact, it was the B-side of that record).

Nick can also be found in this anti-smoking PSA getting his butt (heh) kicked by Superman.

JohnW says:
June 4, 2010 at 2:32 pm


Ed Lilly says:
June 6, 2010 at 10:12 am

Al Capone on a flagpole? I don’t know, I’ve been scouring the tubes of the interwebs on YouTube and I’m not finding it. I think this myth is busted. 😛

nixmom says:
June 7, 2010 at 1:13 pm

@ sean f and Bgbear:

(bgbear (roger h) says:
June 3, 2010 at 3:59 pmI believe SeanF response to Nixmom was for the link for th Simpson reference re Capone. The link worked for me first thing this morning and is there now.)

Actually, that link worked just fine; but I didn’t want to see the Simpsons’ rendition—I was wondering if there was an actual photo or footage of Capone himself. Didn’t much care if a cartoon could pull it off, you know? 😛

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 7, 2010 at 1:24 pm

@nixmom: now I can’t tell if you are kidding. IIRC the Simpson reference is a parody of how people get history wrong, conflating pole sitting with Al Capone. As far as I know, Al was well grounded 😛

“Futurama” has a lot of fun with this too, getting eras mixed up in the 19th and 20th century when recalling “history”.

swschrad says:
June 7, 2010 at 2:38 pm

if the flagpole broke, it would likely dump Al Capone on a shingle.

wishing so [object] lead to the description fondly known as SOS, and all those who served our country are perpetuating a myth about this delicacy.

Borderman says:
June 7, 2010 at 2:55 pm
all those who served our country are perpetuating a myth about this delicacy

Al Capone? Or cream-beef on toast?

Gordon says:
June 10, 2010 at 9:18 pm

I just received my copy of Last Call and understand the “Titanic?” comment from the counterman. If you don’t know the subject of the book and squintingly glance at the dust cover, the bar’s outline does resemble an aerial photograph of the doomed ocean liner at dock, smoke stacks and all.
I had planned a Diner, but several things happened:

Wife decided she wanted to take a nap, which meant I would have to whisper the entire thing.

After a day of producing this and/or that, I really didn't want to produce anything anymore. There: that's it, nutshell-wise. I want to rot. I want to play games and bang on the drums and do squat-all for the rest of the day. Not that anything arduous or difficult happened today – as I said earlier, I can write and talk all day and still feel like a lazy bum, because my dad set the standards for actual work. Lifting barrels and putting them down somewhere else. Driving the forklift, driving a truck, getting up at 2 AM to fill someone's fuel oil tank, shooting planes that were coming in to attack your vessel. Things like that. Work. There's no reason I couldn't do most of the above if I wanted; I don't, so that's that. But at least I know enough not to complain that the day was stressful because I had to come up with blogposts at the top of the hour that would merit a 37-second visit.

It's just the way of humans: be passive too long, and you yearn for action; get your fill of action, and you yearn to be still, think of nothing, listen to the birds, feel the sun. I actually did that today, since I worked outdoors, and even then I would be thinking: what kind of birds? I should know this. I should know my too-wit from my whip-poor-will. The fiend-bird who wakes...
me an hour every morning before schedule is a cardinal, I know that much.

Here’s the cardinal’s calls. The laser-beam call at :30 doesn’t sound familiar, but it may explain all the Star Wars dreams this fall.

I have now learned that this is the sound made by a chickadee. I find myself whistling it in response when I hear it. You can’t not return the call; it’s too close to Hello.

Then there’s the amazing Chain-Saw / Car-Alarm Bird:

Anyway. I wish I knew more about birds, but I’m not mistaking that for the desire to do something about it. I wish I’d done something in the past that resulted in more bird-savvy now, but it’s not going to keep me up nights, and I’m sure the birds don’t care. It’s not akin to a situation where someone’s pleased you’ve made an effort to learn their language. Birds are all off in their own world anyway.

So that was my day. Daughter came home from school happy, having placed third in the year-long math extra credit program. Got a certificate, too, which will be Filed with the things you just have to File, right? Then she went upstairs and drew some more, now determined to show me just how much she’s using photoshop. (She use Jazz LTC for the font on one of the drawings, which was a great improvement; I pointed that out, and got an elbow in the rib. STOP BUGGING ME ABOUT FONTS.) Made pasta, but used a non-standard sauce, which earned frowns: there were chunks of tomato. Dark looks of suspicion:

Is this a new sauce?

Yes, it’s new sauce. It was on sale.

But it has tomato pieces.

So push them aside.
I can't. They're everywhere and all over.

So mash them up.

**Mashing doesn't make them sauce.**

True, that. But mashing is a step towards sauce.

She looked down at the plate with glum despair: pasta, RUINED. My wife came home from work, later than expected – hence the premature deployment of RUINED PASTA – and they went off to a neighborhood ice-cream social while I stayed behind to do the third radio interview of the day. Then I sat down to do the Diner, and heard footsteps. The social is next week. Technically tonight was the anti-social, inasmuch as no one came to stand around in the park with neighbors and eat cotton candy and pitch bean bags through boards painted with gaping faces of crude, hellish clowns. All in all, a bravura day, if only for the clement weather, the steady pace of work, an interval in the sun, and now a cool hour in the backyard gazebo, rain pattering on the roof, birds singing in the trees. All of their songs now sound familiar; still don't know who's who.

And now, the links: Bleatplus.

**30s magazine ads.** Cigarettes today.

**100 Mysteries.**

**Have a grand weekend!** See you at tumblr and popcrush – links above on the sidebar, if you haven’t bookmarked them yet. Remember, Lint – the tumblr blog – is the Institute of Official Cheer’s blog, with all sorts of daily retro peculiar things. Enjoy!

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**81 RESPONSES TO mashing doesn't make it sauce**

**browniejr** says:

June 4, 2010 at 2:06 pm

@DryOwlTacos: A myna bird story. Years ago my aunt and uncle were visiting. My aunt is quite a birdwatcher and has been known to drag my uncle all over the place to see birds. We decided to visit Micke Grove and the zoo there. ([http://www.mgzoo.com/](http://www.mgzoo.com/)) I was ahead of my father and uncle, and was looking at the birds when a couple of young men were trying to get the myna bird to say dirty words. The myna never repeated any, so the 2 young men moved on. My father and uncle arrived, and my uncle greeted the myna with “Pretty bird, pretty bird!” This must have triggered something in the myna's brain, because he replied with a very loud, “BLEEP YOU!” I thought my father would die laughing. I was able to explain to them why the bird had such a “fowl” mouth.
hpoulter says:
June 4, 2010 at 2:07 pm

Re: the North Atlantic Whitefish
Just don’t confuse it with the Coney Island Whitefish.

wimseyguy says:
June 4, 2010 at 2:07 pm

You’re not watching those birds MATE are you?

hpoulter says:
June 4, 2010 at 2:12 pm

So we have one commenter thinking that Lileks was belittling his father’s work, and another thinking he was denigrating his own. I really don’t think either is correct. IMO, he was just reflecting on the difference.

I have done heavy physical work, and I now do work which is almost entirely mental, and both have their points. I was in a lot better shape when I was a surveyor – on my feet all day, swinging a sledge, chopping trees and digging holes when needed. But I’m too old for that stuff now, anyway. Good thing I found myself and went back to school.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 4, 2010 at 2:49 pm

I like a hard day of “real” work because when my back aches and muscles are sore at the end of the day it is understandable.

juanito - John Davey says:
June 4, 2010 at 3:03 pm

wimseyguy:
June 4, 2010 at 2:07 pm

You’re not watching those birds MATE are you?

Arrrrggghhh, the deviant behaviors that writers pick up from Dave Barry whilst summering in Colorado…

terrace says:
June 4, 2010 at 3:04 pm

Not shown: the part where the lyrebird imitates David Attenborough whispering in the forest.

juanito - John Davey says:
June 4, 2010 at 3:10 pm

browniejr:
June 4, 2010 at 2:06 pm

If you went to Micke Grove, are you near Lodi then? If so, why then,
we're practically neighbors, in that “I live two counties away” sort of fashion.

tterrace says:
June 4, 2010 at 3:10 pm

100 Mysteries mailman: Irving Bacon

Bob Lipton says:
June 4, 2010 at 3:36 pm

A friend of mine has a parrot that does a dead-on imitation of her phone ringing. The bird knows it's the surest way of getting some attention.

Bob

DryOwlTacos says:
June 4, 2010 at 3:56 pm

@tterrace
“Not shown: the part where the lyrebird imitates David Attenborough whispering in the forest.”

Thank God the Charmin Bears weren't there, too.

browniejr says:
June 4, 2010 at 4:07 pm

@juanito-John Davey: “Hi-diddly-ho, neighborino!” I live in Oakdale-at the time of the trip to Micke Grove, we lived in Modesto.

swschrad says:
June 4, 2010 at 4:45 pm

@bgbear: I like it even better when the night of hard work ends in the happy purring whirlpool tub, and there is NOT another day of nasty hard work in store.

NerveBag says:
June 4, 2010 at 5:52 pm

How have I not picked up on the fact that you play drums? (Do you really, or was that just random BS?) I, too, like to spend my evenings playing drums along to my favorite artists or gaming. It's hard to be 42 and still enjoy so many “kid” hobbies. 😊

I even have my own little home studio and write and record my own music at http://www.nervebag.com. It's not great, but it's okay. It's just a hobby because I like to make music. It's not like I make money off it. It's all free downloads. It's just fun.

Anyway, you continue to surprise and impress me, even after years of reading the Bleat. Congratulations.

If only you'd get over that silly, disturbing Apple fetish, I think I'd find you to be a darn all-right guy. 😊

J/K

NerveBag
Mark E. Hurling says:
June 4, 2010 at 6:11 pm

hpoulter, good observation as always. On the one hand the first
commentator you mentioned has already demonstrated a
predilection for random cheap shots of our Genial Host already. Got
malt liquor Joe?

In the second instance it's probably a gap in understanding of what
work actually means to men. Unless there's a stack of logs or a new
building when we're done for the day, it all seems trivial. Without
that material manifestation of accomplishment, we have just been
wool gathering to no real effect. It's OK, men and women are just
different in the way we think about this stuff.

I got reminded of this rather forcefully this afternoon when I took
vacation time to cut up a tree that for no discernible reason fell
over. I rented a chain saw, something I have never used before
despite my wife's concern for the integrity of retaining all my limbs.
I couldn't get it to work and so returned it. I got to work with an axe
and made short work of the trunk and limbs in less than 45
minutes. I have blisters on my hands as I type this and a sore lower
back from chopping. I also have a sense of satisfaction from doing it
the old school way. Some real Manuel Labor without having to hire
it done from some street corner.

AnnaN says:
June 4, 2010 at 6:57 pm

@Mark E. Hurling

I doubt it's a gender issue as I once worked a full-time job in
psychiatry (not as a therapist) and held a part time job at UPS as a
loader/gah!Teamster. I viewed the day job as much more taxing and
work-ish, yet the hours I worked from 7-11pm doing hard labor as
the relaxing end to frequently hectic days.

I don't even think it's a generational issue and for that I use my
husband who is (let me Google this…) only eight years older than
James and will frequently have to pop open a 1554 to soothe away
the stress of a day's labor behind his desk.

I believe what constitutes “real work” is not a nature question, but
one of nurture.

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 4, 2010 at 7:28 pm

OK then, boys get it pounded into them from very early on how
important it is to stand up straight, show up at work every day,
support your family, and be responsible. I would be surprised to
learn that this ended in my own generation. I was born in 1950 if
that helps put it into chronological perspective. Women, at least
since the late 60's, are encouraged to realize their full potential. See
the difference? I didn't create these norms, merely repeat them; nor
do I think they are necessarily flawed. They are certainly different
though.
swschrad says:
June 4, 2010 at 8:22 pm

@Mark E. Hurling: Ole had to cut firewood for the winter, so he had Lena take him down to the hardware store. “Yah, and I want the best, fastest saw ya got, then,” he said. so the counterman set him up with a $450 Farm Boss and oil and plugs and spare chain, and sent him home.

Monday, Ole staggered into the hardware store white, haggard, spent, lurching back to the small engine shop and set the saw on the counter. “This here's the worst saw I ever used! It took all weekend to cut a little three inch dead tree! Sven came over and he kicked it down!”

the mechanic came up from the back, looked the saw over, hit the primer, and pulled the cord. The saw started right up, purring like a kitten. he squeezed the trigger for a satisfying roar, a little chain oil spattering the parts book.

Ole jumped back a foot. “What you do to make that noise?”

-0-
work is what you make it 😃

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 4, 2010 at 8:34 pm

Good lord that's funny, and hits a little close to home just now.

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 4, 2010 at 8:38 pm

I'm thinking the lack of sunlight in northern Europe must contribute to developmental disabilities that echo down successive generations of DNA. After all, Sweden is just across the Baltic from Germany, right?

Tacobob says:
June 4, 2010 at 10:04 pm

No Diner? Sad Face!

swschrad says:
June 5, 2010 at 9:51 am

@Mark E. Hurling: but there is a large difference.

Germans have beer.

Norwegians have lutefisk.

it is possible to live too far north… 😢

Kev says:
June 5, 2010 at 10:48 am

*Back in the good ol' days, every once in a while you could get a small french fry that had gone through the deep-fry twice. Any potato taste was deep-fried out of it, and all you were left with was a brown crust*
of greasy goodness. Mmmmm.

At the aforementioned seafood place where I worked, we served a few hamburgers, but if nobody was ordering any all day, we'd clean the grill and shut it down. One time, one of my coworkers went on a late break and decided he wanted a burger, but the grill had already been shut down, so he tried deep-frying it in the (rarely used) clam fryer and the results were delicious! We called them “clamburgers” and cooked them that way for ourselves on purpose from then on.

@DryOwlTacos: A hardware store in Houston that my parents visited on occasion had a mynah bird, and we’d always talk to it when we were there. Often times, it was the usual “hello,” but one day, I decided to be silly and said, “Hello, Joe” instead. At that point, the bird turned and looked at me and said “My names not Joe! My name's not Joe!” I guess I wasn't the first person to try that, LOL. (The owner told us later that the bird's name was, in fact, Paul, but that wasn’t as much fun because it doesn’t rhyme with Joe.)

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 5, 2010 at 5:24 pm

The edda of yggdrasil continues (since we're in a Northern hemisphere state of mind). After 2 hours getting the bejabbers beaten out of me in jujitsu this morning, I tackled my latest nemesis in the back yard. I had better luck than Ole though since I used an axe rather than a saw. In 20 minutes I had the remaining big limbs and branches green recycle bin ready. No shovels required. Of course it’ll take several weeks or maybe even a couple months of rationing tree parts into acceptably sized loads for the pick up. I guess this shows a lack of proper nurturing for nature on my part.

I think I'll celebrate this victory with a horn of mead. Oh wait, I forgot! It's so un-PC to glory in gods with blond hair and one blue eye. Maybe I would do better if I captured some careless neighboring Olmec and offered his heart to the rain god. Yeah, that's the ticket. I will however, have lingon berry jam on my toast tomorrow. Uff da!

swschrad says:
June 5, 2010 at 7:00 pm

@Mark E. Hurling: skol, Viking.

I feed dead tree parts… to the fire ring. the wolverines don't want ‘em.

shoeless says:
June 5, 2010 at 10:12 pm

I've always felt that the Black capped chickadee song are the same two notes in the refrain of the song “Jane Says” by Jane's Addiction. Although the band sings those notes with a bit more volume and ferocity.

Brian Lutz says:
June 6, 2010 at 6:12 pm

ed in texas:
June 4, 2010 at 7:44 am

BTW, I warned you about the fonts. The day of fonty reckoning
approaches.

That's the part where he gets told to go to Helvetica, right?

Dave (in MA) says:
June 7, 2010 at 12:55 am

1. Woo,
2. Hoo.

The spiffification also rectified the chronological oppositeness of the Older / Newer comments link thingy.

zefal says:
June 7, 2010 at 2:05 am

I checked that bird's IMDB page and sure enough he was in 5 of the 9 Police Academy movies.

BeckoningChasm says:
June 7, 2010 at 9:04 pm

“The Life of Birds” has a lot of info about them and is well worth watching—as is pretty much everything David Attenborough has done.

← Older Comments

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Archives

All entries, chronologically...

May 2013
April 2013
March 2013
February 2013
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December 2012
November 2012
October 2012
September 2012
August 2012

Archives

July 2013
June 2013

Visiting 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

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Mashing doesn't make it Sauce | The Bleat.

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?
What? What do you mean, things look different?

Just trying out some new approaches. I'll probably dump the slider above, but for now I like it. The photos are all shots I took over the last few weeks here at Jasperwood, using the good camera.

At the moment I'm in the gazebo; the sun is coming in and out, and a bruise-hued mass of clouds is approaching from the southwest. In the olden times a fellow would have to study the clouds, judge whether they bore rain, and act accordingly; now I can just call up a weather app and see what's going on. Hold on, let me do exactly that . . .

Well, according to my weather app, there's a bruise-hued mass of clouds approaching from the southwest, and they might contain rain. Technology! It makes every aspect of life so much easier.

Wife and child just got back from a Girl Scout trip up north – they were gone all weekend, so it was me and the dog. It rained most of Saturday, and he refused to go outside to void himself – he'd walk up to the door, look out, walk away. Repeat every half hour. I went out to run errands when the rain eased up, and stopped off at Southdale. Passed Eddie Bauer; they had a sale. Imagine that. If you bought anything, you could buy a collapsible stool that had a cooler built right into it, one of those will-wonders-never-cease things, and I bought a small umbrella for the car. It's one of those that comes with a sleeve, and once you get it out of the sleeve it never goes back. The sleeve
migrates around the car, around the house, and is often still around when the umbrella has broken and been discarded. Ideally, you never have to use the umbrella, and it stays perfect in its sheath forever.

When I got outside it was pouring. Had to use the umbrella. This meant removing it from the sheath. For a moment I actually considered running to the car with the Eddie Bauer bag over my head, but reproached myself for being a complete idiot even to think such a thing.

Had a small pathetic supper, then sat outside listening to the BBC World Service service the world on my iPad. The dog sat on the stoop, sheltered from the rain – and then the sun blared through. Came through like a brass band playing a C-Major chord. The dog got up, went to the yard, and relieved himself, then barked at me as if I could have done this all along, but was being mean.

The rest of the night I worked on the upcoming Gallery of Regrettable Food, an overhaul / redesign that began months ago, and proceeds in spasms and lurches. Redesigning old sites is a remarkably unrewarding job, and makes me feel as if I’ve been painting the same house over and over. When I could take no more I watched “Sherlock Holmes in the London That Only Has One Color, Which Is That of Hay in a Filthy Stable.” I liked it. I like Rathbone’s Holmes – upright, English, ascetic, with a hint of paralyzing neuroses kept at bay with steely resolve – but that has much to do with the idea of Victorian England, the calm and decent place. Clopping hooves on cobblestones, men in tall hats explaining “By Jove,” the confident culture of England at its acme, ready to invent things and build great ships. Gaslight and fog. Nonsense, of course, but it’s oatmeal, cream, and brown sugar: hearty and comforting.
The movie has a bit of “steampunk,” a term that’s annoyed me for years, partly because the “punk” suffix has morphed into meaninglessness, and partly because it replaces the perfectly good use of “Jules Verne” to describe late 19th century speculative technology. (Or “spec-tech,” as no one calls it, but should.) (Until it gets annoying.) Which reminds me of this piece I read on i09 concerning the next thing we will all tire of, once we’ve had our fill of steampunk and zombies. I was never crazy about zombies anyway, less so when people started appending them to everything as they did with bacon: add it and it’s awesome! Bacon zombies are inevitable, I suppose. (Sigh. Googling . . . . of course.)

Anyway, it seems steampunk represented a cool hopeful future we never got, and zombies represent our pessimism about the future. So the article says. This is the problem with nostalgia and futurism: it’s either Cool or it’s Bad. It’s either Good or it’s Dystopian. It’s inevitable, with speculative fiction, because you have to come up with something that defines the future, some twist,
some condition, some invention, some new idea that dominates and animates the culture.

In “Clockwork Orange,” for example, it’s the government’s use of mind-control training to remove the individual’s ability to use free will to choose evil. Are you less human if you are unable to be anything else but good? More moral? It’s a book about ideas and language, but it’s known mostly for the “ultra-violence” of the film version and Malcolm McDowell’s turn as yet-another-charismatic-70s-antihero. But the society in which the story takes place is not dystopian. There are trashed public-housing complexes and tony private homes. Violent gangs in the bad part of town. Drugs for some and civilized claret for others. It was set in the late 70s, and aside from the oversized codpieces and fancy forms of drugged milk, it more or less came true. Yet no one would say we live in a dystopia now, or in 1978, because it never arrives all at once. It happens in the margins of the big places; abetted by celebrants in the high and low culture, it happens in small place. And then it becomes the norm, neither dys- nor u-, but just where we all are.

Would today look like a dystopia to someone in 1974? 1962? New rockets blasting off, an international space station, tiny computers in our pocket, widescreen TVs – with politics grinding on as they always have, hairshirt prophets fixated on doom from this while keen-eyed futurists promising salvation from that. In short, the usual. Underneath it all in the daily quotidian sense it’s always the usual, and barring an asteroid or the Utter Collapse of Everything it will always be the usual. Or so I think, which made this line stick out:

> I’m going to crawl out on a limb and say that our world will keep feeling apocalyptic for the foreseeable future. And our fiction will continue to represent our panic about the hopeless present, and maybe a nostalgia for the hopeful past.

Oh, whatever. Panic away, it’ll do lots of good. And when you talk about the hopeful past, make sure you never wonder too much about the culture that produced such optimism, because this may bump up against the shibboleths held by members of modern Enlightenment.

It is the particular conceit of the young and the old that things have never been worse – the latter because pessimism conveys false authenticity, the conviction that things are being seen through the faultless lens of new eyes, and the latter because the Old Ways are ignored or mocked. But no one can point to the exact day when it all went off the rails, because there’s no such moment. Change never arrives all at once – each year is fresh paint and new toys, but otherwise the same mix prevails, the bestial and the angelic. The proportion varies. That’s the bad news, and that’s the good news as well.

Let me put it another way: when they write the history of the early part of the 20th century, people who worried about the impact of long hot showers on the Climate, or wondered what would replace zombies, will not figure
high in the roll call of significant actors.

———

**No updates** today, but tumblr's q'd up and ready to roll, starting at 10 AM, and PopCrush begins at 9 and updates throughout the day. See you around!

Pass it along, if you wish

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**69 RESPONSES TO *Monday & Tomorrow***

**Bonnie**

says:

June 7, 2010 at 1:36 pm

I'm a big fan of Fringe and the glimpses of the alternate Earth are fascinating. There, the World Trade Center never came down, and zepplins dock at the Chrysler Building.

However I think it's a fascist state, and a very ugly place to live because of that. Perhaps Nazi's won WWII there? This alternate universe concept makes me watch the show.

I think we're living in a broken timeline, where things went terribly wrong. I'm hoping to get ahold of a Fringe gadget or two and move to a timeline where Mohammed died in childhood and Karl Marx got run over by a bus.

**Tory Mitchell**

says:

June 7, 2010 at 2:02 pm

So you are updating GORF (ha!) and you think it is an unrewarding task? Just sos ya knows, i was rereading your book Gallery of Regrettable Food just last night and laughing again…what a CLASSIC! Anyhoo, know your fans appreciate your work, whether the stuff you give us for free or the stuff we can buy! Have a Grand Day!

**fizzbin**

says:

June 7, 2010 at 2:19 pm

The new look is great. As long as it’s black letters on white background I don’t care about the other stuff. The photo slide is gorgeous! Our genial host is, indeed, a renaissauce man 😜

As for AGW alarmism, hahahaha, I’ll believe it when the Mother Ship rises up from my moon-base and takes me away, Calgon.

I, being a certified Geezer, like the size and look of the font in the comment box – and get off my lawn, ya little brats!!

**Brisko**

says:

June 7, 2010 at 2:31 pm

@ fizzbin

A “renaissauce man”? Sauce was Friday's topic.
Borderman says:
June 7, 2010 at 2:38 pm

My gravatar has disappeared (or won’t load here) and my previous comment is “awaiting moderation.” Yikes. Was going to say the look of the new template is very nice, but now I’m wondering what part of the emperor’s new cloths I haven’t admired. Or–maybe I don’t get to admire anymore and can only read. Oh well. This won’t be the first rodeo out of which I’ve been thrown.

Borderman says:
June 7, 2010 at 2:39 pm

How about just this? Does it too require moderation?

swschrad says:
June 7, 2010 at 2:42 pm

the “cops” references that splattered the right side of the web page from little birdies brings the sauce back to present consideration.

police training in a nutshell: “if you run, you have something to hide. if you have something to hide, the only question is the extent to which you want to hide it right (!) now.” know those two sentences, you know all there is to know about police response.

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 7, 2010 at 3:34 pm

Not bad, swschrad. Jeez, I’m a poet and I didn’t know it. Very true too, although until now I’d never seen it expressed in such a succinct manner. There’s another one though; don’t laugh every time you hear the SODDI (Some Other Dude Did It) defense.

Borderman says:
June 7, 2010 at 3:46 pm

@AnnaN:

Oh! I get it – you are discontented with the thought of having to alter your life significantly (possibly even through gov’t mandate!)

Yeah, he’s discontented. So are a lot of people, especially with the “alter your life…through government mandate” stuff. Read any polls lately?

@ Trimegistus

When did everything go off the rails? That’s easy: when a band of murderers killed 3,000 people in New York and Washington one morning, and a significant chunk of the American voting population decided we deserved it.

Well said.
browniejr says:
June 7, 2010 at 4:16 pm

@hpoulter: I had my Wally gravitar all ready back when Wally Ballou/ Bob Elliott came up in a discussion here, but you beat me to it! I thought you wouldn't mind if I used it for a while. I also love old Buster Keaton movies, so we must be tuned to a similar wavelength somehow. (dibs on Patrick McGoohan/ Prisoner images for Gravitars (?)!- can you even do that?)

lanczos says:
June 7, 2010 at 5:56 pm

Here's another Dog/Rain Approach, courtesy of lanczos' two PitBulls:

Open the door to the backyard in the morning, but if it Is Raining / Has Been Raining / Is Raining Nearby / Trees Dripping Dew Or Any Other Moisture: No Deal – Climb into the Living Room recliners, until we:

Take the leashes from the closet (the implication being a Trip To The Park): They're Ready! Rain? Snow? Sleet? Hail? – NO PROBLEM! (I guess if it were actually hailing At That Moment, we would wait until the hail stopped, then Head For The Park.)

hpoulter says:
June 7, 2010 at 6:28 pm

@browniejr: Hey, Wally belongs to the world. You can have #6 with my blessings. I may add UFO's Commander Straker to my rotation, especially if I can find one of him with a tiparillo.

JeffdeCal says:
June 7, 2010 at 7:13 pm

JAMES:

In your penultimate paragraph, you mistakenly use “latter” and “latter” instead of “former” and “latter” to describe the feigned pessimism of the young and old.

The description of the young is so apt, though, it's easy to tell that is where the mislabeling happened (I mean, besides the obvious convention of mentioning the former thing first, and all. But you're still brilliant).

G'day.

browniejr says:
June 7, 2010 at 11:37 pm

@hpoulter: Here's Straker out of uniform, but definitely “smokin”:
http://daisydownunder.com/Ed-Bishop-Index.htm

browniejr says:
June 7, 2010 at 11:39 pm

John Prine Aid It Best (of course)

We are living in the future
I'll tell you how I know
I read it in the paper
Fifteen years ago
We're all driving rocket ships
And talking with our minds
And wearing turquoise jewelry
And standing in soup lines

Paul in NJ says:
June 8, 2010 at 2:45 pm

“...the good camera.”

Speaking of The Good Camera, I need to buy a new camcorder. (Is there anything cooler than needing to buy a New Guy Thing?)

Probably get an old-fashioned SD flash-memory model; it's my first camcorder since, well, 10 years ago.

What do y'all use?

Foxfier says:
June 13, 2010 at 10:13 am

For "Steam Punk"—how about "Gaslamp fantasy"? That's what Girl Genius calls their (launched in Jan of '01) free-to-read professional level comic of... Victorian science and (kinda sorta, with a Jules Vern type origin) zombies. ^_^

http://www.girlgeniusonline.com

Read it, you'll love it!

(Not paid in any way, just a rabid fan.)
Tuesday is the last day of school, and my kid’s conflicted. Sad. Looking forward to freedom, of course, but it was a good year, and its conclusion leaves her as angsty as she gets. That’s growing up: the realization that things end. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, she had an existential crisis the other night about the Conclusion of Childhood, the realization that she will grow out of things without intending to, that she will lose interest in things almost against her will. I’ve watched her grow out of various phases, many of which have to do with trademarked properties, and it’s hard to watch because you know what it means and you know your child doesn’t know what it means. Rejection of Hello Kitty = PROGRESS for them, but they don’t have to put the stuffed toys away, send them off to Goodwill, save a few for the sake of saving a few, and sigh: time’s winged chariot and all that. Everything goes under the wheel. But that includes sorrow and regrets, too; that’s part of the deal.

There’s no point to school this week. They have cleaned out their lockers and taken home their materials. I asked her what they did today, and she said “we played cribbage.”

*Cribbage*

“It was the only game that didn’t have gambling.” She paused. “What’s gambling?”

“Spending a lot of money to win a little money.”
“That’s stupid.”

Keep that thought.

An ordinary day; blogged in the sunlight. Ran to the store to get cookies for school tomorrow and a gift card for the teacher. The latter was done at Walgreen’s, where the clerk who swiped my goods was the same clerk who rang me up when I moved back to Minneapolis in 1994. Greyer, but just as laconic. We’ve never had a real conversation; I’m not sure we need to have one. She seems content not to engage. But if she retired and they had a little sign on the door that said PATTY IS LEAVING!!! people would stream in all day and wish her well. At the grocery store I could have had the same clerk I’d known since 1994, but he wasn’t on. Had the checkout clerk who always calls me Mr. Newspaper Guy.

“Are summers better for you, or worse?” she asked.

“Better,” I said. And then I went home and blogged for five hours in the gazebo. Dog dozing in the shade of the tree. No complaints. No sir. None.

Knocked off work, napped, made dinner; wife and child went off to soccer. Did some work while watching a tidy 1950 movie for “100 Mysteries,” a simple, crisply written, low-budget noir. They used to make scores of these every year, and even the least of them would keep your keister in the seat for 71 minutes. Those were the days when movie theaters were plentiful; people took streetcars downtown or walked to the nabe on a Monday or Thursday night to sit in a cool room and watch a story, then walk home, then maybe have a piece of pie, then go to bed. You did things one at a time then, I think.

**Interesting discussion** in the comments yesterday; thanks. I agree that WWI is a good starting point for the train leaving the rails, at least for Europe. Whether Europe is the canary in the coal mine for Western Civ – you know, the canary on the train that went off the rails into the mine – we’ll see. Little from old Europe gives me much hope, but that’s just observation from a distance. We both be suffering the end of the idea of technocratic statism, but we still have some steam left to manage the transition. To what? I haven’t the faintest. Technocratic local statism, probably.

**How offensive** is this?
We'll get to that in a moment. I was listening to Dennis Prager this morning, and he was discussing the infamous Andres Serrano photograph, “Piss Christ.” It wasn't the subject of the show, but it came up in a chat about standards of art, the academy vs. popular tastes, the enshrinement of the ugly and base as being more authentic, and hence more important, than silly bourgeois notions of beauty and transcendence, and so on. I am not a fan of Serrano – most of his stuff seems lurid and banal and obvious (oh! A cardinal next to a whipped, bleeding woman! Take THAT, Rome!) but the controversy over PC has always annoyed me, because there is something to learn here.

For one thing, it's a perfect example of Tom Wolfe's “The Painted Word” – a book about modern art's amusing dependance on text. You can't really understand a work of art until you know what doctrine it's supporting. (Or rejecting.) Before all the old styles fell apart, a painting was about technique and subject, theatricality and theology or some civic doctrine. Afterwards, it was about new schools of abstraction, each more pious than the next – although Mondrian seems to have topped them all from the start. Only straight lines! Only primary colors!
I like Mondrian, but that's another story. Anyway: you have to know the backstory to get the artist's intentions, which is why P.C. caused so much trouble. Without the title we would have no idea, and this would be seen by some as an almost ethereal work of reverence.

Compounding matters: when the controversy broke I heard that Serrano was intending the photo to be reverent, in a sense; he was doing all sorts of work with human fluids, a medium that had somehow escaped the attention of DaVinci and Michelangelo, imbuing the Word with the common elements of the physical form. There's a tradition for this, if you like; Leo Steinberg wrote a book called “The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Painting and Modern Oblivion,” which detailed – endlessly – the ways Renaissance art went out of its way to make you look at the Christ Child's little dongle. His point: this was their way of emphasizing the humanness of the divine baby. See? He's fully
equipped. It is quite weird, when you look at picture after picture of Mary splaying the tot and looking straight at the viewer. Without the backstory the intention is lost.

It's a theory. I remember discussing the book with my favorite college teacher Norman Canedy (Art history was my minor, and he was the reason I took it up) and he smiled and shook his head and said “Leo, Leo, Leo.” The man had a reputation.

So context matters. The context Wolfe discusses are insular, personal, fractious, and theoretical, but the contexts of Renaissance art and its inheritors are theological, historical, and political, and hence much more interesting. What did that choice of a particular saint mean? Why this object in the foreground? Who's that patron? And so on. There's none of that in Serrano, just a luminous photograph marred with a name that forces you to reevaluate what you're looking at, and define it downwards. I'm not saying I think it's a good idea. I'm not saying it was intended as a crackpot's means of expressing devotion. It may have been just another in a tiresome line of epater le bourgeois art whose creators got their jollies from thinking about decent ladies in petticoats getting the vapors when they saw something Startling! and Real! But there is technique, aesthetic judgment, and calculation – he decided to call it what it was, knowing how it would change perception of the image – and enough ambiguity to provoke some serious discussion, and so it's not fair to toss it in the junk pile with art created by hacks and provocateurs.

I mean, most people think it's a picture of a crucifix in a Mason jar o' pee. It may be many things, but not that.

Which brings me back to this:

![Image](image_url)

Do you know who did this? Does it matter? What if I said it's Serrano – and he didn't describe anything about it?

As I said, I don't think he's that good, and the claims and controversy around this object exaggerate his own abilities and depth. His website may give you
an example of the maxim “First, know thyself.” Warning: it might well be what you expect.

By the way, the controversy first erupted not because of the existence of the photo, but its public funding. Completely different matter.

Later today: Comic Sins! Don’t miss “Lymphatic Fluid Superman,” coming around noon.

Pass it along, if you wish

79 RESPONSES TO the wheel

swschrad says:
June 8, 2010 at 10:54 am

@spud: my vote is for integrity.
the Lord provides it everywhere, but there are a fair number of churches where staff, ministers, and congregants don’t have any.

just sayin’

GardenStater says:
June 8, 2010 at 11:07 am

@MDG: “I’m assuming the madonna is the butter sculpture at the fair.”

Exactly what I thought when I saw it.

hpoulter says:
June 8, 2010 at 11:12 am

@bgbear: dang, missed it. What I get for not reading every post and comment. It’s very strange.

GardenStater says:
June 8, 2010 at 11:17 am

@Al Federber: “Pissing on religious and statist icons is always a good idea. We need more of it.”

The skunk at the garden party makes another appearance.

Hey Al, don’t go pissing on any Muslim symbols, or you might end up dead. Pissing on Christian symbols, on the other hand, might win you a government grant.

Strange how that works, isn’t it?

Brian Dunbar says:
June 8, 2010 at 11:31 am
By the way, the controversy first erupted not because of the existence of the photo, but its public funding. Completely different matter.

Amen. I could give a darn about offensive art. If I don't like it, I won't look at it. Problem solved.

But using my tax money to support it … well then you're asking me to have an opinion and a say on if I like it or not.

**Kev** says:
June 8, 2010 at 11:38 am

*If concert music can sound a little like John Williams, that's an unalloyed good.*

Agreed. I've had a longstanding theory that film scoring saved classical music from plunging into the abyss of the avant-garde. It's always nice to have some modern orchestral music that people actually want to listen to.

(And I realize that, as a jazz musician, I risk being branded a hypocrite, since my own genre lost quite a bit of its audience when it morphed from dance music to bebop. But I still maintain that well-done bop has the ability to touch the soul more than, say, twelve-tone compositions that are almost more math than music.)

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
June 8, 2010 at 12:55 pm

@GardenStater, I declined to rise to the bait on that one since he's been on such good behavior lately. But then again, if you want stir up some real religious fury, just question authority on anything related to climate change. You'll see scaffolds and stakes set up faster than you can say auto de fe.

**hpoulter** says:
June 8, 2010 at 12:58 pm

*bgbear (roger h)* says:
June 8, 2010 at 10:35 am*

At some point, enough people convinced themselves it was possible to create Heaven on Earth and that paradise was not just something that could only exist in a hidden valley or in the Golden Age.

*And zany antics ensue.*

*Those who in the Elysian fields would dwell*  
*Do but extend the boundaries of hell.*

Oakeshott, *The Tower of Babel*

**Dave (in MA)** says:
June 8, 2010 at 1:20 pm

This article and discussion thread reminded me of the quote from musician Anthony Phillips, who dedicated one of his early albums to “*those who still champion the old-fashioned ideals of beauty, lyricism, and grandeur in art against the tide of cynical intellectualism and dissonance*”. 
shesnailie says:
June 8, 2010 at 1:29 pm

_@_v – favourite art discussion was that of number six who displayed an abstract sculptural piece called ‘escape’ a the village art fair in ‘the chimes of big ben’. the piece was in fact a boat he planned to use for the said purpose of the title...

Borderman says:
June 8, 2010 at 1:34 pm

*human fluids, a medium that had somehow escaped the attention of DaVinci and Michelangelo*

And they were so close to said fluids in those days before plumbing. With all that raw material everywhere I just have to ask myself *why* they were preoccupied with things like the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and carving the Pietà. *The Last Supper* is reckoned by some to be the most reproduced work of art in the last 512 years, but it took the genius of Mr. Serrano to show us what we’ve not appreciated about our world. Thanks, Mr. Serrano. That’s such a lovely picture on your Web site. A self-portrait, isn’t it?

-o-

@hpoulter: I too ran into the censuring bug (uh, *feature*) in the new template yesterday: *YOUR COMMENT IS AWAITING MODERATION.* Not only that, but my gravatar was absent. I tried to correct it, twice, but no soap. And then something broke loose, and posted *all three of them* plus the gravatar. Fascinating, Captain. I have no idea what was wrong in the first place. And no, social ist was not any part of it. New software is all the doubt I can give benefit of. So, hpoulter, I don’t mind your high post count on this subject. I know of which you speak and it is/was disconcerting.

-o-

@Mr. Lileks: I appreciate keeping a few items your child has outgrown and the difficulty of sending the rest on to Goodwill. Oh brother, do I ever. My wife might say you are a sentimental pack rat, as I am, but from one of those to another, I sincerely appreciate why you keep those items of childhood past. I have done it too, and if any grand kids ever show up will do so again.

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
June 8, 2010 at 1:47 pm

That Frigidaire ad in tumblr is creepy creepy creepy. Like Mom is daring daughter to open the box, and daughter (who is rapidly outgrowing her kiddie clothes) knows no good will come of it but is curious to try anyway. A metaphor for something about growing up, perhaps. But creepy!

swschrad says:
June 8, 2010 at 1:53 pm

( snarky comment about how they can’t put a working thermostat in our new Frigidaire, parts has shipped two replacement bottom glass shelves for the one that bent over like a half-cooked pancake and exploded, and now the snap-on tray bumper on the top of the fridge door won’t stay on omitted for brevity and to keep blood pressure in
the low 4 digit readings. )

hpoulter says:
June 8, 2010 at 2:32 pm

Watch that BP, you don't want to blow a(ther) gasket.

fizzbin says:
June 8, 2010 at 3:01 pm

@GardenStater and Mark E. I thought of responding to our pal Al but I'm trying to be a nice guy 'cause Santa is keepin' a list, so I didn't. But now, since you've broached the subject, I'll just say that good old Al should hop on his tricycle and peddle his skinny little butt to Dearborn MI. When he gets to a certain street, in front of a certain building (best on a Friday, noonish) he should place a large picture of the prophet on the sidewalk and do what he thinks should be done more often. After that, clean-up and disposal of what's left will be no problem.

Great, now I'm never going to get an American Flyer set 😒

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 8, 2010 at 3:14 pm

@fizzbin, just remember Santa's advice to Ralphie, “You'll put your eye out kid!”

fizzbin says:
June 8, 2010 at 3:14 pm

Oh, and now that I have thought long and hard on the subject of Art, all I can say is Ars Gratia Simia.

swschrad says:
June 8, 2010 at 3:15 pm

@hpoulter: that BP, now them guys is oily slick.

to some, there would appear to be a massive disconnect in the Market, where everybody rants at length about Beyond Pitiful, then fills up at the local BP convenience shop.

it could be that consumers are getting sharp enough to distinguish between the harried local franchisor who has to pump 200,000 gallons of gas a month at a half cent above market to keep the lights on and the franchise fee paid... and the fumblerooski crew out in the gulf killing the shrimp po-boys before they can be cooked.

it could be we're all too dumb to connect the dots.

it is not likely that we all understand whatever sign is in the air, the gas we buy in the twin cities, for instance, comes generally from Canadian or North Dakota crude, and is likely refined at (newstar? formerly amoco) in Mandan, Flint Hills (formerly Koch) in Newport, or Marathon (formerly Ashland) in East St. Paul.

there is also some gas coming in from Canada on a Northern Pipe Line that runs down a half block from my house, about a mile north of where a rupture at the edge of Mounds View 30 years ago burned up a neighborhood that is just now being rebuilt in condos.
none of ours comes in at Belle Fourche.

**hpoulter** says:
June 8, 2010 at 3:36 pm

Whoops, I used “BP” for “blood pressure” and uncorked a gusher. I guess I shouldn’t buy BP. I already boycott Hugo’s Citgo. I wonder where Al Gore and his ilk buy that guilt-free fuel their SUVs and private jets run on.

**Dave (in MA)** says:
June 8, 2010 at 3:37 pm

Please tell me that it’s butter.
I want to believe it’s butter.

**C. Wingate** says:
June 8, 2010 at 3:39 pm

Kev, the Balto. classical station plays lots of film scores. The BSO also played a suite of Howard Shore’s score for the LotR movies as a concert pieces.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
June 8, 2010 at 3:57 pm

@hpoulter, too funny!

**browniejr** says:
June 8, 2010 at 4:15 pm

@Dave (in MA): “There’s more butter around then we are led to believe“:  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MsbvGmLaU4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MsbvGmLaU4)

**Pencilpal** says:
June 8, 2010 at 4:38 pm

Several months into my freshman year in art school in the 80’s, my drawing teacher (who painted abstract oils) told me he’d looked at my academic transcripts and asked what my intended major was. When I answered ‘Illustration’ he opined I might be ‘too intelligent to be an illustrator.’ I remember it clearly, because it crystallized the suspicions I’d been forming about the mindset of the fine art faculty, and solidified my intent to be a ‘commercial’ artist.

By the way, the venerable Philadelphia Sketch Club has a show up now called “Phillustration 2010” with artwork by area commercial artists, people who have talent, work ethic and a propensity to create scenes that most regular folks find beautiful. No catalog explanations needed.

**Baby M** says:
June 8, 2010 at 4:38 pm

@browniejr — That is just glorious! I can’t believe it’s not Monty Python.
swschrad says:
June 8, 2010 at 4:48 pm

@hpoulter: why, they're using Fairy Fuel™, the totally guiltless
energy source delivered by unicorns!

steveH says:
June 8, 2010 at 7:18 pm

Some years ago, a work friend of mine and her husband, both
Stanford grads, associated socially with some of the music
department's post grad composers.

And so attended a recital of a number of new works by said artists.
Performances preceded in each case by a discussion of the
mathematical/philosophical/political/etc foundations and
underpinnings of the pieces.

At one point in the proceedings, she leaned over to one of the
composers and asked if many people intentionally listened to any of
the works (and I'm certain she phrased the question a lot more
pleasantly).

He, in turn, looked at her as if she'd suddenly sprouted a second
head, possibly followed by a third.

"It's not written for people to *listen* to!"

And that, I think, was the unvarnished truth.

Richard C. Moeur says:
June 8, 2010 at 10:45 pm

@Terry Fitz: That has to be the best description of the Internet that
I've seen in at least a week – no, make that a month. Many Months.
Since I can remember, anyway. Thanks.

Mr. Manager says:
June 9, 2010 at 9:23 am

As an art school grad I can give the simplest (and most cynical)
explanation – most artists don't have the skills or the dedication to
learn the skills necessary to paint like Michelangelo or Rembrandt
or Trumbull. They do know how to weld together chunks of metal
or give random names to random piles of junk or "utilize" bodily
fluids unusually. Therefore this is now art.
The last day of school began with the promise of suffering: my daughter said they would be playing kickball, and she didn’t like kickball. What? No! Impossible, because I loved kickball! Of course I loved it because it was a respite from the usual humiliations, but what were her reasons? The boys hogged all the balls and yelled things from the sidelines. Well, give it back to them, then. She said maybe she would, but really, it’s just kickball.

I walked her down to the bus stop for the last day. Stopped walking her down a few months ago, because she’s not a baby. But I’d said I would this day and she reminded me that I said I would, which suggests she didn’t mind if I did. As long as there wasn’t a hug or kiss or anything. The bus huffed and rumbled around the corner, collected the kids, lumbered up the hill, and it was back to a day before the machinery, collecting, distilling, writing. No gazebo work: all rain, all day.

She came home at the usual time and said there was no kickball, because it
rained. But there was more suffering: she had cried. Over the end of school? No: the end of a movie. They saw a movie about a dog whose master died and he went to the train station and waited for him every day.

“Oh, Hachiko?”

“Yes! Hachi! He was an Akita and he was soooo cute it and was so sad.”

“I think there’s a statue of him where he stood.”

“Really?”

To the internets, then. I found some pictures, and noted that the original statue had been melted down for bullets for World War 2. She told me more about the story: the dog ran away but people fed him at the train station because there was a dude who ran a bagel shop right there -

A bagel shop? Not in Japan.

“Well that was the weird part because none of the people looked Japanese.”

Sure enough: the movie was set in Rhode Island, and stars Richard Gere.

So the dog loved, but suffered. My child suffered, but loved the movie. You may say these are the things that give life meaning.

Oh, you would be so wrong.

The difference between a crackpot and a professor is often that the latter has office hours, and the crackpot rarely sends in a teaching assistant to tell people that the world is hollow and filled with mole people. I had good professors in college, but I went to a large public university; I expect that if great amounts of money had been spent at elite institutions I would have been lectured by very smart people completely insulated from practical reality, and thinking it is the norm to be paid $150,000 per year to think about interesting justifications for eliminating humankind from the planet. Pete Singer often writes about Life, and in general he’s agin it. The most recent example is this piece on the Times website, where he asks “Should this be the last generation?”

I’ll answer that one, professor: no! There. Class dismissed. But I’m not thinking things through philosophically. After the usual talk about the morality of bringing a child into the world who may suffer, that being the prism through which this comfortable fellow judges the lives of others, he bolsters his case with the arguments of other Deep Thinkers:

Schopenhauer’s pessimism has had few defenders over the past two centuries, but one has recently emerged, in the South African philosopher David Benatar also argues that human lives are, in general, much less good than we think they are. We spend most of our lives with unfulfilled desires, and the occasional satisfactions that are all most of us can achieve are insufficient to outweigh these prolonged negative
states. If we think that this is a tolerable state of affairs it is because we are, in Benatar’s view, victims of the illusion of pollyannaism. This illusion may have evolved because it helped our ancestors survive, but it is an illusion nonetheless. If we could see our lives objectively, we would see that they are not something we should inflict on anyone.

Methinks thou dost project too much, to alter the quote. Singer finds this fascinating:

Of course, it would be impossible to get agreement on universal sterilization, but just imagine that we could. Then is there anything wrong with this scenario? Even if we take a less pessimistic view of human existence than Benatar, we could still defend it, because it makes us better off — for one thing, we can get rid of all that guilt about what we are doing to future generations — and it doesn’t make anyone worse off, because there won’t be anyone else to be worse off.

You have to love this: let’s say everyone agreed not to have children. Then is there anything wrong with this scenario? The obvious answer is “yes; no children” but since the childless future with no humans at all, just birds and fish and bugs, doesn’t mean any human suffering, then the net amount of suffering is reduced, and we can all have a party. This is also an argument for smothering everyone under 15 so they don’t suffer broken hearts and angsty 20s, which happen to everyone. But don’t worry; he’s just asking questions.

I do think it would be wrong to choose the non-sentient universe. In my judgment, for most people, life is worth living. Even if that is not yet the case, I am enough of an optimist to believe that, should humans survive for another century or two, we will learn from our past mistakes and bring about a world in which there is far less suffering than there is now. But justifying that choice forces us to reconsider the deep issues with which I began. Is life worth living? Are the interests of a future child a reason for bringing that child into existence? And is the continuance of our species justifiable in the face of our knowledge that it will certainly bring suffering to innocent future human beings?

These are tough, hard questions. To which I could add: do french fries really benefit from a dash of salt? Is “Empire” better than “Jedi”? Does the bear strain, his haunches splayed, and deposit the end result of his digestive processes on the forest floor? God help me, there are 40 pages of comments. Number two sets the tone for one side:

Unfortunately, we still need enough humans to take care of the cats, dogs, horses, etc. Other than that, humans are nuisances. Recommended by 164 Readers
Those poor horses and cats and dogs; what did they do before we came along and extended their lives and gave them good food and warm places to live. This letter is a view of a particular form of social hell I feel lucky to have avoided:

. . . by not having a child, or children, I am not only reducing the ‘resource footprint’ of my family by the children I am not having, but also by all of the children that my own potential children might have had, and so on.

It just really annoys me when a friend with 1, or 2, or 4 children tells me I should eat less beef and less seafood, and more vegetables, as doing so would be better for the environment. Reducing my own personal choices is certainly going to be less important than generating entirely new consumers of resources. If you have even one child, please stop sermonizing about conservation to your child-free friends. They have just conserved a full person’s share of resources, by not having a child.

Jolly times at the old Thanksgiving table, I can imagine. ARE THESE YAMS SUSTAINABLE? Another member of the 12 Monkeys Guild weighs in:

I don’t believe that there’s any inherent good in having people on earth. We’re fond of ourselves, but that’s about it.

Uh huh. Well, here’s a question I find more interesting than Singer’s threnodies: if there was no sentient life on Earth, would Nature still be beautiful? Everyone loves the beauty of Nature, after all. Everyone agrees it’s a Good and Wonderful Thing, although some think some spiritual experience can be distilled from its contemplation. I don’t – I sense the inconceivable depths of time, the wonders of natural systems, and find aesthetic pleasures if they mesh with my own preferences, i.e., I like the colors of a sunset, but do not like the face of a spider. There is no moral component to beauty, no ethics in a great forest. I like them, but they are not my Brother or Mother anymore than the bear considers me a distant relative. I prefer a certain amount of distance from Nature, as in the form of walls and roofs and clothing and medicine and so on, and if this makes our lives “disconnected” from Nature, then talk to the beaver, who gnaws down trees and dams streams. But we cannot disconnect with Nature; we’re part of it. We’re just the clever part that figured out how to arm ourselves against its indifference.

We pay Nature the compliment of being Beautiful, but that’s a hard-fought luxury. Nature requires the application of judgment to be beautiful. It requires people.

I don’t think we’re alone in the universe, but if we are, imagine what we have done: we have looked into the heavens as far as we can, and simply by observing we have extended the emanations of sentience far beyond our own lovely blue marble. Sentient perception gives the universe meaning the
way the sculptor’s chisel gives the marble a shape, a face. This view is elastic enough to accommodate atheists and believers alike – the former can enjoy our singular perspective, and the latter can believe we are intended to observe, to stand in awe, to contemplate the intentions of the vastness.

It would be a shame for a universe to be born, grow, and die, and never have anyone tell it that it’s pretty.

Well, I don’t know how I got off on that, but I did, and now we’re done. Out of Context Ad Challenge up around 10:30 or so; see you then!

126 RESPONSES TO *tiresome utilitarians*

**swschrad** says:
June 9, 2010 at 5:13 pm

ah, forgot one thing. the ultimate thing. the Garden of Eden.

God could have used the opportunity to banish Sin, totally, absolutely. instead, we have this continuing fight between good and bad till the end of the ages, if you’re into this argument.

mankind has only little choices… I can kill this baby now by garrotting, or not. I can cuss now, or not. I can give thanks for this breath and the next, or not. each is a crossroads between sin and none.

one, single, tiny misstep, and game's over.

all mankind is sinful. your preachers are sinful. their preachers are sinful. both candidates in the election are sinful.

if you accept the concept that sin = bad, it is difficult to ignore the rest of the argument IMPHO.

if not, well, hey, it's your choice.

**Alex** says:
June 9, 2010 at 5:37 pm

@Baby M (3:04 PM): to add to your point, here's a rather thought-provoking essay on what things that we take for granted would be missing, if the Torah (Jewish law) had never existed -

http://www.aish.com/h/sh/t/48962111.html

**canajun-eh** says:
June 9, 2010 at 5:42 pm

The bloggers here who claim to be followers of Jesus… seem so full of hate and condescension. Is that how the bible instructs us to treat others who may disagree with our beliefs?
Honest says:
June 9, 2010 at 5:49 pm

swschrad – it's so not like that. Read the Ten Commandments. All of them are rules to us so that we don’t hurt each other. Except the one about there should be no other Gods before Him. In which case, if you’re not paying attention to important rules that matter, you’ll fall for anything.

Read the New Testament. I don't think Jesus ever asks for anything you can't comply with. He made wine available for a wedding. He befriended and forgave a prostitute, whereas the populace would have stoned her.

The Creator knows who and what we are, and loves us anyway.

How much “radical freedom” do you need? Do you want to deny any boundaries so you have permission to hurt other people capriciously for sport or gain? Then God is not for you and you’re most likely in heaps of trouble. Otherwise, I don’t see much to worry about. Feel free to move about the cabin.

GardenStater says:
June 9, 2010 at 5:51 pm

@swschrad: Well said.
@canajun-ish: “…full of hate and condescension…”

Not sure where you’re getting that from. I’ve been coming online off and on all day. What I’ve seen is one or two trolls who want to spit on all religion, claiming it's all bad (or, in the case of Al F’s post from yesterday, piss on it). And I’ve seen followers of Jesus trying to defend their beliefs.

Maybe you can point out the “hate-speech” you're finding here.

swschrad says:
June 9, 2010 at 5:52 pm

do not confuse some folks' anger and occasionally hate as messages from above.

reminder: we're all lagbolted down here and flailing around.

still unpleasant to see. and we all know better, I'm sure. this activity gets worse with time, alas, we're getting to have shorter fuses and whack the enter key as soon as we have a thought.

which is a vicious cycle I'm really sick of.

(Obvious punchline here, you *$%^&*(*)

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 9, 2010 at 5:52 pm

??

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 9, 2010 at 5:53 pm

So you decided to join the fray here, eh? It's one thing to practice one's faith in the solitude of the place of worship or in private observance out of the presence of others. Are those who believe
required then to remain silent when those beliefs are slagged provocatively in the public square? I'm curious here, have you forgotten that Someone Very Important drove moneylenders from a temple in Jerusalem? Was that a demonstration of hate and condescension? Maybe Peter should have left that sword home that night in Gethsemane. Or are those portions of the New Testament considered hate speech north of the border? Yes, as Christians we are called upon to stand courageously for our faith even when slapped in the face or beards are plucked, does that in turn mean we should never engage or reply to those who defame our beliefs?

Brisko says:
June 9, 2010 at 5:55 pm

@canajun-eh

Al's pet troll? But seriously, I haven't seen anyone full of hate around here except Al. All he does is try to inflame people's ire and get angry responses as you're currently doing.

And for the record, I am not a “follower of Jesus” per se, but I also believe Al is full of it. Obviously.

And now back to worshipping All-Father Odin.

shesnailie says:
June 9, 2010 at 6:32 pm

_@_v – just remember… without religious white people wanting to do the right thing in life, the liberal guilt-industrial complex wouldn't have anyone to sponge off of…

Honest says:
June 9, 2010 at 6:38 pm

And religious black folk too.

Honest says:
June 9, 2010 at 6:40 pm

Religious black people hold themselves to such higher standards that would put a lot of white folks to shame.

Honest says:
June 9, 2010 at 6:49 pm

But God doesn't see race or color. He sees the truth seeker, the striver for good and truth.

Bonnie_ says:
June 9, 2010 at 8:43 pm

This is such a nice salon. I suppose Al serves a purpose as well, because without his ignorant rants I wouldn't get to read the elegant and loving defense of Christianity from the readers here.

Now off I go to kiss my beautiful children, all four of them, and laugh at Peter Singer once again when father's day comes around and my Dad gets kisses and hugs from his eighteen grandchildren. And more on the way, Mr. Singer, more on the way. Mwuah-ha-ha-ha.
B. Minich says:
June 9, 2010 at 8:52 pm

Is Empire better then Jedi? This is in the same category as “Should we be the last generation?” It is a question with an evident answer: “Yes”.

B. Minich says:
June 9, 2010 at 8:56 pm

(Just to be clear: I DON'T think we should be the last generation. The evident answer for Empire over Jedi is the opposite of the evident answer for “should we be the last humans evar.”)

Ed Driscoll » ‘Obama announces Terrorist Stimulus Plan’ says:
June 9, 2010 at 9:36 pm

[...] the other hand, the New York Times just ran an op-ed from Princeton University's Peter Singer calling for the end of mankind on Earth. Perhaps Obama simply wants to give some walking around money to the group currently working [...] 

Mag says:
June 10, 2010 at 12:13 am

Moishe3rd, you're hilarious and I adore you, unworthy though I yam.

swschrad says:
June 10, 2010 at 7:19 am

@Honest: Jesus says there is no way to heaven except through him, he is the light and the life.

yet he still asks much... love each other as yourself, honor the commandments, be humble and penitent.

in the end, though, the summary by John is all in a nutshell what you need to know.

Patrick McClure says:
June 10, 2010 at 8:37 am

OK, completely off the comment debate topic, but did anyone else, on first reading the blog title, think it said “Tiresome Unitarians”? While not a Unitarian, I was wondering what James had against them, before I realized what it actually said.

RKN says:
June 10, 2010 at 12:37 pm

reminder: we're all lagbolted down here and flailing around.

Witty, funny, and true.

fizzbin says:
June 10, 2010 at 1:23 pm

Usually I think it is best not to feed the trolls, but this discussion is
riveting. The Bleatniks are a wise and humorous lot. I think I learn more here than I do watching Fox News – gack, now I've p.o. Al ad his kind 😐

**nightfly** says:
June 10, 2010 at 1:43 pm

The Bleatniks are a great group of mensches! Consider yourselves hi-fived.

**The new Dr. Death | Junior Ganymede** says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:19 pm

[...] Lileks has the brilliant rebuttal: It would be a shame for a universe to be born, grow, and die, and never have anyone tell it that [...]  

**Vader** says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:22 pm

“It would be a shame for a universe to be born, grow, and die, and never have anyone tell it that it’s pretty.”

Pure genius.

**Robert** says:
June 13, 2010 at 2:12 pm

Well, I don’t agree with Singer, to begin with. The philosophical question of ‘why are we here at all?’ can be productive; the question ‘should we NOT be here at all?’, less so.

That said, my husband and I have adopted, so at least we can provide parents to children who need them, while not adding additional children to the world. This could be an elegant solution, but there are many (religiously motivated, for the most part) who would deny us that opportunity. So it gets complicated.
Day one of summer vacation: child was very crafty, and didn’t tell me when she got up. Just woke and slid over to the computer and started working on this and that. She wrote a story, drew, and – get this for your modern world – used Skype to walk a friend through animating something in Flash. Kids today. When I went outside to work I gave her the phone, and told her to call my cell if she needed anything. Half an hour later, the phone rings . . . rickroll. Half an hour later it rings again . . . Trololo. And so passed the first morning of the great expanse kids call summer.

She’s more productive than I was; I woke and watched game shows. I loved game shows. Liked the Price is Right, but watched “Let’s Make a Deal” with my mom, who had a little sneaker crush on Monty Hall. “He seems like he’d be fun at parties,” she said – I know I’ve said this before, but I always remember that quote as a window into her head. A party where everyone is dressed nicely, standing around, laughing, chatting, all quite Gay in the old sense, with Monty keeping up a steady line of merry patter, making everyone feel at ease, special, making all the women feel as though he knew the other women were a bit silly, wink wink. Of course at the parties we had – not named as such, just “company coming over” – the women were dressed nice, always in dresses and heels that left indentations on the lino. TV dinner trays, ashtrays – my folks didn’t smoke, but all the aunts and uncles smoked as if there was a contest – and beer for the Menfolk. It’s the sort of memory I connect with wearing plastic-soled footie-jammies, wandering into the living room, getting rote questions, stealing a cookie, then back to my room to do
whatever it was I did when I was eight or nine.

Certainly wasn’t sitting on the floor with a computer learning Flash.

Later in the afternoon a high school friend came by. Hadn’t seen him in years; he was in town with his wife to catch some Twins games. Came up from Texas, where he’s a high school music teacher. One of those people with whom I’ll always be at ease, no matter how many years pass; a regular chum, to use the archaic term. A pal. We drank coffee and talked about things, and only briefly dipped into nostalgia. When catching up on things back home, he spoke of a relative who’d succumbed to Alzheimer’s, and had the most interesting delusion: she believed the Coen Brothers were shooting a movie across the hall, and frequently expressed the need to see how the film was going. Not, I should add, someone steeped in movies, either. But “Fargo” made a deep impression on Fargoans, I guess, and her mind chose the Coen Brothers as the preeminent fantasy.

They left; I took Natalie to karate, where one kid decided it was Shouting Day and accompanied every – single – kick with a six-second scream. I’m talking screams more apt for being gutted with a rusty cutlass, too. The sensei tried to dial him down, to no avail. My daughter said she thought she should really work on her screams, because she didn’t really have a fearsome sound, and wanted to impress anyone foolish enough to take her on. “A palm in the nose is worth two shouts in the ear,” I said, sagely. She said she supposed that was so.

Busy night here – column ahead, so I’ll have to leave it at this. But there’s also this:

It’s yesterday’s Black and White World, which I forgot to post. Just so many things popping up all day – but I will try to remember to get Out of Context Ad Challenge up in the morn. In the meantime, Tumblr and Popcrush. See...
Okay, well, some more. This is the car I'd take back to 1955 if I'd been Doc Brown:

I'm pretty sure they played the theme live every day; it certainly sounded different, and had that great Holiday Inn Brunch feel:
DryOwlTacos says:
June 10, 2010 at 2:22 pm

Red Green hasn’t always been Steve Smith?

I just returned a phone call from Ontario, and played phone-tag with that person’s answering machine. The outgoing message was spoken first in English, then in French. It sounded lovely to my ears, which are jangled daily by my fellow Texans’ drawls and bursts of Spanglish. I guess if I had been calling Quebec, the French would have come first.

Canada pretty much rocks, but I’d rather not have their healthcare system.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 2:26 pm

IIRC “kiai” is translation/transliteration of Chinese “chi” “qi” or whatever, no expert here.

Crabtree says:
June 10, 2010 at 2:40 pm

“Red Green hasn’t always been Steve Smith? ”

He has. Bgbear was referring to a character that sounds VERY similar to Red in the movie “Final Sacrifice” that also features the character of Zap Rowsdower.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 2:49 pm

“Red Green hasn’t always been Steve Smith? ”

He has. Bgbear was referring to a character that sounds VERY similar to Red in the movie “Final Sacrifice” that also features the character of Zap Rowsdower.

IIRC, The someone in the MST3K gang says “keep your stick on the ice” during “Final Sacrifice”

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 2:52 pm

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

Rowsdower, Pipper and Troy in all their glory

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

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 2:54 pm

oops accidently posted link to “Rowsdower, Pipper and Troy in all their glory” twice and got moderated.

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

GardenStater says:
June 10, 2010 at 2:54 pm
My favorite Canadian is Pamela Anderson. …

**Borderman** says:
June 10, 2010 at 2:56 pm

My grandmother had a pretty huge crush on Allen Ludden I think. She never missed *Password*, daytime or prime time.

When I was a college sophomore Allen Ludden lectured my communications class, mostly because he was a successful alumnus (and not the other kind) in our chosen field. His “lecture” was mostly Hollywood anecdotes and stories about *Password*, but all very interesting. He looked exactly the same as he did on TV when I was nine. Same houndstooth jacket, same Buddy Holly glasses, and of course the famous blonde crewcut. He was very polite, took all questions, laughed at himself and remained unruffled, seemed like a very nice guy. I called my grandmother from the dorm later. She said, “Allen Ludden came to your college?” My grandfather said she was excited about that for weeks.

**El Capitan** says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:09 pm

You really don’t want a Bricklin…

The guy that rebuilt my transmission has 3 of them, and I went to school with another Bricklin owner. The very first thing that quits working is the door hydraulics, leaving you an 80 lb door you have to raise up to shoulder height, and hope it doesn’t come crashing down on your head or kneecaps while entering or exiting.

They've got poor driver visibility, & they run hot. Good engines, though.

**madCanada** says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:12 pm

Great Canadians … um, hello? …. Alan Thicke! With all due respect, USA, you could never self-generate a man like that. You're welcome.

**Borderman** says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:19 pm

**GardenStater** says:

*My favorite Canadian is Pamela Anderson*….

I understand. Mine is Shannon Tweed.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:22 pm

**Borderman** says:

**GardenStater** says:

*My favorite Canadian is Pamela Anderson*…

I understand. Mine is Shannon Tweed

O seriously, Edith Prickly has them all beat.
Mark E. Hurling says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:23 pm

@bgbear, dead on target sir. The shout is a means of channelling ki, chl, or qi energy from your center outward through your hands, feet, and sometimes simply the acoustic shockwave produced by the sound alone. That's the mucho mysterioso mystic power of the East version. A more occidental explanation of the physics of neurologic recruitment and kinesiology suggests that more power is produced and transmitted when the abdominal muscles are tightened forcefully (like through a yell) which sets off a cascade of other muscles tightening in sympathy. Personally, I think only the Shadow knows, heh, heh, heh.

Borderman says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:25 pm

My favorite Canadian is Pamela Anderson....
I understand. Mine is Shannon Tweed
O seriously, Edith Prickly has them all beat.

SCTV security guard Gus Gustofferson certainly thought so.

shesnailie says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:26 pm

_@_v – lola heatherton is pretty sleechy…

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:31 pm

further on “ki”, IIRC, the etymology of the word “ki” really refers to blood which of course does carry the body's energy which means the ancient Chinese had it more correct and reality based than the modern mystic talk of today.

Yelling can get the blood going, heart beating faster, so it does make sense on this level too.

Borderman says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:40 pm

There is no ki in cinema like that issued from the late, great, Master of Way of the Intercepting Fist, Jeet Kune Do.

And Lola Heatherton is screechy, yes. But emanates heat and is hot nevertheless.

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:45 pm

Well then, since you seem interested in this topic, (just tell me to callete la boca when you've had enough bgbear) the root source of the word may translate literally to blood, the concept of ki is more nebulous than that. One of the early emperors a couple thousand B.C. decided to stick needles in people to chart the energy channels
and their effects (fatal in some cases). This was the origin of what we call acupuncture among several healing and destructive arts coming from China. The scrolls of yore never talk about anything as tangible as blood, rather more like force flows and energy transfers (cue Yoda here). One of the problems with looking at the literal meaning implied in the Chinese characters is that there are subtleties implied in the characters themselves that are not explicit unless you are deeply encultured to the unstated foundations.

madCanada says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:48 pm

I must say, as a Canadian: Catherine O'Hara makes me want to hoist that maple leaf sky-high.

How many comedian(nes) just keep getting better & better over the years? She's a rare bird.

nightfly says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:49 pm

@Mark Hurling – yup. Big Dan fan, though my real name is NOT Lester. I picked the bloghandle because, if I were ever a late-night DJ, I would have a mixed music/chat format. (I do think Brubeck's a pioneer, but I'm too fond of too much music to limit myself to just jazz and conversation!)

Then again, in here, in real life, there's a conversation about old cars, qi, and favorite Canadians – so why bother going on the radio? (I'm partial to Rush and hockey players, myself.)

browniejr says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:58 pm

@bgbear: Old and Busted: Edith Prickley. New Hotness: Cobie Smulders. Alan Thicke has also been on “How I Met Your Mother” whenever there were Canadian jokes/let's poke fun at Canada storylines to great effect.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 3:58 pm

well mark, I think you got it right, it is the translation of the ancient text that is the problem.

Here is my opinion and (I believe I absorbed from someone). If imaginative translators thought of “energy flows” meant something spiritual they quickly went off track. Think if they simply meant blood. Sticking needles in people is blood letting and could be a misguided and cruel way of charting the vessels of the circulatory system.

Mistranslation can create monsters out of common animals. The origin of the Yeti was simply villagers trying to describe a bear to Europeans (and probably explains Sasquatch as well).

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:01 pm

I love Catherine O'Hara, her character in “A Mighty Wind” could not be pulled off by anyone else.
bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:02 pm

Oops again, she was good in “A Mighty Wind” of course but I meant “For Your Consideration” for a great character, the has been actress.

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:16 pm

bgbear, you’re certainly right about the cruel part. As the old stories go a LOT of peasants died when those channels got charted. Then again even more died building the Great Wall. As for the needles and blood letting, it wasn’t exactly like the bleeding as practiced by followers of Galen’s theory for letting out the humours. The needles were and are somewhere between the size of darning and knitting needles and typically don’t result in anything like more than a dot of blood to emerge.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:20 pm

Don’t underestimate knitting needles:

http://www.tcm.com/mediaroom/index.jsp?cid=141275

Kathy F says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:22 pm

Off Topic, TVLand has been running the first season of Bonanza, 1959. Many fine actors as guests and Star Trek connections up the wazoo.

Crabtree says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:25 pm

Kathy,
I’ve been working my way through Maverick and it’s the same.

Bob Lipton says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:27 pm

My favorite Canadian? Either Mary Pickford or perhaps Leslie Nielson.

As for Canadian songs, here’s the Arrogant Worms‘ take…

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cZ8uwozu6k

Bob

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:27 pm

Yeesh! Well of course you can do a lot of damage with them. By the way, don’t make the mistake of trying to fly with them. My daughter learned this the hard way when TSA confiscated hers in the Portland airport. I understand the rationale, but I swear TSA seems to do its best to confirm my assertion that this country is actually run by 15 or so different governments. No two airports are run alike by the TSA wanna-bes.
Borderman says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:36 pm

Kathy F and Crabtree:

Have been progressing through *Gunsmoke* on Encore Westerns channel weeknights since January. Same effect. Marvelous, no? Virtual time machine.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:40 pm

Try “Have Gun Will Travel” for Star Trek connections/actors. Gene Roddenberry was a writer for the series and he even recycles character names and uses lots of Shakespeare.

I caught part of “The Virginian” the other day and it had Leornard Nimoy and Sherry Jackson (hubba, hubba).

Crabtree says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:50 pm

Funny you should mention Trek connections. I’m watching Columbo and Commodore Decker is yelling at Dr. Tristan Adams. Alta Morbius and Cornelius the ape are watching them. TV is a funny thing….

SeanF says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:56 pm

Sorry, Gibbering, Bob’s right. And it’s you who is changing the odds.

There’s a 1/3 chance the car’s behind the door you originally chose and a 2/3 chance it’s not. Monty opening one of the other two doors does not change that.

Crabtree says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:59 pm

What’s neat is that many of these westerns are on Netflix instant streaming. I use my PS3 for it. It’s really annoying to me that with so many horrible movies on DVD, Maverick has only had 3 episodes released! Netflix is the only way I can watch it, and even then they’ve only got four episodes from season one.

Crabtree says:
June 10, 2010 at 4:59 pm

Err… plus most if not all the episodes from seasons 2-5.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 5:01 pm

I created a character for whatever media I would use if I had any real talent. I call him “couch ferret” because he sits on the back of the couch and watches old movies all day long.

The shtick is that couch ferret confuses the characters with the actors, that is, Humphry Bogart/Rick Blaine is the same guy in “Casablanca” and “Maltese Falcon” and the ferret wonders why he
did not come to Ilsa's rescue when she was being tormented by Pepe le Moko in “Gaslight”.

Crabtree says:
June 10, 2010 at 5:04 pm
bgbear, hah! Love it!

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 10, 2010 at 5:07 pm
I swear bgbear, between you and hpoultier you guys make me recall some of the strangest things. Your reference to the Maltese Falcon kicked a synapse and I now remember that I have known three former CIA types who had the black bird somewhere in their office. I can only conclude that some trainer in northern Virginia must have inculcated some special reverence for it in an entire generation of spooks.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 10, 2010 at 5:36 pm
I have a recast Maltese Falcon statuette. When it shipped it was wrapped in newspaper, my wife innocently asked “What's that?” boy did I grin when I realized I could respond “the stuff that dreams are made of”

swschrad says:
June 10, 2010 at 5:47 pm
@shesnailie: “I want to BEAR YOUR CHILDREN! he heh.” great takeoff on Vegas lounge-lizard act Joey Heatherton.

blivet says:
June 10, 2010 at 5:52 pm
Funny, I just saw a Bricklin last Sunday. I'd forgotten all about them, and I don't think I'd ever seen one in real life before.

Sunday was clearly the day for childhood-related coincidences. The song “Windy” by The Association got stuck in my head last week, and I bought and downloaded a copy. Doggone if it wasn't the soundtrack to the opening scene of Sunday night's episode of Breaking Bad.

bgbear says:
June 10, 2010 at 8:57 pm
awesome Canadian actor: Michael Ironside.

RPD says:
June 10, 2010 at 9:39 pm
Ack, late to the party on great Canadians. I'll nominate Mike Holmes, from the program “Holmes on Homes.”
nightfly says:
June 10, 2010 at 10:30 pm

@blivet – it was my day for coincidences too. Tonight I was out with my bride in the bookstore, and caught one of those big budget books on the center table: the 500 Worst Cars Ever Made. I had to know… and yep, there was the Bricklin. Gotta buy that book someday.

nightfly says:
June 10, 2010 at 10:34 pm

@Mark Hurling – I think my original reply to you was eaten. Yes, my bloghandle comes from the Fagan album. If I had ever been a late-night DJ, that's the format I would have chosen, a chat-and-music mix. (And though Brubeck is a pioneer, I wouldn't stick to just jazz.)

Great thread, isn’t it? Qi, bad cars, great Canadians, and Star Trek tie-ins. Fascinating, captain.

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 11, 2010 at 10:06 am

@nightfly, that was a great album and a great theme. I could just see the covers of Life from the time period as I’d listen to the lyrics.

Lorraine C. says:
June 12, 2010 at 12:31 pm

Maybe it’s just me, but the apple lady contestant in “Let’s Make a Deal” looks a lot like Billie Burke. “Monty, are you a GOOD witch, or a BAD witch?”

Jim C says:
June 14, 2010 at 7:57 am

The Bricklin was brought to us by Malcolm Bricklin, the same man who brought the Yugo to America.
**StarTribune Column**

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

**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?
It's a clearance sale today: everything must go. I'm going to dump all the stuff I've had hanging around in the “Week in Bleats” folder for, well, weeks, waiting to be used. These are things about which I hoped to Expostulate Upon, as opposed to bits of jetsam tossed up on Lint, the Institute of Official Cheer's blog. Running three daily blogs is interesting; I recommend it to anyone who wants to have their attention span shattered like a cold piece of Turkish Taffee hit with a ball-peen hammer.

That was one of the sales pitches for the candy, by the way: you could consume it in its pliable state, or freeze it and smash it, yielding jagged pieces that cracked in your mouth and attacked your gums. I really should write more about candy, even though A) I don’t each much, and B) there are 16 trillion candy blogs out there. The subject would fit right in – nostalgia + marketing + art + American pop culture history. Alas, people didn’t save wrappers like they saved matchbooks. The other day, however, I set aside a candy wrapper my daughter brought home from the sucrose bacchanalia that attended the last days of school:
This one reached way, way back. Lemonhead was one of the mysterious Ferrara Pan candies, a branch of the Sugarsphere that seemed to chart its own proud course. They were the little guy. If I remember correctly: they made Atomic Warheads, Boston Baked Beans (spiny little nodules no one tried, because, well, BEANS) and the ever-popular Red Hots, which worked the cinnamon aspect like few other candies. But Red Hots were ersatz Hot Tamales, which came from the creepily named “Just Born” company, which also made “Mike and Ikes,” aka neutered Hot Tamales. Just Born had a logo that looked like a melted baby in a placenta shroud in a scale.

They also made these, which I had forgotten until I found this flickr set devoted to Just Born candy. Root-T-Toot:
Anyway. Lemonheads, I recall, were hard and unrewarding, so it was a surprise to see them in chewy form. It was even more remarkable to see that Lemonhead had wrangled some friends to share his hideous fate—mastication, then submersion in gastric acids.

So. What's in the bin? A 1939 editorial cartoon from the Minneapolis Journal, the anti-FDR paper. The more things change, and so on:

From the early 60s, Proto-Stoner Dude goes grocery shopping at the Wig:
Baked ham:

Do they still make Hi-Lex? I used that product as a means of helping people pronounce my name. Rhymes with. Let us consult the internet: ah. It was a Minnesota product! Says a comment on the page:

_As a medic in World War I, my grandfather wanted a way to sterilize bandages. He and his brothers started the Hillex bleach_
company in St. Paul. At the height of Hilex popularity, the Hi and Lex gnomes, shaped like bleach drops, walked in parades. Grampa kept them in his garage. Now there are many sanitizing products and companies.
~William Eldredge, St. Paul, MN

I had no idea. I must find those gnomes. I prefer the gnomes to the chickens:

Googling . . . okay, WOW:

But get this: those are gnomes from St. Paul Boy Scout Troop 13, which has a proud history of marching in Hi-Lex Gnome Form despite the fact that the brand's left town. I have to do a story on this. (Googling some more, I find that the story was done ten years ago by the late great Don Boxmeyer, the very model of a local columnist. Well, I will work in his shadow.)
So. That empties the bin, which wasn't as full as I thought, but at least it's spent. As am I: wrote a metric dungload today. A few more things before we go:

100 Mysteries, of course. And the start of the 30s Magazine Ads Miscellany site, including the first batch of some incredible ads for the Rex Cole Appliance company, which I first discovered in a big book of Depression architecture. The man's stores were amazingly beautiful, and his ads were remarkable as well. Enjoy! See you here, and there, and damned near everywhere.

Oh: Candy memories, anyone? Have at it in the comments.

Pass it along, if you wish

109 RESPONSES TO the candy man can. because he mixes it with love.

spinetingler says:
June 12, 2010 at 12:16 pm

Heh. Just today I succumbed to the lure of the checkout aisle candy rack and bought a 50 cent bag of Circus Peanuts. I wanted to see whether the kids would like them (they didn't).

I would also like to suggest candyblog.net for all kinds of brightly-colored goodness.

fizzbin says:
June 12, 2010 at 3:26 pm

@Mark E...thanks for the shout, brother. I've always found United States Marines to be good and decent people, even after the two Marine 105 rounds fell short on us, almost. Hey, stuff happens 😏

@swischrad...funny story about Asian sizing. Many years ago when I was even larger than I am now, I went to Tar-zhey boutique to buy some sweats. I bought XXL pants thinking there was no way they wouldn't fit. Silly me. I could not get the supposed XXL pants over my wide load butt (the beer gut was no help at all). Chi-comm crep, of course. Oh, well, I put them to use polishing my car.

Ashira says:
June 12, 2010 at 6:05 pm

This is the best post of yours I've read in a while. xD The ‘Just Born’ logo commentary was HILARIOUS.

Robert says:
June 13, 2010 at 5:45 pm

When I was growing up, my mom had a very simple rule about giving her candy – either get See's chocolates or Almond Roca (“Brown & Haley makes ‘em daily – 'cept Sunday”). Anything lesser
and she might go Clytemnestra on your foolish self. She’d worked at a See's in the wayyy before time (i.e., before she became Mom). She told us once that she and the other ‘girls' were told their first day that they could eat as much candy as they wanted for the first week they worked there. Mom knew that there was something behind this, so she only had one free piece per day that first week.

By the end of the week, all the other ‘girls' were utterly sick of candy. My mom kept her sweet tooth for the rest of her life.

I developed a fondness for old-fashioned, obscure candies during my teens. Hoffman’s Cup-of-Gold was my favorite for years.

browniejr says:
June 13, 2010 at 6:06 pm

@Robert- Your mother had good taste. The story about “eat all you want for a week” is probably true about See's. I worked for a summer when I was in college at the local Hershey plant, and they had bins of the stuff in all the lunch rooms and break rooms for you to sample. One of my memories was of a line supervisor (a man) remarking that “they told me I would get sick of this stuff after a week. I've worked here for 15 years, and I still like it!,” just as he was finishing his second piece of chocolate during his break. I gained 10 pounds that Summer. I think that anyone who gets sick of chocolate has something wrong with them, but that is just me.

shesnailie says:
June 13, 2010 at 10:29 pm

_@_v – with all this talk of sweets i actually prefer salty foods… go figure…

nixmom says:
June 15, 2010 at 12:13 pm

@shesnailie: I'm with you. 😊 I keep a dish of Dove chocolates in my office and people can't figure out how I restrain myself. Easy. But if it were a dish of, say, macadamia nuts, they'd find me face-down in the dish on a daily basis.

That said… I was scrounging spare change out of my desk so I could treat myself to a Coke this afternoon. I may have to go for a Heath bar instead after reading all these comments…

Elise says:
June 16, 2010 at 1:56 pm

Lifesavers’ “Choc-O-Mints”; as in “Pep-O-Mints” or “Spear-O-Mints” except chocolate flavor! There weren't nothin' wrong with those! Why did they discontinue them?!

Antony Ballena says:
June 24, 2010 at 9:32 pm

I have read some good information here. Its Definitely good bookmarking for future reference.
Rain. If not rain, clouds. If not clouds, darkness. Or darkness with clouds; hard to say, since it’s not one of those things you wake at 3 AM to check. It’s not unusual for June, but it stinks anyway, and glummenates the mood. Add to that the departure of wife and child for a week. Child, last Friday:

“I’m a little nervous about going to California because of earthquakes."

“I understand, but don’t worry! There won’t be an earthquake.”

So they get there, and there’s an earthquake. Granted, it was to the south, but
it still shoots my credibility.

Sunday I had to get out of the house to keep from going steadily mad, so I went to the antique store, which is like going to the museum except you can touch things and everything is a gift shop. Still had some store credit, and bought many small things that will be posted this week in free and premium areas. As usual, I took pictures. I remember this from childhood, because it bothered me:

Anthropomorphic letters were one thing, but if they didn’t have faces they were worrisome. This was taken from a big display case full of nuts. You just don’t see enormous cases full of nuts anymore.

The standard jumble-o-babies in an aquarium:
This is fairly alarming; don't know who'd want one of these. A Charley Weaver action figure.
Elsie Krack was a character in the stories Weaver told about his home town – the ugliest girl in town, I understand. This was an action figure, too – when you turned it on he poured a drink, raised it to his face, and smoke came out of his ears.

Charlie Weaver wasn’t his real name, of course – he was Cliff Arquette, and Charlie was a character. (He was the grandfather of the Arquette actors; Toto’s song “Rosanna” is a tribute to one of them.) He was a radio performer and pianist, but retired for show-biz – only to revive his career three years later, in 1959, when he invented the home-spun Weaver character. He never appeared on TV out of character, and when I grew up seeing him in the corner of Hollywood Squares I assumed that was his name.

A better version with some history can be seen here.

Close-up of the Paint Store sign, and a reminder of how much illustration, not photography, defined the commercial landscape.
A tool no one needs anymore. In the Olden Times, the Butter Trust forbade colored oleo, so people had to add color by hand. Unless you bought one of the brands that had a secret color capsule inside, activated by extensive kneading, you had to stab the margarine, churn it in a bowl so it looked like butter. Minnesota lifted its colored-margarine ban in 1963. Citation needed, you say? Sorry. Not in the mood to go handing out citations willy-nilly.

Not just soap pads: Soap Filled Pads.
There's a difference, isn't there? Wonder why they soft-pedaled the soapy center. This is charming:

Things are always merry and down-right all right on packages; the concentrated amount of cheer that used to beam from the fridge and the cupboards must have blinded people some days. *Turn it down! I have a hangover, thanks to your friends in the whiskey ads!*

Now we know who designed those ubiquitous numbers:
The Macklanburg-Duncan company is still around, although they go by M-D. Why, I can’t imagine.

When I was a kid, everyone had these. Every house. And half the houses had screen doors with the owner’s initial, too. I’m sure there are a few around, but it’s a bygone fad, and one of those things you never think about until you see one on an old house – a sure sign there’s an old couple inside, still in the same house, not going nowhere no sir. (The Macklanburg-Duncan company is still around, although they go by M-D. Why, I can’t imagine.)

As for me, I’m taking the week off from Bleats, more or less – there will be posts daily, either updates or short notes. Since the family’s gone I’m bearing down on several projects and hope to finish some things in this interlude of solitude. The tumblr and PopCrush will keep you entertained, as well. Links up there on the sidebar. Stop back tomorrow; I’ll be here.

As for the sun, I have no idea.

60 RESPONSES TO elsie krack

Kurt says:
June 14, 2010 at 5:55 pm
What about a big initial on the chimney? There is a house nearby (a big Tudor-style place from the ’30s) with a fancy-script “E” on the chimney. I always wonder who “E” is/was and if they are still around.

cnyguy says:
June 14, 2010 at 7:18 pm
I always enjoyed Charlie Weaver’s slightly corny humor, and I still have a copy of “Letters from Mama” around here somewhere. Weaver/Arquette was also a Civil War buff, and there was once a
Charlie Weaver's Civil War Museum in Gettysburg, PA.

When my parents replaced the original wooden storm door on our 1958 ranch-style house with one of those modern aluminum doors (circa 1963), we naturally had to spend the few extra bucks for the little grille and the glow-in-the-dark letter. All our neighbors had ‘em, and we didn’t want to be left out.

**swschrad** says:
June 14, 2010 at 9:17 pm

bongs: there is no good explanation. there are a multitude of awful ones.

such as: somebody told him the website was all, totally, bong, and he was doing graphics research.

he had a lacsadical workman in to fix the doorbell, and it now goes “ding bong.”

he read one too many “commentators” who are considered “learned” advise (some political hack) to not spill the bong water, and was wondering if there were any shaped like (the political hack.)

or indeed he's been invited to make a presentation to somebody loathsome at a large gathering.

**StephenB** says:
June 14, 2010 at 11:02 pm

Kurt,

Perhaps that's a Navy veteran with a Battle “E” on his smokestack…

**chrisbcritter** says:
June 15, 2010 at 12:14 am

I guess Natalie and her mom have another quake to talk about now (45 minutes ago)…

**Janet** says:
June 15, 2010 at 12:23 am

what part of California did your daughter and wife travel to? If they are in San Diego, they just felt an earthquake!

**Steve Ripley** says:
June 15, 2010 at 1:26 am

Wow, James!

Please don’t PROMISE Gnat there won’t be any earthquakes! There was a whole swarm of ‘em today!

**Ross** says:
June 15, 2010 at 1:28 am

In the “Where Are They Now?” file, the cheery gal on the butter container shows up some years later in “Emmanuelle”, in a sort of nickelodeon peep-show in the Orient(no, really–it's disturbingly close to the same face/same drawing style).
I wouldn’t be surprised if she turned up as an “E! True Hollywood Story” episode…

Brian says:
June 16, 2010 at 10:09 am

Macklanburg’s name is on the patent for at least one of those monogrammed doors.

http://www.google.com/patents?id=5U1cAAAAEBAJ&printsec=drawing&zoom=4#v=onepage&q=false

Gary says:
June 17, 2010 at 8:11 am

Life’s great mysteries solved by the Bleat #3,578,920

The photo of the mechanical Charlie Weaver bartender looked somewhat familiar, the general shape and functionality of it. It conjured a primordial memory from my toddlerhood of a very similar cherished toy. Could it be the same manufacturer? A little googling found “Gino”, a toy I probably haven’t seen since I was four and haven’t thought of in over three decades. The memories wash over me like a spring rain. Thanks, James.

updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
I said I’d pop in, and here I am. Another dim rainy day FOR GOD’S SAKE ANOTHER ONE but I kept myself from going house-daft by heading into the office, which shaved three hours off my productivity.

One of the things I’m doing, as noted, is redoing the entire Institute of Official Cheer. The old tiny version will remain for mobile, I suppose, but I refuse to calibrate everything for screens that make a pack of playing cards look like IMAX. One of the things I’ve added to an old site:

RECENT COMMENTS

polymathamy on 06.14.12 Bleat
Amanda from Michigan on Boo. Hiss
Julie on Testing the new RSS feed idea
shesnailie on Autobots and Bruckner
Wagner von Drupen- Sachs on Autobots and Bruckner

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND
Yes, that surprising new innovation in BBQ, coffee.

I also brought up an old Mac Pro tower for my wife to use, and discovered it won’t turn on. Tried everything; opened it up, took out the battery on the motherboard, then went to Walgreens to get a replacement just in case. I was standing at the battery rack when the clerk asked: “What are you looking for?”

“A battery,” I said, my people skills already hopelessly degraded. She asked what kind, and I said “The kind you don’t have.”

She looked at it, and nodded.

“You should go to Batteries Plus,” she said.

Here I thought it would be sufficient to go to Batteries. What does Batteries Plus have? Plus what? Shelving units? Dried goat scrotums? (A delicacy in some parts of the world.) I did not go, but I will.

I have to play with the hamster, because Lord knows he’ll just sink into a funk if I don’t put him in the invisible Ball of Terror and make him roll around the room before returning him to his safe, wonderful home full of food and things that smell like him.

I have to finish “Stargate,” a movie I saw a long time ago, and remembered well. I still think it’s fine fun, but the idea that there are 500 additional TV episodes is a disincentive to explore the idea any more. Can imagine it now: long plot arcs will conflict and shifting allegiances. Like Star Trek except with a big door instead of starships. The court of Ra in the movie is rather
ridiculous – it's like some galactic Neverland, ruled over by a hissy teenager. Kurt Russell is good at playing a marble version of himself, though.

Am still doing Wii Fit; have lost another 1.8 pounds, and am no longer “overweight.”

There: you’re up to date. Back to work – and here’s Comic Sins for today.

40 RESPONSES TO tuesday: checking in

GardenStater says:
June 15, 2010 at 5:22 am

I could be wrong, but–are they grilling burgers in the bedroom?

GardenStater says:
June 15, 2010 at 5:23 am

Took a second look–what appeared to be a bedspread is really the guy's shoulder.

browniejr says:
June 15, 2010 at 6:19 am

BBQ coffee: tested better than both curry flavored coffee and teriyaki flavored coffee, but not by much.

Batteries Plus: in the mall, right across from the “Scotch Tape Emporium”?

Comic Sins: She should have used “Dear John Telegram Service”-guaranteed delivery in under an hour, singing optional. Tom is better off without her- what kind of heartless bi@$tch sends a telegram to break up with someone? Master Sergeant Killjaw is headed for heartache!

kc says:
June 15, 2010 at 6:39 am

Kurt Russell is good at playing a marble version of himself, though.

Reason #6734 Why I read Lileks.

Mark says:
June 15, 2010 at 6:45 am

I resisted Stargate for a very long time but have decided the show is quite fun. Comparisons to Star Trek are well-deserved, although the show doesn’t take itself as seriously. It's more swashbuckly action than philosophical drama. I suppose that could be good and bad. But I like it.
Zoc says:
June 15, 2010 at 7:26 am

Does Sgt. Killjaw in today's Comic Sins remind anyone else of Oscar Goldman?

RPD says:
June 15, 2010 at 7:58 am

Stargate the movie was a stand alone, it never occurred to them that there would be a series. Fortunately the series ended being a great deal better than the movie, so there's that. It is comparable to Star Trek in a way, though there is far less use of the reset button. I always liked that the show had a generally positive view of our armed forces as well. Also they kept the mood a good deal lighter than Trek tended too.

juanito - John Davey says:
June 15, 2010 at 8:14 am

Yes! Exactly. A young Richard Anderson (not related to TV Stargate's Richard Dean Anderson, to bring it back to one of the subjects of today's Bleat).

As far as the Mac Pro Tower not booting, check the power supply. If it has sat unused for a while, it's not too uncommon for the power supply to let go when you first power it up. Not being a Mac guy, I'm trying to recall if there are any beep codes related to a CMOS issue on a Mac (if it really were the CMOS battery). Even if you get a power indicator LED when you turn it on, it could still be a bad power supply.

Here's a Power Supply Tester at Best Buy

Or if you want to find one Online

MikeH says:
June 15, 2010 at 8:51 am

Wifey in the BBQ coffee ad looks like she was placed there as an afterthought. Men can't be trusted to go camping by themselves. Why is she offering more coffee to him when he hasn't started his 1st cup? "Honey just wait!! I know you made more coffee, but I haven't finished this one. Why the hell do I bring you on my hunting trips? When I go hunting with the guys we drink beer and Wild Turkey. But with you….COFFEE? Yeah it's 11pm. That's what I like drinking in the middle of the woods after driving for 9 hours and finally settling in this spot….COFFEE!! WHO NEEDS SLEEP??"

Ok, little off tangent. Comic sins, yeah breaking up with a guy by telegraph is just as bad as over the telephone.

shesnailie says:
June 15, 2010 at 9:05 am
_@_v – who breaks up with somebody by telegraph? what... was your aldis lamp busted? couldn't find your other semaphore flag?

Claire says:
June 15, 2010 at 9:08 am

Won't the heat from the grill peel the paint off the refrigerator?

Ron Ramblin says:
June 15, 2010 at 9:28 am

If you ever have a psychic over to Jasperwood, have her hold that comic and tell you the story of the girl who bought, read and saved it and why she felt compelled to label Tom.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 15, 2010 at 9:49 am

Tom wasn't dumped, Betty Nophone here just wanted him to wear his black dinner jacket so her two dates would not look like bookends. More salt and pepper.

Baby M says:
June 15, 2010 at 9:49 am

Today's Comic Sin is the sin of adultery! Two timing double booking poor communications protocols.

Actually, it could lead to a good film noir if the next panel involves one of her dates pulling a roscoe in a fit of jealous rage and putting the other one six feet under. Given that the title of the book is Romantic Secrets, I think the odds of that are pretty slim.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 15, 2010 at 9:58 am

Don't forget a possible power cord fault. If it has been wrapped up for awhile, a wire could be broken inside.

Also reset PMU, SMC, or PRAM depending on model.

fizzbin says:
June 15, 2010 at 10:14 am

@Baby M... I think the phrase is “rit of fealous jage” 😊

shesnailie says:
June 15, 2010 at 10:25 am

_@_v – oh wait... maybe it was sergeant killjaw that broke his date with tom...

Kim says:
June 15, 2010 at 10:32 am

Dried goat scrotums?

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7338
Many thanks for my first spit-take of coffee this morning! 😃

swschrad says:
June 15, 2010 at 10:37 am

@Kim: you've obviously never been down the “international” aisles at Cub.

Batteries Plus: a place to locate. few have things like scooter or wheelchair batteries (useful also for whompin' big UPS that leak enough magnetism to smear the monitor from five feet) but in a large area, at least one or two stores will carry them.

certain to have the sub-AA 3V mac backup battery.

Blar says:
June 15, 2010 at 10:46 am

re Stargate: The original show was middling when it was on Showtime, and good to excellent when it got picked up by SciFi. It actually improved consistently up to its cancellation, unlike a lot of other scifi series. Stargate Atlantis was consistently excellent. Both could be surprisingly thoughtful, but never lost the the light, swashbuckling quality that other commenters have remarked on.

It's also curious as a refuge for actors from other scifi series. Everyone from the Doctor on Voyager to the Smoking Man has found their way on the franchise.

Re Comic Sins: I think that cover would be a magnitude more interesting without the thought bubble.

nightfly says:
June 15, 2010 at 11:12 am

Many thanks for my first spit-take of coffee this morning!

That's cool, the BBQ lady has you covered.

Tom is clearly horrified that now one of them is going to have to go all the way home and change. Absolutely ruins the evening.

My favorite part is the promise of “DIFFERENT, thrilling confessions!” You know, those other books have the same ol' boring confessions: I left the lid up and drank milk STRAIGHT FROM THE CARTON!!!! OUR confessions are different – they're THRILLING!

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 15, 2010 at 11:20 am

Your comment, ‘lost another 1.8 pounds, and am no longer “overweight.”’, put me in mind of an article I read on one of the lifting sites I frequent. It was an article by a young Army Major with two tours in Iraq. In it he was questioning military height/weight standards that are somewhat light even by the BMI standard. His observations were that the standards and associated PT demand high endurance and relatively low strength even in the area of push ups, sit ups, and pull ups. He contrasted those standards to the reality of 80+ lbs. of field gear, weapons, ammo, and body armor, and found that his troops who conformed to the charts gassed quickly in anything other than riding in a vehicle. If they had to dismount they tired very quickly. Conversely, his “overweight” troops performed much better and actually could be relied upon to
drag a wounded comrade out of the action, something the “fit” guys could not. Weight and height are two parameters of description. When looked at in the absence of the physical requirements of your job or life, they can be counterproductive.

Brisko says:
June 15, 2010 at 12:44 pm

Stargate movie = awesome.
Stargate TV show = not too bad for the first couple seasons.
Massive Stargate franchise = crap.
Also, today's Comic Sins was drawn by Dick Giordano, who passed away not 3 months ago, so it has that going for it. God rest his soul.

Borderman says:
June 15, 2010 at 12:52 pm

Does Sgt. Killjaw in today's Comic Sins remind anyone else of Oscar Goldman?

Funny the name Oscar Goldman comes up on the Bleat today.

Like our Illustrious Host was home alone last night (although just for a few hours not a week), and watching a 1956 police-thriller, *A Cry in the Night*. A young Richard Anderson, head bandaged after being sluged by the bad-guy who also kidnapped his date and acting a bit groggy still, is grilled by good-cop Brian Donlevy who asks his name. He pauses, looks confused, and opens his mouth. Before he speaks I hear a voice say, “Oscar Goldman.” What!? Until I realized the familiar vibration of the mastoid bones behind my ears was because I was the one who spoke, I had a bad couple seconds there. Like the couch could suddenly do MST3K commentary or something.

We have the technology.

As for sending a telegram to break a date–heh. Tom probably doesn't have a carrier-pigeon hutch on his roof, either. Another message he didn't get. For heaven's sake, Tom. *Get with the program.*

Aleta says:
June 15, 2010 at 1:43 pm

I was unimpressed with the movie “Stargate” when it was released. I've come to appreciate it more over the years. It's a comfortable pair of jeans with a hole in one pocket and frayed cuffs. But I have even more respect for the “Stargate SG-1” series. The first year is somewhat rocky and has too many “strange civilization based on Greek mythology” but after that it settles down and is very enjoyable. It's better than Star Trek by a wide margin, IMAO. I recommend it.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 15, 2010 at 2:36 pm

I finally saw the Stargate movie a year ago and was surprised I liked James Spader and the character he played. Seemed realistic for some reason.
margaret says:
June 15, 2010 at 2:38 pm

Tom quit the gang and has in witness protection many years.

Imagine his shock as he sees the oh-so-familiar, oh-so-terrifying “sinews” tattoo of the professional hitman on the back of KillJaw’s hand.

And Killjoy has seen his hand, too.

Borderman says:
June 15, 2010 at 3:10 pm

@margaret: Not only the tats, but notice KillJaw’s fingers making the complicated, yin-yang hand symbol for “my crane style will defeat your dragon style every time, you rustic peasant.” Showdown imminent. Danger Will Tom Robinson.

Wagner von Druen- Sachs says:
June 15, 2010 at 3:20 pm

I think Sgt. KillJaw may just be her blind date…

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 15, 2010 at 3:25 pm

Tom
Charlton, USA

New employee at Al’s cleaners STOP Laundry mark on front of dinner jacket Stop Al says he can get it out for tonight Stop

Betty

rivlax says:
June 15, 2010 at 3:35 pm

Grillin’ and BBQ are different things entirely. If you just throw meat (steak, burgers, brats, etc.) over some hot coals, that’s grillin’.

If you put a pork butt, chicken or (nod to Texas) beef over hardwood coals and cook it slow for about three hours, then put some vinegar-pepper sauce on it, that’s BBQ.

Yankees always get that confused.

lanczos says:
June 15, 2010 at 5:11 pm

[First panel of RomSec]

Oh, TOM… Uhhhh, Thanks so much for the beautiful corsage. Uhh, and please put those beautiful flowers in some water. There’s a vase in the kitchen. You’re so sweet!

Oh, and can you wash my car tonight – it’s so dusty!

Oh, and would you mind housesitting Mister Fluffy for me for a while – Sergeant Ki… – Uh, my friend and I are leaving for the weekend, and I won’t be back until Monday.
[Then the REAL heartbreak begins...]

**Di** says:
June 15, 2010 at 6:35 pm

Reporting in from So.Calif.
Thought of Mr. Lileks last night as 5.7 quake rumbled through – how you promised child “no earthquakes.” Well, feel comforted because these recent quakes are merely aftershocks from actual quake on Easter.
So you spoke truth 😊

And dried goat scrotum is always perfect accompaniment to crunchy frog.

**Soozcat** says:
June 15, 2010 at 7:03 pm

Oh, the heartbreak of getting Dear Johned by telegram.

Of course, it’d be far worse today... Tom logs on and checks Facebook, and the first thing he sees:

? Betty_Biatch is now single.

Then, a few hours later:

? Betty_Biatch is in a relationship with Sgt. Killjaw.

And then the consolation messages start pouring into his inbox.

**RKN** says:
June 15, 2010 at 7:20 pm

What Kim said – tho in my case wine not coffee. Raining here too today, you understand.

Off to the teevee, the prez is on reassuring us we need reassurance.

**ASM826** says:
June 15, 2010 at 10:33 pm

The Batteries Plus here has a very helpful staff, and they have had every odd computer and camera battery I have ever asked them for, in stock.

**Ross** says:
June 16, 2010 at 12:10 am

Like several of the other Bleatniks, I, too, resisted watching “Stargate SG-1” for years(wondering the whole time why it was still on the air, as their ads were dreadful–made the show look like something made for Lifetime or The Family Channel). When I finally did start watching, I was hooked. Forget all the analyses–just watch R D Anderson play maybe the funniest soured-mood wiseass since “Buffalo Bill” was canceled(regularly insisting he’s just a dumb soldier, he’s sort of the anti-McGyver). The built-in tension between him and Michael Shanks’ version of the James Spader character is realistically messy over the span of the series, as well. And it did become a haven for other sci-fi actors, especially at the end/into the “SG-Atlantis” spin-off. Claudia Black & Ben Browder, the two leads from “Farscape” (an extraordinary series) and the
“Firefly” mechanic became main characters, among others.

GardenStater says:
June 16, 2010 at 5:39 am

@rivlax: I'm a Yankee, born and bred, but I know the difference between grilling and BBQ. I tend to prefer the latter. Did 9 racks of ribs on Saturday, had 'em on the smoker for 8 hours. Yum. For Father's Day weekend, I think I'll do a 20-hour pork shoulder... (drool)

Stjohnsmythe says:
June 16, 2010 at 9:44 pm

“...dried goat scrotums...”

Jeez, James, testy today, aren't we?

Allison says:
June 16, 2010 at 11:52 pm

the markup on batteries is just fantastic. I think Radio Shack made more money off the batteries it sold than on any electronics in the store combined.

The place to buy batteries is Amazon. sellers sell whole sets of the little button types for the price you'd pay for one at BatteriesPlus.
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?
The sun! The sun! It came back, oh, it came back! But unlike a dog that follows you across country, the sun just strolled back with self-conscious nonchalance, as if it hoped we wouldn't notice. The clouds rolled over, rolled away; rolled over, rolled away – and then we got a perfect puffy-cloud evening with the promise of more tomorrow. Everyone always forgive's yesterday's weather. Unless it dropped a tree on your house.

Another thrilling day of scanning, blogging, blogging and sorting, but I'm getting much done. Scanned & sorted 47 items for the upcoming Gallery. Forty – seven. May even have some novel time tonight. Anyway: today's contribution to keeping the site alive during this sort-of-hiatus week is the usual Wednesday Out of Context Ad Challenge, and a few things up at tumblr.

(Forgot to put anything up today, but the queued posts kept rolling out. Apparently tumblr does not operate on the Grandfather Clock Principle. And it stopped – dead – never to post again when the old man died.)

72 RESPONSES TO forty-seven jell-o illustrations

Borderman says:
June 16, 2010 at 1:03 pm

Formal attire. That guy's about as fancy as you could get for 1932. The women also.

Borderman says:
June 16, 2010 at 1:11 pm

And there must have been about six people total, nationwide, in the market for formal attire in 1932, what with Hoover's booming economy and every thing. So why not run a color ad? Sure.
John Powell says:
June 16, 2010 at 1:15 pm

Swedish penis enlargers.

JerseyAmy says:
June 16, 2010 at 1:54 pm

I'm with GardenStater, I think Lileks spelled this one out for us: Jell-o. The art looks a lot like this.

shesnailie says:
June 16, 2010 at 2:14 pm

_@_v – having brought it up... there's a good video on youtube concerning that disaster and its cause...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oWFDqlSczM

on another video the engineer in charge of investigating that notes that 'about $25 worth of materials' could've prevented the collapse

shesnailie says:
June 16, 2010 at 2:31 pm

_@_v – oh and nice colour piccy of fifth avenue at 39th street. the ss kress store on the left was torn down in late 70s early 80s for a building that wrapped a glassy wing around the surviving knox building on the corner of 40th & 5th.

something like this building....

http://www.lileks.com/mpls/lawyers/law2.html

hpoulter says:
June 16, 2010 at 3:20 pm

Gastropodal one – not to nitpick, but it is kind of misleading to say that $25 of materials could have prevented the collapse. The cause wasn’t cheapness, but really basic engineering. They didn’t re-evaluate a design change that effectively doubled the tension stress on the supporting rods, among other things. It should have been evaluated as a totally new design, instead of just assumed to be a minor change. Professor Henry Petroski has made a career out of investigating the processes of engineering failure and design innovation (I like his essays on paperclips, paper bags, pencils and other homely tools). He gives a pretty thorough analysis of the Hyatt failure in this book:

“Design paradigms: case histories of error and judgment in engineering ”

As Petroski said, “a change for any reason must have its implications measured against the original design objectives”.

The math was easy, the cost wasn’t really an issue – it was just bad project management and engineering malpractice. A sobering lesson.
**swschrad** says:
June 16, 2010 at 3:30 pm

@hpoulter: you mean that “hold my beer and watch this!” isn’t state of the art?

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
June 16, 2010 at 3:37 pm

 gotta wonder how putting twice much wait on any supporting structure would not set off alarm bells.

Looking at diagrams, even in original design, they seemed to be putting a lot of trust in a weld.

**hpoulter** says:
June 16, 2010 at 3:43 pm

@swschrad: reminds me of the Stephen Wright line:  

“Put your seatbelt on, I wanna try something. I saw it in a cartoon once, but I'm pretty sure I can do it”

**browniejr** says:
June 16, 2010 at 4:08 pm

The Kansas City walkway collapse is THE classic case of not following MIL-TFD-41 requirements. (MIL-TFD-41 = “Make It Like The Freaking Drawing for once.” -Freaking is not the original word…). Demonstrates, tragically, the importance of verifying a design both during and after construction.

**shesnailie** says:
June 16, 2010 at 4:27 pm

_@_v – here’s a link to the engineer quote…

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tR_N6lyTxj0

i would presume that stuck with the risky box-girder design and the split hangers the 25 (1979) dollars would go for the metal plates needed to prevent blowthrough of the welded box-girder joints actually working on a novel based on the citicorp engineering crisis of 1978 – now that would’ve been an epic mil-tfd-41 fubar

**hpoulter** says:
June 16, 2010 at 4:59 pm

“citicorp engineering crisis of 1978 ”

Holy crap, I missed that one somehow. What a cluster-foxtrot.

**Paul in NJ** says:
June 16, 2010 at 5:01 pm

Chairs, of course. Nice plush chairs more suited to a Formal Event than the aluminum-and-horsehair ass-killers that the nice ladies are parked in.

It’s obviously all about… The Comfy Chair!
ancient hacker says:
June 16, 2010 at 5:31 pm

The REAL cause of the Kansas City disaster was that the original design was IMPOSSIBLE to build – it had ONE three-story long steel rod threaded at each floor through the floor girder. Easy to draw on the blueprint, but once you think about it, impossible to assemble in the real world. Also impossible to somehow put threads and a nut on this long rod at each floor level. Some mid-level engineer changed the design to something buildable, but did not do even a basic load analysis. And that got thru the inspection process too. A classic clusterfarg, to use a Lileksism.

Paul says:
June 16, 2010 at 6:28 pm

“Aside from that, how was the ballroom dancing, Mrs. Lincoln?”

Dave says:
June 16, 2010 at 8:41 pm

My guess is kotex or something of a delicate feminine nature, explaining why these glamorous women are sitting out the swanky dance of their dreams.

Apropos of nuttin’, I’d like to give a shout-out to another collection of amazing ads, compiled by an academic named Dr. Chris Mullen. The Cold War stuff is especially nutty.
http://www.fulltable.com/VTS/a/aa/menu.htm

Grebmar says:
June 16, 2010 at 9:42 pm

@hpoulter: I love Petroski's rant about plastic trash bags in one of his books (the same one with paper clips and forks). It's a great piece of writing. His book on the pencil (The Pencil) is also a classic.

Stjohnsmythe says:
June 16, 2010 at 9:50 pm

Buick. When better automobiles are made, this gentleman will buy one. Bet he dances a mean foxtrot.

shesnailie says:
June 16, 2010 at 10:43 pm

_@_.v – alec hiddell's sniper emporium – because you might not get a second chance at angela landsbury…

Crabtree says:
June 16, 2010 at 11:13 pm

I think I've been watching too much Jeeves and Wooster 'cause when I saw the title of this post I immediately sang it to the tune of “Forty-seven Ginger-Headed Sailors”….
xrayguy says:
June 17, 2010 at 12:20 pm

Hey, what's going on over there at Mr. Lincoln's box?

Looking for something?
Use the form below to search the site:

Still not finding what you're looking for?
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

Archives
All entries, chronologically...

July 2013
June 2013
May 2013
April 2013
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February 2013
January 2013
December 2012
November 2012
October 2012
September 2012
August 2012

Please install and activate the "Twitter for WordPress" plugin to use this section.
Family's gone five days now, and I've devolved into sloth, atavism, and aimlessness. The hours pass like drugged snakes through thick grass. It's a miracle I get anything done.

Earlier: Sitting in a Fantastic Sam's waiting to get my hairs cut. I will have to wait longer because I am such a decent guy. I got out of the car about ten seconds after a big, big mom with a big baby carrier got out of her car. Bonus: old lady in tow. I figured they were going for the crafts store, but an immediate assessment of their trajectory put them at Fantastic Sam's, and there was a 50-50 chance we would arrive simultaneously. They had half the distance to travel, but were moving at 75% my pace. If I walked at my normal pace, I'd beat them, and be out sooner, and be back to doing all the fascinating things I do. And so it was: I reached the door first, and my trajectory didn't take me anywhere across their path. I thought I WIN!

To explain: I will always have memories of the Giant Swede's run-in with one of the late 70s enduring cultural college cliche, the Iranian Exchange Student. Swede was maneuvering to back into a parking spot; the IES zoomed in behind him (in the obligatory Firebird), then got out and said I WIN! I WIN! To this day we say the phrase to indicate petty glee over meaningless victories.

So I stopped, opened the door, let them ahead. It was too close. There was no
way I had a clear claim to the head of the line here, not with the baby and old-lady handicaps. God, seeing I should be rewarded for my behavior, didst decree that the woman should want only a Wax, which did not put her ahead of me in the hair-cutting queue. Thus are we rewarded.

Please don’t take me seriously. I’m sitting in a hair salon, bored, typing. But it was a good day – accomplished nearly everything I needed to do, much of which was sheer brain-frying rote photoshoppery. As I may have mentioned, I am readying the Matchbook Museum for e-book format, and the amount of resizing, transforming, sharpening, drop-shadowing, and so on – well. When I finished scanning the entire collection I had almost 200 scans, most of which had 12 matchbooks each. Chewing through the scans has brought me to despair, but now that I’m down to the last 30 there’s a spring in my step. And then there’s the Gallery overhaul. Old version:

New version.
Either way, it's still triple creamed! You can see what I'm up against: time, ravages of. Anyway: a bounty of material awaits tomorrow; see you then.

89 RESPONSES TO land’s sake, calvin

Jan says:
June 17, 2010 at 12:37 pm

I like the gloss and sparkle of the cleaned up version but Calvin and Jenny still have a bit of jaundice.

David Holland says:
June 17, 2010 at 12:43 pm

My tax accountant prefers easily digestible receipts.

RobertB says:
June 17, 2010 at 12:44 pm
I agree with Maharincess: I like the restored cover. The point is to erase the distance between the 21st century and the time when the book was printed, so we don’t see it as quaint nostalgia for another time. James wants us to see it as people saw it when it was new. It’s like seeing vivid color photos from the 1930s — it makes you realize that the past was not actually drab and worn.

James Ingram says:
June 17, 2010 at 12:52 pm

Typo alert… recipes is spelled “receipts” in the second balloon.

Larry says:
June 17, 2010 at 12:54 pm

She looks like that gal on the Food Network the one with nothing but teeth when she smiles

Larry says:
June 17, 2010 at 12:58 pm

Also she has the same colour of hair

GardenStater says:
June 17, 2010 at 1:09 pm

@Mr Manager: “…ever since then I have had to have my hair cut at one of the ladies places- it works, but is sure not the same.”

That’s because, when you’re waiting in the ladies’ places, you don’t hear any good jokes, and the magazine selection is limited to Ladies’ Home Journal, Vogue, and Vanity Fair. At the barber shop, you have a choice of some more…shall we say…interesting titles.

(Of course, I pick them up because of the articles.)

GardenStater says:
June 17, 2010 at 1:11 pm

@Robert B: Me, too.

And for those who object: Don’t worry, James didn’t retouch the actual cover, but a digital image of it. The original cover is in James’ house, still looking worn out and beat up.

browniejr says:
June 17, 2010 at 1:12 pm

Best barbershop ever- especially when the manicurist went to work: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0KvqhVQHg

(ring a ding ding, indeed!)

RLR says:
June 17, 2010 at 1:56 pm

The day I let another human being within 5 feet of my neck with a straight razor in their hand, is the day they give me the Long Dirt Nap.
Yes, I saw _Godfather II_, why do you ask?
I cut my own hair and LIKE IT! 😊

Lisa from MT says:
June 17, 2010 at 1:59 pm

Hmmm, I generally love everything you do James – and have for years but I'm not so keen on the upgrade of the old stuff. I can see taking the tears and damage off but the new colors seem a bit too bright. Rather than retaining some of the charm of being old and nostalgically funny the new look resembles a harsher parody. It's like shining a really bright light at your sweet old granny. Perhaps not so much change would be nice. Just my opinion.

hpoulter says:
June 17, 2010 at 2:08 pm

GardenStater says:
June 17, 2010 at 1:11 pm @Robert B: Me, too.

And for those who object: Don't worry, James didn't retouch the actual cover, but a digital image of it. The original cover is in James' house, still looking worn out and beat up.

Dang – here I was picturing him with an airbrush and tiny paintbrushes, like the toy repairman in Toy Story 2.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 17, 2010 at 2:10 pm

If I read it correctly, James is doing the retouch for E-book. I assume this means a smaller screen than what you are currently using. The touch ups and color manipulation may be needed for the picture to be appreciated in that format.

GardenStater says:
June 17, 2010 at 2:11 pm

@browniejr: I second your Ring-a-ding-ding. Love that Barbara Eden.

Speaking of barbershop manicures: Back in the 80s, I worked in an office building on Park Ave and 33rd St in Manhattan. In the lobby was "Johnny's Park Avenue Barbershop," a real throwback to the "Mad Men" era. Four Italian barbers, a shoeshine boy, and two ladies of a certain age who would give manicures. I went in there once on my lunch hour–got a shave (complete with hot towel), haircut, shoe shine, and manicure, all done while I sat in the barber chair. The whole treatment cost me about $30. I just needed a cigar and a girl taking dictation, to complete the whole Edward G. Robinson feel of the moment.

Alan Taylor says:
June 17, 2010 at 2:25 pm

About Barber shaves: Now I have had a full beard for about 15 years and prefer it to having to shave myself each day. But I have had a few barber shaves, and the full treatment with the hot towel, warm
lather, straight razor, etc. – very decadent. That's why them swells went for 'em.

**DerKase** says:
June 17, 2010 at 2:49 pm

There are a couple Italian barbershops in DC I highly recommend. One is in the Watergate and the other is at Pennsylvania and 21st NW. Basic haircut is over $20, but you feel like a million coming out. I agree with GardenStater & Alan that the swells knew a thing or two back in the 20s & 30s.

Now I work at a small Navy base down the Potomac and go to a non-Italian who gives an ok haircut for $8. Better than Haircuttery, but I still like to go back to the Italians whenever I can.

**Wagner von Drupen-Sachs** says:
June 17, 2010 at 2:54 pm

When a shortening is NOT digestible, does that mean that it, well, er, comes out in the same state that it went in? Like corn kernels do? Mike Wallace didn't mention whether Fluffo is digestible, so maybe it isn't. Could account for the Restless Leg thing he's doing there…

**Emile** says:
June 17, 2010 at 3:13 pm

And they actually let the typo “receipts” get past them in her dialogue balloon?

**GardenStater** says:
June 17, 2010 at 3:30 pm

Oh, and I left one thing out: When you walked into Johnny's Park Avenue Barbershop, the same guy who shined shoes would meet you at the door, take your coat, and hang it (on a wooden hanger, of course) in the closet. As you made for the door to leave, he'd help you with your coat and give the shoulders a quick brush with a whisk broom.

Man, I miss that place. I also miss having anywhere to get a decent shoe shine. Working in the suburbs has a few advantages, but there's nothing like the feeling you get when you walk out of the shoe shine place, your brogans shining like mirrors. (sigh)

**swschrad** says:
June 17, 2010 at 3:46 pm

@host-twitter: they're working up to “Partly Armageddon” for tonight's weather. now expected between 6 and 8 tonight with tornado watches out until 9 pm for your convenience.

this, of course, is about the time I step out of work, walk 1 mile to the corner of Barren and No-Shelter, and wait for the bus. this bus is NOT one of those you can set your atomic clock to.

4 inches of rain in West Fargo this morning, about 3 miles south of mom's house. we have a city engineer from Fargo coming out to survey why the basement is always wet. this to solve a sibling argument during house sale time. the clay doesn't drain water in the valley, you know. it holds it and oozes it away very, very slowly.
Borderman says:  
June 17, 2010 at 3:47 pm

I know that I too get sorta goofy twice a year when my wife goes to visit her dad in California, one week in the fall and one week in the spring. So I empathize, deeply, with our Illustrious Host. One time when she was visiting in California I got into a big Photoshop lather and “cleaned-up” or “restored” or whatever an Army Air Forces recruiting poster from 1944 I got off the Library of Congress, or maybe National Archives or some university site. Thought my version looked absolutely terrific in comparison, much as our Illustrious Host has done here with the Spry ad and his re-touched version. So I printed it, framed it, and gave it to my dad the Army Air Forces veteran for his birthday to hang on his wall of Army Air Forces stuff. Six weeks later I was up in Fort Worth and saw he had put it in a garage sale. So I don’t bother anymore when she goes out of town. I sit in the dark after work munching pepperoni and saltines for supper. Eventually the night comes when it’s time to go get her at the airport and life resumes. She’s never gone more than a week so my digestion isn’t completely ruined. You all are correctomundo when you say the original is heavily worn and should look that way. Take from me, it’s just the imposed bachelorism rotting his psyche. Pray, Illustrious Host. It’s your only hope until they come back to Sorrento. Or Jasperwood. (BTW, Boar’s Head pepperoni is superior and Bridgford is not, or so I’ve come to believe. Nabisco are the only saltines).

swschrad says:  
June 17, 2010 at 3:50 pm

@WvD-S: when a shortening is not digestible, you have P&G’s fake fat, Olestra.

runs are not limited to baseball, folks. and it takes few fake-fat potato chips to make you realize why the Charmin ads (from P&G) changed to bears in the woods about the same time Olestra came out.

Mark E. Hurling says:  
June 17, 2010 at 4:00 pm

Not to go too far down the dirt road here, but the same observation might be made about the diet product Alli.

swschrad says:  
June 17, 2010 at 4:08 pm

@Mark E. Hurling: yeah, you won’t get far down that dirt road, that’s a fact.

Mark E. Hurling says:  
June 17, 2010 at 4:21 pm

Why sir, are you implying the green apple quickstep wouldn’t carry you fast and far on your run?

swschrad says:  
June 17, 2010 at 5:26 pm

depends on whether you remain, ahhh, carrying the apples or not.
no good reason to run when you don't have to. “large angry carnivores chasing you” is a good reason. so is “ten steps to the outhouse, nine steps to the outhouse….”

Crabtree says:
June 17, 2010 at 5:29 pm

My comment seems to have been blocked, so I'm trying again without what I suspect was the problem work.

Saw Barbara Eden on an early episode of Perry Mason the other day. She was being...er... I'm not sure what they called it back then, but now we'd call it a form of date assault. The jerk quickly got killed and Eden's mother was blamed for it. I think Perry made Barbara cry on the stand. Funny how often he did that. I guess it was more acceptable back then. According to my professional ethics professor, modern judges tend to get annoyed when you make women cry on the stand.

swschrad says:
June 17, 2010 at 5:40 pm

@Crabtree: IMPHO taking out a {degrading and personal act of violence with threat containing vice tinges} perpetrator, in the act, should be a misdemeanor with a $15 fine. God can sort out the details later on his own court.

but it's unlikely to become law of the land until I become acclaimed Benevolent Dictator For Three Lifetimes.

the way politics is going, could happen, though.

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 17, 2010 at 5:56 pm

Sounds kind of like the affirmative defense so well known in Texas as, “Well your Honor, he done needed killin.”

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 17, 2010 at 7:11 pm

Mr. Lilek's, sir; I just caught your session with Hugh Hewitt this afternoon and wondered, did your father serve on the Block Island? My father was part of it's USMC contingent. It was one of the few things he talked about at all. Of course one of those stories was when he passed out from the fumes of the still he had rigged in a paint locker. He lost his stripes for that.

grs says:
June 17, 2010 at 8:40 pm

I have to agree with everybody who prefers the original. The photoshopped version reminds me of autotune or colorized movies. The ‘shopped version also seems to remove some detail.

jamcool says:
June 17, 2010 at 11:17 pm

“Not to go too far down the dirt road here, but the same observation might be made about the diet product Alli.”
As well as “sugar-free” candy, made with sugar alcohols such as mannitol, maltitol, sorbitol, or anything ending with “-tol”.

**lehurst** says:
June 18, 2010 at 10:07 am

“Receipts” is not a typo. It’s is an old-fashioned, kind of country way of saying “recipes”.

The cover of the recipe book looks like it has the same photo of those two, minus the talk balloons. How’d they do that!??!

**Normie** says:
June 18, 2010 at 1:22 pm

For those of you who still don’t understand, “receipts” is an old-timey version of want we now call recipes. It is not a typo.

Had to get that off my chest. Thanks.

**RVW** says:
June 18, 2010 at 2:26 pm

I have this cookbook! It was my mother’s.

**NeeNee** says:
June 19, 2010 at 8:13 am

Have the cookbook and it’s $9 in my antique shop (less 20% discount).

**MerryKate** says:
June 19, 2010 at 9:08 pm

That’s a real cookbook? I thought James made that one up…

**Paul in NJ** says:
June 23, 2010 at 12:38 pm

I love the recursive book cover, too: it shows Calvin with his arm around Jenny, his other hand holding the book, the cover of which features…

Calvin with his arm around Jenny, his other hand holding the book, the cover of which features…

Calvin with his arm around Jenny, his other hand holding the book, the cover of which features…

And so on, *ad infinitum*.

**Paul in NJ** says:
June 23, 2010 at 12:40 pm

> That’s a real cookbook?

Yes, MerryKate… It’s a cookbook. *A cookbook!*

← Older Comments
Fine day – hot, hot, humid and dramatic. Great gusty wind, with the promise of a bruising storm in the evening. It never materialized, but we got spooky skies and strange light, the sort of magic that transforms a summer evening into something otherworldly.

Updates I promised, and here you are:

The 30s Magazine Ads busts out the incredible Rex Cole GE Appliance ads into a section of its very own. To recap: Rex Cole ran the ultra-modern chain of appliance stores around New York, and ran clever, gorgeous ads. Here are a few. The first batch are repeats; if you saw them last week, start here.

Rex Cole folded when the Depression got its claws in.

Bleatplus up – I have a few memberships to approve, and will get to them in the morning. Have been lax with email.

100 Mysteries! It's #83. The end is nigh.

A Diner podcast.

Finally, here's some broom labels. Really: there was an entire genre of broom-specific labels, and I bought a few last weekend. The first, ornate and fussy and full of European class:
The 20s: behold the Broomkateer!
The 30s:

HOST WITH THE MOST
Has nothing to do with brooms, but suggests you'll sweep faster. There you go; hiatus week is over, and we're back to the full panoply next week. See you Monday! And of course today at tumblr and Popcrush.

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

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

BLEAT PREMIUM

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

55 RESPONSES TO friday!
steveH says:
June 18, 2010 at 8:11 pm

I attended a coed boarding high school during the late '60s, about an hour north of L.A.

One of the requirements for attending it was that students worked off part of their tuition in various on-campus jobs; janitorial, carpentry/painting/construction, food service, or as readers for the academic departments. They also worked in some school-run businesses, including an auto shop, dairy/poultry farm that fed a cash-and-carry store, a small commercial laundry. And a broom and mop factory.

Around that time, we were told that we made just under half the brooms sold on the west coast.

It's all gone now, of course.

hpoulter says:
June 19, 2010 at 5:29 am

@Charles: You could be right about Dehner not being an actual animator, but I doubt it. Not just imdb, but every online source mentions it, including TCM. Many say he as an “assistant animator”. Old-time Disney was not too lavish with the on-screen credits (unlike Pixar, who credit everybody down to the toilet cleaners). They liked it to appear as much as possible as though everything was drawn and animated by Walt himself. My guess is he moved into the on-screen and narration appearances because he was there, and had the voice and face for it.

GardenStater says:
June 19, 2010 at 5:45 am

@Steve Biddle: Good catch on the ZIP code. And yes, it's supposed to be all caps, since it stands for Zoning Improvement Plan. Talk about a nerd–why do I even know that?

hpoulter says:
June 19, 2010 at 5:53 am

Re Dehner: I found an interview with Dehner's daughter, who confirms the animator story:

http://www.atencionsanmiguel.org/archives/thea_2006_feb_10_eng.html

She says “animator”, pardonable paternal pride – other sources say he started as a “traffic boy” and worked how way up to “assistant animator” before leaving. He worked on Bambi (Thumper team) Fantasia, and The Reluctant Dragon.

Looks like they realized they had in-house talent good enough for him to appear as himself in their fake documentary alongside faux animator Alan Ladd.

hpoulter says:
June 19, 2010 at 6:34 am

Since it is pride of a daughter for her father, I guess instead of “pardonable paternal pride”, I should say “forgivable filial fealty”.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7362
No better way to celebrate: we went to the theater for our annual Pixar outing. Got there early; got a seat by the railing – there's an aisle that goes lengthwise across the theater, so if you're on the railing no one can sit in front of you. For short daughter and short father this is necessary.

There was a trailer for Cats and Dogs 2, which will be seen by millions and, once seen, forgotten by an equal number. It contained the obligatory Urban-Talking Animal – a pigeon, this time. *He's hip! He's slangy and brash! He's available for licensing on soft-drink cups!* Then a trailer for “Despicable Me,” which seems amusing enough – an evil dude who looks like a version of the food critic in “Ratatouille” must pause in his struggle with an arch-enemy because the plot requires him to adopt three little girls. I'm sure they will be smart and resourceful and full of sass and bravery; it would be unacceptable these days for them to be anything but, and I'm also sure everyone will Learn Something at the end of it, perhaps about Family. A trailer for something whose name I’ve forgotten, about warring super-guys, with the good super-guy as a vain self-confident cliche, because we haven't seen that ever before. Made me want to watch “The Incredibles” again. A trailer about owls on a great quest, which seems to consist of a great many close-ups of the faces of owls, talking. Or flying. There's not a lot you can do with hyper-realistic owls, is there? They're flying, or they're talking. It has to do with saving good owls from bad owls, and the fate of owldom hangs on several young owls going off on a long journey. So it's “Lord of the Rings” with owls.
These being 3D trailers, there were many things put into your face, since many filmmakers seem to think the essence of 3D is repeating the experience of standing three feet away from someone who's spinning a yo-yo at your head with a cord length of two feet and eleven inches.

Then “Night and Day,” which I’d actually forgotten about. I have never been a fan of UPA animation, the simple stripped-down abstract style whose blobby characters have stubby legs and oversized noses. This was a contest between two UPA Schmoos, more or less, and is so conceptually abstract it’s almost impossible to describe. It actually comes to a screeching halt to have its message delivered, verbally, with a voice-over. Then it quickly reverses itself, finds resolution in an image that was present in the concept since the beginning, and bang, it’s done, and wow: that was fargin’ brilliant, you think. Again! Again!

“Presto” is still the funniest short to preface a Pixar movie (when my daughter is watching it on my iPad as we drive home from piano, I hear the hillbilly music that plays when the magician is dancing a jig after his finger’s jammed into an electrical socket, and I laugh). “Night and Day” was something different – it was about the medium without being one of those self-conscious exercises that says “HEY, THIS IS ABOUT THE MEDIUM” – and it seemed to be inventing itself as it went along.

Then the Castle – in 3D, never seen that; all Disney fans have to think “Walt would have loved that,” because we always like to think we know what Walt would have loved – then the clouds. Right away, you know the details will matter, because clouds were the opening moments of TS1:

But now we see “real” clouds, not the wallpaper of Andy’s room. We’re in the Southwest. Cowboy country, where only a lawman like Sheriff Woody stands between spud-form varmints and the breakdown of civil order. Took about 40 seconds before I had my first laugh – a bark that surprised me so much it made my daughter elbow me: Dad! You don’t have to laugh so hard! - but it was such a hilarious visual I couldn’t help it. (The orphans, if you’ve seen the movie.) What followed surprised me, because I’d thought this was the end of
the movie, at least from what I’d seen on the trailers.

It’s an imaginary adventure, of course – someone on the NYT review comments complained that that’s a spoiler! But unless you believe that Mr. Potato Head has gone rogue and really become a 19th century train robber, you know this is Andy’s imagination. It’s part of the joke: Andy concocted great surreal free-flowing adventures for his toys, never knowing they had ones of their own, linear ones whose plots centered around him, if only in absentia: winning his affection, returning to him, or – in the end – being there together in case he needed them again. It”s like Narnia for Deists.

Anyway: the opening was the sort of set-piece that some movies work up to. Great relief to see it in the beginning: now I had no idea where this was going.

Then again, I did; we all know where it’s going. Right? The toys, left behind when Andy grows up, end up in a day-care center, where they’re bashed and tossed and chewed and abused. We knew this. The day-care center has a big ole slow-talkin’ country bare what goes by the name of Lotso, and he’s the patriarch of these here parts. We knew that, too – although I always suspected Lotso had an agenda. We meet Ken, the original metrosexual, all preen and plastic sheen, and Barbie falls hard. Of course; it’s in the trailer. I suspected the movie would be about escaping the mean toddlers and making their way back . . . well, where? Andy’s going to college. Not likely they’re going to make their way to Japan to join up with Stinky Pete.

So how can they possibly surprise us? There’s only so much you can do with the toys-wanting-to-get-from-here-to-there story. If they’d just given us that, people would have been happy. We love these characters, after all. We’ve known them for fifteen years – or three-and-a-half hours, however you look at it. (I’d go with 15 years.) It’s just enough to see Buzz and Woody back, and with enough action and technical whizbangery, any sense of plowing the same furrow wouldn’t hit you until you watched it again.

Anyone expect that’s what Pixar would do?

Right. So you get new characters. There’s a charming earnest thespian porcupine; there’s Ken, acting like a game-show host from 1975; a battered old Fisher-Price phone my sister dragged around as a kid, and one of the creepiest infant collossi you’ll ever see – there’s a scene in which he sits in a swing, unmoving, staring up at the moon, and it’s more unnerving that anything Stephen King ever thought up.

So, check that one off. If there’s one character who doesn’t really seem distinct, it’s one made of gel. Figures.

Old characters get twists, and this is always tough. In the course of the story, though one character rethinks his core mission, another switches identities and loyalties, another swaps his body for something else and performs some physical comedy that makes you think of a drunken Buster Keaton imitating a sober Charlie Chaplin, or vice versa. They change character while
remaining true to their character: that's mighty fine screenwritin', I reckons.

None of that matters if the pace flags, or the story meanders, or the movie thinks it has to beat you over the head and deafen you at regular intervals because this is SUMMER BLOCKBUSTER SEASON and kids need noise and wise-cracking birds and things coming out of the screen every 47 seconds. (The 3d is actually very subtle.) No, the pacing is absolutely perfect, carrying you along so you're always in the moment without losing your sense of where you've been or losing your curiosity over where you're going next.

Nothing feels like the obligatory quiet patch, or the next big set-piece, and as soon as the movie winds up to a big amusing Escape-from-Alcatraz scene it stops, and throws all the characters into a remorseless, linear, mechanical hell – but I'll get to that. Suffice to say it's the direction that makes this such a joy. You don't notice how good the moment is because you're too busy thinking how great the experience is, and that's direction.

I'll have to see it again, for all the details you miss the first time (my daughter found Totoro first, and I'm convinced I saw the Presto bunny in plush form) and do the usual marveling over things that rush past the first time – the textures and colors are what you'd expect from Pixar, but because this movie is more “realistic” than Wall-E or Up it has a wider range of things that must have been sheer hell to reproduce. But it has a more coherent feel than either other TS. Everything in this world belongs there, everything fits.

In the end it's difficult to describe without spoiling it, which is why I'm not going into more detail. But since everyone talks about misting up at the end – or flat-out sobbing, depending – and yes, it's a killer. It's a surprisingly long goodbye that gives each character their due and closes the story with gentle grace. (And they promptly pick you back up and makes you laugh with an extended credit sequence.) For me, though, the most effective episode came earlier, in the final Scene of Great Peril. All of these movies have moments were everything seems lost, when escape seems impossible, when Evil seems about to triumph, and of course TS3 had that scene. Usually the heroes are just about to do something before they're saved, or they make one desperate last lunge that turns to be the exact right thing to do, and if they have a moment of doubt and fear it lasts one beat, two beat, three – SALVATION!

Not this time. Again, I don't want to spoil anything, but in retrospect it reminded of “Titanic,” only inasmuch as the emotion in TS3 were absent from the sinking of the ship. Cameron uses emotion to explore the possibilities of computers; Pixar uses computers to explore the possibilities of emotion.

You'll know what I mean when you see the scene. If you saw, you know, right? The expressions, the hands, the dread, the quick and necessary assumption of acceptance. It's a Bambi's-Mom-is-Shot moment but much deeper, and I don't think there's anything like it in the Disney canon.

THEY'RE JUST TOYS IN A COMPUTER MOVIE is what usually gets shouted at this point, and that's just sad. And novels are words on paper. Your point is? It's art. IT'S ALL SUPPOSED TO MAKE YOU BUY THE TOYS AND GAMES AND
GO TO DISNEYWORLD! Uh huh. Because no one creates these things out of love for the work, it's all because they get orders on high specifying the number of items that can be licensed or spun-off or turned into attractions. It's not that those things flow naturally out of an idea, oh my no.

On the way out my daughter asked if there would be Toy Story 4, because she wanted to see it. I said probably not. The stories have been told and it's done, and a long movie probably wouldn't be right, but I wouldn't be surprised if they made some short cartoons about the characters. I read some stories that hinted a few future shorts: Good. In the end it turns out we didn't say goodbye to the “guys,” as Woody calls them, but Andy, who stood in for us as a kid and the adult who had to leave childhood behind. That story's done. But you want to say goodbye to these guys for good? I don't.

It's vanity to think you know what “Walt” would have wanted, and he wasn't big on sequels, but I suspect he would have wanted more, too. And he wouldn't have trusted the work to anyone but the people who made this wonderful film.

71 RESPONSES TO father’s day & toy story

kevin says:
June 21, 2010 at 3:02 pm

I'm a big fan of Pixar, and love the short film “One Man Band"

Maharincess of Franistan says:
June 21, 2010 at 3:09 pm

Please tell me there's not anything as devastating as Jessie's song from TS2. If there is, I'm not going to TS3.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 21, 2010 at 3:14 pm

@Maharincess of Franistan: Oh, no separation issues at all (snicker).

winterhawk says:
June 21, 2010 at 3:39 pm

Maharincess: Yes and no. There's nothing *quite* as outright tearjerking as Jessie's song, but there are a couple of scenes that are *very* close, in a somewhat different vein.

Maharincess of Franistan says:
June 21, 2010 at 4:07 pm

Thanks. I guess I'll make sure my hands are free at all times, so I can stick my fingers in my ears and sing loudly when I suspect something wrenching coming along.

Crabtree says:
June 21, 2010 at 4:14 pm

Mark,
Nah, I tend to smile at people anyway and my years of working at a reference desk have given me lots of energy and practice at dealing with annoying people.

Charlie Young says:
June 21, 2010 at 4:26 pm

I thought TS3 was great! Many tear-jerking moments at the end, but it was worth it sitting next to my nine year old daughter. Had to hand her a tissue. Had me a little watery-eyed, too.

Budget buster, indeed. 93 bucks for six of us (one teen, one kiddo, and four adults) just to get in. Then another 40 for requisite drinks, popcorn, and Twizzlers.

Charlie Young says:
June 21, 2010 at 4:29 pm

I also have to chime in on the 3-D. Mostly a subtle use of the tech in the movie. It worked for the opening scene, but was not overblown. This will be great as a flat screen movie, as well.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 21, 2010 at 4:42 pm

I agree with Charlie Young on 3D. I think what was going on was that it was not used to give you “Dr. Tongue” in-your-face moments but, to give you depth.
Charlie Young says:
June 21, 2010 at 5:17 pm

It also sounds like many of you had a more robust “Coming Attractions.” All we got were the IMAX 3-D show off footage, the Owls as Hobbits show and one other forgettable movie.

Charlie Young says:
June 21, 2010 at 5:19 pm

We did get “Day & Night,” though. That was a bit of a thinker.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 21, 2010 at 5:27 pm

I like at least one thing in the “Tangled” preview, the horse was a traditional Disney character design.

Blather. Wince. Repeat. » Blog Archive » What is Your “Toy Story?” says:
June 21, 2010 at 7:59 pm

[…] James Lileks, on the other hand, has a daughter who is in the sweet spot for movies like Toy Story III. He has a sweet and insightful review up over at his blog, here. […]

Will says:
June 21, 2010 at 8:00 pm

I’m with Crabtree, I refuse to be bullied for no other reason than because I’m a man. I went this afternoon, and was about the only unaccompanied man there. No suspicious looks that I noticed, nobody called the swat team on me, anyhow.

I liked “Night and Day,” but it would have been better without the voiceover. “Boundin” is still my favorite short. And Ratatouille is my favorite Pixar flick. By far.

Will says:
June 21, 2010 at 8:05 pm

Oh, and no trailers at my Imax 3D showing. Just the short and the feature. Which suits me fine.

buzz says:
June 21, 2010 at 9:44 pm

We loved TOY STORY 3 as well. The trailers in our theater were for the CGI owl movie, WHO GIVES A HOOT? (no, not the title, just my reaction), another Narnia movie, and TANGLED, which demonstrates non-Pixar Disney CGI animators can’t do feet.

Peter says:
June 21, 2010 at 11:23 pm

The first two Toy Story movies were about toys from the ’50s and early ’60s: a cowboy, a spaceman, Barbie. I noticed many of the new toy characters are clearly meant to be from the ’80s and the ’90s: Lotso (who is to Love-A-Lot Care Bear what Kane is to Hearst), a My-
Little-Pony-like unicorn, the “real” Totoro. One is exception is Musical Jolly Chimp. I would complain the Chimp is typecast, but I don’t think he really could play any other type of character.

If Mr. Pricklepants the Hedgehog has the plummy voice of a “classically trained” actor because he is supposed to be based classic British storybook – like Beatrix Potter or Kenneth Grahame – why does he wear lederhosen? Or am I over-thinking the whole thing?

Ed Driscoll » Network TV Wishes Dad a Happy Father’s Day, in their Own Special Way says:
June 22, 2010 at 2:40 am

[…] Lileks follows up on his review of Two Story 3 Sunday night with an anecdote about the surprisingly positive male role models Woody and Buzz are, […]

greg zywicki says:
June 22, 2010 at 10:06 am

“If Mr. Pricklepants the Hedgehog has the plummy voice of a “classically trained” actor because he is supposed to be based classic British storybook – like Beatrix Potter or Kenneth Grahame – why does he wear lederhosen? Or am I over-thinking the whole thing?”

Mecki. Not sure where I stumbled on that guy.

furious says:
June 23, 2010 at 12:09 am

Loved the movie until the Musical Monkey night watchman made his appearance. Remember (speaking of something unnerving by Stephen King) “The Monkey”, by Stephen King? Made the mistake long ago of reading it right before bedtime, and cymbal-banging monkeys have given me the willies ever since.

But, yeah, saw it with my six-year-old daughter. We both loved it. Now we have to spend 15 mins every trip to Kroger at the Toy Story kiosk.

After Bonnie, my favorite character was Latin Buzz.

–furious

Jaxmom says:
June 23, 2010 at 7:02 pm

OMG, Furious! I read that story (about the cymbal-banging monkey) next to a pool in Acapulco. It was scorchingly hot and humid and the story gave me CHILLS! Everytime I’ve seen that stupid monkey since (including TS3), I always think, “Oh no! Someone’s going to DIE!” Damn Stephen King. 😊
Still not finding what you're looking for?
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!
Putting daughter to bed, making up dialogue for the stuffed animals, looking ahead to things to come.

“Rockin’ good news,” I said, summing up the imminent future.

“You always say that,” she said. Actually, I don’t, but I must say it enough. I’m never going to explain where I got that line. Leave it as a little landmine to go off if she ever watches “Wild at Heart” some day.

I tweeted earlier about my wife’s ability to make printers cease to work, and it has nothing to do with her computer skills. It’s just the old cliche of machines deciding to operate based on their perception of your needs. Cars
are dogs; at their worst, they'll try. Printers and copiers are cats. I bought her a printer last year, but it refused to work with her Mac mini. Finally I swapped my old printer for hers, installed the drivers – a whopping half-gig of HP garbage spat all over the disk, with constant requests to install a module that would allow me to participate in a survey. There are times when YES and NO are not sufficient options, when HELL NO is what you really want to click.

I printed off a test page, and all was well.

Tonight she needed to print off something for the soccer team she coaches. She said the printer told her that the cartridge was not recognized. I checked the error message; sure enough. Best of buds two days ago, and now the printer driver cuts the cartridge dead like a social inferior. Confession: it was an Office Depot replacement, but I've never had problems with those. Ever. They know the secret passwords, and have fooled the printer for years, but all of a sudden the printer is on to me. You are using the inexpensive replacements, aren’t you? You’d think I wouldn’t find out? You think I haven’t known? That’s why I let you stock up and buy them on sale so they’d all be useless. All of them. Go on, try. Open them up, one by one, put them in. I’ll chew on them and print out a scanning sheet and and then, oh, oops! I don’t recognize them anymore.

The only way BP could be more hated: if they changed their name to HP and were spilling printer ink into the Gulf. At the current price that would be about a billion dollars an hour, probably.

So I switched printers on my computer, hooked up the one I’d given her, and downloaded the drivers. I was about to hit print -

“We’re going,” she said from downstairs. “I don’t have time to wait.”

I hit print. The page rolled out, all nice and black and crisp.

She hadn’t needed it, after all.

Cool day and a sultry night. I’d prefer it the other way around; when the sun is strong and sweet at the end of a clammy cloudy day, it’s like an alcoholic parent making up for slapping your spoon out of your hand because he had a hangover for breakfast. I know June is rainy. I know it’s good for the crops. But from what I hear the corn is high enough to require aircraft warning lights. As for the other crops? We don’t have any other crops. Just corn. I believe we have an entirely corn-based economic system now, and more; in the next war they will fire hardened depleted cobs instead of missiles. Or we
will fire huge clouds of hulls into enemy forces, and they will be distracted trying to get the hulls out of their gums.

Busy day, with many new prospects on the horizon – including, urp, daily webcasts. So my video overlords have decreed, and I’m happy; it means I get to design the credits and write a five-second jingle. It will be low-tech, too, and happily so – sometimes from the camera on the laptop, sometime from the new low-tech home studio. Instead of the little bug in the corner of the screen that brands it as a STARTRIBUNE product, I’m going to print off the logo and prop it up with toothpicks and styrofoam. The next phase of video at the paper, as far as I’m concerned, is quick and cheap; the less time spent in production, the better. Just get the damned thing up already.

It’ll be 90 seconds a day, M-F, starting in a couple of weeks. Stay tuned. And then there’s something else, but that’ll have to wait. And then there’s the Matchbook Book, one of two I’m putting out in ebook format just for the sheer hell of it. The way I figgers: the collection isn’t top-notch enough for a coffee table book, and even if it was, the only people who’d publish it would be Taschen, and only then if I could work sex into the subject. Even if it did get published, I imagine sales would be . . . thin. So why not put out an ebook, or a publish-on-demand version, just for the hell of it? There’s another matchbook book as well, but that’ll have to wait until the end of the year.

That’s part of what I was doing last week, besides going slowly mad. Wife and child were in California, as I noted, and I had the place to myself. Kept up a semblance of a schedule, rose and slept at the usual times, never found myself waking at 3 AM with the Xbox controller in my lap and the dog licking my hand. But time just flowed between my fingers, no matter how much I tried to cup them.

**Something I wanted to add** about Toy Story 3 last night, but it was late I was tired of writing about something I couldn’t describe in detail. I don’t remember if Bonnie, the little girl at the end, had a father. If there was one, I don’t think I was supposed to pay him much mind. Andy, as we knew from the start, didn’t have a father. No doubt commentary abounds on the web about how this reflects an ideological predisposition to downplay the need for fathers or traditional nuclear families, but I think that’s nonsense. For starters, Pixar made “Finding Nemo,” which I believe one might construe as pro-father, no? “Monsters Inc” made a dad out of Sully, and in fact the last moment of the movie was all about the emotions of fatherhood. In “Up” Carl wanted to be a father, and came to fill a void left another man’s absence, reinforcing the importance of fathers. (And there were dads aplenty at the awards ceremony at the end.) In Wall-E separation from parenthood was one of the things that infantilized adults. (Can’t quite make the case for “Cars.”) So no. But for Toy Story the narrative almost requires the absence of a male figure, because the story features two different role models, and there wouldn’t be a way to shoehorn in a Real Dad without making him marginal, or requiring him to be someone who embodied traits contrary to the characters of Buzz and Woody.
If you want to read much more into it – and why not? – then Buzz and Woody aren't just toys, but objects into which the kid can project ideas of masculinity. One is about Law and Order and Justice, the things kids need to believe exist to make the world safe and rational and fair, and the other is the Soldier, unattached from domesticity, fighting existential perils. (Precisely the words kids would choose, you know.) These concepts are part of the cultural atmosphere; kids inhale them, and exhale them through play and imagination. You could even say it was subversive to suggest that a boy growing up in a house without a man would naturally want to play the shoot-'em-up games he played. (I'm still waiting for someone to complain that the little girls made their toys have tea parties.)

To argue that Woody and Buzz are actually surrogate fathers is trickier, and also probably wrong. (Hence less tricky.) I can't even phrase the argument in a way that isn't auto-refuting in its own ridiculousness, so I leave that to someone's doctoral thesis.

Anyway. Just wanted to finish up. I gnash my teeth when I see weak silly dads on TV and in the movies, and think it's slow poison to portray men as chinless tech-dorks or chestless domestic dullards, and it makes me wish there was a movie where a dad was a true hero, loved his wife, was big and strong and cheerful, doted on his kids, but still had his private doubts and angst. Hey, make him a superhero, too – with a family of superheroes! That would be awesome. That would be Incredible.

Hah: a firework shell just blew up several blocks away. The dog, in his deafness, heard it, and his head came up fast and he looked at me: you hear that too? Now he's staring in the direction from which the sound came. Fireworks, his annual terror. One sound, and he remembers. I feel bad for him, but fear has one advantage: you know you're alive, dog. No one in the boneyard ever bumped his head in surprise.

106 RESPONSES TO rockin' good news

Will says:
June 23, 2010 at 10:41 am

I had quite a refined set of kill-filters on Agent back in the usenet days, hpoulter. It made the internet so much nicer. That's something that's irretrievably lost in the days of proprietary web forums and blog threads.

Baby M says:
June 23, 2010 at 11:13 am

@efurman — There's good and bad art in every niche, but one of the harder lessons to learn is that while the set of “good art” overlaps with the set of “stuff I like,” the two are not coextensive.
Our Genial Host is a great (but not unthinkingly uncritical) fan of *Mad Men*. I've watched *Mad Men* a time or two; I found it technically impressive but it didn't engage me. Clearly to be included in the set of “good art,” but not a member of the set of “stuff I like.”

Our Genial Host is also fond of *The Simpsons*. I despise *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening and his smirking cynicism and all his works with the white-hot fury of a world-destroying supernova—but I'm not going to leave a comment accusing Mr. Lileks and all other *Simpsons* fans of being clueless dupes in thrall to the manipulations of the sucktastic *Simpsons* and its spin-off merchandise empire because:

1. They're not all dupes, and many of them are quite intelligent, and I can still enjoy a Bleat that's shot through with *Simpsons* references without having to like *The Simpsons*.

2. It's not polite to come into another person's house website as a guest and insult your host and incite a flame war over what is, in the grand scheme of things, a trivial difference of opinion over personal taste in entertainment.

Oh, one more point: there are things in my personal set of “stuff I like” (and yours, too, whether or not you admit it) that is not also a member of the set of “good art.” Some things that aren't all that good are guilty pleasures, or just big dumb goofy fun. There's a place in the world for *A-Team* reruns and pirate movies and poker-playing dogs and three-minute formula pop songs and *Jonny Quest*.

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**MikeH** says:
June 23, 2010 at 11:34 am

Apollo 13

**RPD** says:
June 23, 2010 at 11:45 am

@Baby M

Johnny Quest is not in the subset of good art? APOSTATE!!

**Baby M** says:
June 23, 2010 at 12:34 pm

*Jonny Quest* has typical el-cheapo Hanna-Barbera animation, some of the episodes aren't all that well-written and it can get a little predictable, Bandit the anthropomorphic miniature bulldog is too cartoony in comparison to the “hard-edged” tone of the rest of the show, there are ethnic stereotypes in it that were barely passable in polite company in 1964 and cringe-inducing today.

So, it's not great, it's more good but flawed.

I dearly love it, of course. If you don't get why, just watch “Shadow of the Condor”—utterly awesome.

(Don't get me started on the 1980s version 2.0. Utter bowlderization. The people responsible should be publicly flogged—by the guy who managed the giant lizards in “Dragons of Ashida.”)

**Chuck vs. The Trash « Chuck This** says:
June 23, 2010 at 2:40 pm

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[...] I'd like to introduce you to one of my favorite writers (Ernie's too, I understand), James Lileks, who brings up a good point about the messages children receive. This is what he had to say about a [...]
Miserably hot, but that’s a good thing. Mainly because it’s not miserable for me. If you should have occasion to work at home, the full office regalia is not required; you can sit out back in a loincloth if you like. It’s different if you are a dog, which of course you are not, but my dog is a dog, and insists on sitting outside with me. I have no idea why. There’s not much he might miss, and there’s not much he could do about anything if he wished. It would be bad enough if he went in his Cool Cave of Dirt beneath the treehouse playset, but he sprawls in the sun and pants. Yes, it’s not enough he has to have fur, he has pants. I put him inside, where it is cool; I point to the commode, which has the coldest water in the house should he be so inclined; I tell him to sit and relax. Two minutes later: he’s at the back door, because he forgot where he was just a few minutes ago.

Lessons from dogs: Life always resets the moment the door’s opened.

Well, it’s supposed to cool off a bit, and heavy rains come Wednesday. This will be a relief for my daughter, who’s attending a summer event in a public school that has no air conditioning, and few fans. The kids sit around like day-old lettuce, and sweat. I don’t know why there’s no air conditioning. Other buildings constructed over the last few decades seem to have it, so I
know it’s possible. This is one of the schools where she might go to high school, but every year I drop her off there for a summer program, and think No. Everyone speaks highly of the teachers and all that, and I’m sure they’re a smart, caring bunch, but the place is a dump, and one of the local moms described a trip there during actual high-school hours: she was called a BITCH by a kid for no particular reason, and all the other kids giggled and whooped.

I cannot imagine the misery that would have befallen anyone in my high school had such a word been deployed. In Junior High we had a vice-principal hated for his strict ways: Mr. Lear. Jack Lear. He had short hair and wore a suit and had creased pants and he wasn’t anyone’s friend. He was not interested in being anyone’s friend. He was here to train us, and when the bullets started flying, we’d thank him. Mr. Lear’s preferred method of getting a kid to behave was to lift him up by the short hairs on the nape of his neck, which are directly connected to the portions of the brain that handle pain, fear, humiliation, and resentment. What earned this? Horseplay. Tomfoolery. And, of course, hijinx. But if you said a bad word you walked on tiptoe to his office, held aloft by your neck hairs.

There were never any fights at school, and no one swore out loud.

I was disciplined twice in my entire school career – once for taking over the school library with squirt guns, barricading the doors, and pretending we were a domestic terrorist organization, the SLA. (Speech League of America, a parody of the Symbionese Liberation Army.) For that I was bade to leave the school for a day. In grade school I uttered a ripe Bronx cheer on my arm during orchestra class, and Miss Nelson made me stand in the hall. The principal walked past as I stood there; the shame was unbearable, especially since he had thought well of me since my monogram on Ants in the third grade.

My daughter has never been in trouble; it’s not her style. Today, though, she told me two boys came into their Lego robotics class and took over and didn’t even talk to her: huh, a girl. Did the teacher intercede? No. (The teacher, a high schooler, is also a girl.) I said I’d talk to that teacher, knowing the response I’d get:

No, Dad. I’ll handle it myself.

I like that. But she’s not one of those brassy little numbers who radiates that bratty self-confidence some kids have. You know what I mean: the ones who’ve been told from day one they are automatically entitled to their marvelous self-regard. I like that she has innate humility, and perhaps it’s a result of worrying more about her abilities and progress than the daily state of her self-esteem.

Drifted off for a moment, thinking. Realizing: I was never pushed. My mom let me have a long rope, partly – as my dad told me last time we were home – they didn’t know what to do with me. They let me go where I was interested, but insisted that I do some things I didn’t really want to do., Piano, for
example. I hated to practice, as 99.9% of kids hate to practice. But they made me do it – which is why I can write obvious but adequate jingles for newspaper videos now.

That might have pleased my long-suffering piano teachers. Mr. Lear would have been indifferent. One of those men you cannot possibly imagine listening to music in any form – Wagner, country, bluegrass, blues, rock, anything. But now that I think of it, he might have been the sort of guy who went home to the bachelor apartment, changed from a suit into a short-sleeved shirt, poured himself a Cutty Sark and listened to Yma Sumac while reading Popular Mechanics. You never know.

Updates still sporadic, but hey: here's Comic Sins for the week. And here's Black and White World. Rowr: Angie. See you at Tumblr, which didn’t work today because none of the queued posts auto-posted, and PopCrush!

### 75 RESPONSES TO discipline & initiative

**swschrad** says:
June 23, 2010 at 3:45 pm

physics, physics… if the Law of Perspective is constantly violated in ComicLand, why not the rest?

send in the Newsboy Legion, that'll teach the lavender-pants villains.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
June 23, 2010 at 4:00 pm

*Battle Between the Two Earths*

(That's a relief, more than two could be serious trouble)

I stand here tonight ready to work with you to make Earth stronger. And we have much work to do, because the truth is, we still live on a planet where there are two different Earths…

One, for all of those people who have lived the Earth dream and don't have to worry, and another for most Eartlings, everybody else who struggle to make ends meet every single day. It doesn't have to be that way.

**Baby M** says:
June 23, 2010 at 4:11 pm

@Kev — “I think *all* administrators should be required to teach one class every day. This would go a long way toward keeping the people “at the top” actively engaged with education as it is now, as opposed to 20-30 years ago (which is when a lot of current admins last taught). It would also drive the people without a heart for teaching out of the profession, which would be a good thing.”
As I revealed here the other day, I'm a decommissioned schoolteacher. What drove me to change careers was public school administrators. Little tin gods with hyperactive egos, the lot of 'em.

Normie says:
June 23, 2010 at 4:50 pm

To James and the others who are already lamenting the time when you bid goodbye to your children: Please believe me when I tell you that THEY NEVER REALLY LEAVE. They might change locations briefly, but as someone once said, “They come back – AND THEY BRING MORE!!!”

Once teenagers get a drivers license and a car they get very busy and the only evidence you have of their existence is the dirty laundry that appears in the hamper and the food that disappears from the kitchen.

In our case, we saw our kids more after they moved out then when they lived at home.

browniejr says:
June 23, 2010 at 5:05 pm

bgbear- Who cuts your hair? Is there a mistress you want to deny now?

(Made me laugh!)

Doesn’t a “Battle” imply that we fire back? Looks mostly like a sneak attack on the cover (may be why people are having flashbacks…)

In terms of perspective, the two guys on the roof outside could probably lob a grenade and take out most of twin-Earth’s Africa-the other Earthers must have to struggle because of their weak, puny little bodies!

dcmatthews says:
June 23, 2010 at 5:06 pm

What earned this? Horseplay. Tomfoolery. And, of course, hijinx.

Kev: Possibly even mayhem or hooliganism as well.

What with all the shenanigans and goings-on… (MST3K The Movie)

About that Comic Sins cover: it does make me want to read the story (that’s the job of a good comics cover, duh!). I’d like to find out if that’s simply a symbolic cover, or if we really were being attacked by an Earth the size of a weather balloon.

dcmatthews says:
June 23, 2010 at 5:06 pm

Rats. Forgot to close my italics tag.

Cory says:
June 23, 2010 at 5:21 pm

All you people who couldn’t imagine Neville Brand as a bad guy? – THE MAN WAS AL CAPONE on The Untouchables.
He was the bane of Robert Stack's existence.

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
June 23, 2010 at 5:32 pm

@browniejr: I am as faithful as my good friends Bill Clinton and Al Gore.

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
June 23, 2010 at 6:00 pm

Harvey Korman is the other guy in the meat carving film. He also worked with HGL in the dawn of his career, nudie films IIRC.

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
June 23, 2010 at 6:02 pm

Oops, nonsense comment about Harvey Korman and nudie films was sent to wrong blog. Go on with your lives.

😊

**browniejr says:**
June 23, 2010 at 6:18 pm

bgbear: Korman was in nudie films?!? The Great Gazoo, indeed! (ROFL) 😆

**JamesS says:**
June 23, 2010 at 6:43 pm

  **bgbear (roger h) says:**
  June 23, 2010 at 6:02 pm

  Oops, nonsense comment about Harvey Korman and nudie films was sent to wrong blog. Go on with your lives.

  And yet another window is opened upon the everyday Internet life of an otherwise normal-appearing person...

**hpoulter says:**
June 23, 2010 at 7:01 pm

You can't leave it at that, Roger Bbear. Which blog? Jabootu or another one of the B-Master? I recognize HGL as Herschell Gordon Lewis – I was just reading the review of She-Devils on Wheels on Jabootu last week

**hpoulter says:**
June 23, 2010 at 7:02 pm

er, I meant “gbbear” of course.

**hpoulter says:**
June 23, 2010 at 7:05 pm

And we all sincerely hope that Harvey did not appear nude in any
nudies. Hedley Lamarr, Noooo!

chrisbcritter says:
June 23, 2010 at 7:33 pm

Memories? Oh boy. Sweet Mrs. Rohrhoff. Maddest she got was when some girl in class did something or other and she snapped “That is NOT ladylike!”

Mr. Roschmann – disciplinarian with a decent sense of humor. I gave a wise-guy answer to a question once which got a few laughs. He calmly walked up to me, and I knew he was going to bop me on the head, so I threw my hands over my head. He bopped me in the stomach instead, and when I grabbed my stomach, THEN he bopped me on the head. Perfect Moe Howard timing. Lesson learned: Teacher is top banana; student is stooge.

Cry Terror – good little suspenser although I did notice Inger's Chrysler had New York plates in some scenes and California plates in others.

ssmart says:
June 23, 2010 at 7:35 pm

Harvey Korman nakid, my eyes are bleeding.

Marjorie J Birch says:
June 23, 2010 at 9:02 pm

The Vice Principal at my high school was Mr. Shreck. “Schreck” is German for “terror”, I think. (I did look it up.) Perfect name for him. Very mean looking man — and I have also wondered if they have a warehouse full of vice-principal types.

And yet his school career came to an odd end — he was investigated for the inappropriate use of school facilities — he had a florist business on the side and used the school greenhouse to start some carnations. He resigned, to avoid scandal and embarrassment and continued to raise flowers... as an easily intimidated seventh-grader, I would never have suspected him of doing anything so gentle.

Why were teachers scarier then? The last time I attended a high school reunion, I was musing upon this with a classmate. “Can you believe how we FEARED all those old women?” I asked her. “Nowadays, if some hapless pedagogue dared to say ‘well, you didn't do your homework, you'll have to stay after school to finish it,’ the little moppet would probably lisp 'You'll hear from my lawyer in the morning!’”

kevin says:
June 24, 2010 at 8:40 am

Holy crap James, talk about coincidences. I read this, and then saw the obit in the paper for one Jean F. Leier, whose husband was one Jack Leier.

They met at a ND teachers college, so I do believe it is the same Jack Leier we recall from Ben Franklin Jr. High, circa 1971.

http://www.inforum.com/event/obituary/id/282707/

Jean spent her childhood in Minot and graduated from Minot State Teachers College in 1950. In September of 1950, she married Jack
Leier and moved to Fargo in 1951.

In Fargo, she and Jack raised five children. Jean was a loving wife and mother who was mainly a homemaker but worked as a furrier and seamstress when her children were grown.

After retirement, Jean and Jack spent winters down south and settled in Altamonte Springs, FL in 1999.

Jean is survived by her husband, Jack and children: Michael, Paula, Robert (Rachel), Barbara (Shane) Grovum, and five grandchildren: Anna, Jaclyn, Alison, David in Altamonte Springs and

SeanF says:
June 24, 2010 at 9:34 am

What, no mention of the “Star Trek” connection in “Cry Terror!”?

It's Kenneth Tobey, BTW.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 24, 2010 at 9:46 am

yes, on Jabootu and Herschel Gordon Lewis.

Korman did not appear nude as far as I know.

IMDB only has Korman listed in HGL'd “Living Venus” that may not have been a nudie at all, just lotso bikini and undies so, I may be wrong on a lot of this.

ech says:
June 24, 2010 at 11:37 am

So, I found one good linke to Travellers Premium Company. Google has the October 18, 1952 issue of Billboard, with a blurb about the new Christmas and goodwill gift catalog from them and saying that they needed reps for “their extensive line of gifts and premiums, said Samuel Dorf, president.”

My employer uses one of these companies to handle employment anniversary gifts. You get a catalog in the mail and get to select a gift from those for your number of years of service or below. It includes company logo watches, pins, cuff links, and non-logo stuff like binoculars, kitchen items, etc.

oldtimer says:
June 24, 2010 at 1:40 pm

Jack Lear! He wasn't vice principal yet when I was at Ben Franklin. But I think I had a class from him. English? Science? Can't remember. Odd duck. Seemed real old. Probably all of 30 or so!

Emily says:
June 24, 2010 at 3:52 pm

My daughter's high school was constructed by a man who also builds prisons. It looks like one; big concrete thing. Ugly.

It is, however, one of Newsweek's Top 500 High Schools, and does terrific.
The theory of one teacher is that this is because the special ed kids for the district are housed at this high school. She says the kids pull together and become protective of them, and it starts a special atmosphere.
Sitting in the dojo, watching daughter jab imaginary foes with a long wooden dowel. The fellow at the Chinese restaurant always goods around with her when we come in after class; a few weeks ago he ask if she could break the stick in two and use it to defeat enemies. He did an awesome crazy-face martial arts yell, too.

Too dang much to do tonight, so we will have to content ourselves with some pictures. Saw this at Target last Sunday: Baby Borg! Aw! So cute.
A neighborhood sign I’ve always loved, partly for its simplicity, partly for its ancient term no one opens a chow mein joint anymore.
It’s always a specific form of Asian cuisine, not the general mush of chow mein. I’ve never had the stuff, and associate it with La Choy gloop spooned from a can and topped with crunchy sticks. Speaking of which, a detail from the upcoming Gallery overhaul:

![Image of La Choy ad](https://example.com/image.jpg)

At some point I stopped redesigning the site as it was, and decided to do it all from scratch. This meant deviating from the Key Mission – it’s not all regrettable anymore. It’s mostly regrettable. But it will also be an archive of commercial illustration and recipe book design. So far the “covers” area has about 80 pages, and half as many in the new advertising section – including a very large version of the “Sack o’ Sauce” ad that put this site on the map back in 1996. Or 97. I forget.

From a trip to the mall: another dead store.
This was the last B. Dalton's in town. Once the nation's biggest bookstore chain, I believe. One of the original stores was in this mall; there are no plaques to mark the grave. The original store is now . . . an Apple Store. With iPads with access to more books than the old stores had.

Anyway: long, long day ahead: three radio interviews, the usual blogging, a desperate attempt to get an iPhone without a preorder, a column due, and a video shoot at the office. Oy! How I love it. See you tomorrow.

69 RESPONSES TO jetsam

juanito - John Davey says:
June 24, 2010 at 12:32 pm

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 24, 2010 at 10:08 am

Don't know if he was proud of it, couldn't stand the idea of a little kid with wet hands, or a pervert.

Or perhaps a delightful, charming amalgam of all three?

John Robinson says:
June 24, 2010 at 12:52 pm

That's Betty Furness holding the can of the LaChoy what's-it, right? Thought so.

But whoever put that display together must have had his head firmly up his nether regions. Can you imagine placing the soy sauce
like that in a real grocery store? On a Saturday morning? All it would take is Aunt Melba cutting it a shade too close with her cart, and it's “Cleanup in aisle three!”

Kevin says:
June 24, 2010 at 12:59 pm

You could always get your new iPhone at Walmart, James. No need to contend with the crowds at the Apple Store! 😊

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 24, 2010 at 1:06 pm

No shortage of bookstores here in the South Bay beach communities of LA. There is a Borders and a Barnes and Noble in El Segundo about a mile from where I work, and both of the same at the Del Amo Mall about a mile from where I live. There are two great little second hand book stores even closer, like Book Again. Nice place with an amusing crew of older (than me anyway) ladies who work there.

Brisko says:
June 24, 2010 at 1:19 pm

@ Will

Well, that argument is no defense in the situation I described since both the EB and Gamestop people worked for the same company, and were at one point managed by the same person for while they were both open after the companies' merger and I seriously doubt there was a huge disparity in the hourly wage of the EB and Gamestop employees.

The GS employees were just nice people, the EB people were not.

jamcool says:
June 24, 2010 at 2:34 pm

Don't forget that the other mass-market Chinese food was born in Minnesota… Chun King, created by the man who later created Jeno's pizza rolls.

Borderman says:
June 24, 2010 at 2:52 pm

Chinese food and David Carradine's Kung-Fu series: When it was on Saturday nights during the last season (1974-75) there was only one Chinese restaurant in town (although there are a couple hundred today) and unbelievably it did not do take-out. (See what lack of competition brings?) I got into a habit on Saturday nights of having the next best thing, frozen Chinese dinners (La Choy, maybe?), ready to go at showtime. Quai Chang Caine kicked posterior on bigots and bullies across the Old West and I slurped reheated chow mein in front of the TV. Dee-lish!

The comments about Keye Luke (Kung-Fu's blind Master Po) also playing Charlie Chan's Number One Son gave me pause. Thought that had been covered here recently in relation to a 100 Mysteries film, and that Number One Son is/was Victor Sen Yung, a.k.a. Hop Sing of Bonanza fame. Thanks to an IMDB/Wikipedia one-two punch,
I have learned the role was played by both Mr. Luke and Mr. Sen Young! What are the chances of that? In 1940s Hollywood pretty good, apparently.

Sen Yung first made his mark in the 1938 film Charlie Chan in Honolulu, as the Chinese detective's "number two son," Jimmy Chan. In this movie, Sidney Toler replaced the recently deceased Warner Oland as Charlie Chan and Sen Yung replaced Oland's "number one son" Lee, who had been played by Keye Luke. Sen Yung played Jimmy Chan in 11 Charlie Chan films between 1938 and 1942.

Gee, Pop!

Kurt says:
June 24, 2010 at 3:08 pm

Does anyone remember Pickwick Book Shops? They were a small, Southern California that B. Dalton bought back in the early '70s, I think. I remember us stopping at one near Ventura, CA, while on a family trip. My Mom bought a copy of "Paddington Bear" for me. Haven't thought about that in years. I really miss the small bookstores in shopping malls, as well as record stores.

Lars Walker says:
June 24, 2010 at 3:47 pm

I remember Pickwick. I bought my copy of _Dracula_ in one, long, long ago. The book was still pretty new back then.

Charlie Young says:
June 24, 2010 at 4:18 pm

If you're ever in the Portland, OR area, check out Powell's Books, the largest independent new and used book store in the world. Sorry for the blatant commercial plug, but the place is remarkable. It covers a whole city block with two stories. Definitely worth a visit if you happen to go by it.

shesnailie says:
June 24, 2010 at 5:21 pm

_@_v – snailleyville has a couple sweet used bookstores- one downtown and one a few blocks away from the college. even better is the annual library book sale. i collect old urban planning and city picture books and have been able to find a remarkable number of them around town.

here's one i actually have myself posted online...

http://citynoise.org/article/10552

swschrad says:
June 24, 2010 at 5:49 pm

@jamcool: so was LaChoy.
Jeno Palucci of Duluth, to my recollection, did LaChoy, Jeno's, Chun King, and Micheletta's lines. also had a sandwich line that he ran briefly from the docks, can't remember the name of it.
presently his family is still in charge of Micheletta's/budget gourmet/Yu Sing frozen foods.
not bad for a boy from the mines.

hpoulter says:
June 24, 2010 at 6:17 pm
Snailie – you're coming out of your shell! Very interesting posts on citynoise. Thanks for the link.

Borderman says:
June 24, 2010 at 9:16 pm
My post from this afternoon was “awaiting moderation” and never did make it. Nothing political, just Chinese food, Keye Luke and Victor Sen Young. They both played Charlie Chan's #1 son according to some IMDB digging around. I used to eat re-heated frozen Chinese dinners, Chung King or La Choy don't recall, and watch David Carradine's original Kung Fu series because the solitary Chinese restaurant in my college town in 1974 didn't do take-out. I wonder if this will need moderation as well.

Borderman says:
June 24, 2010 at 9:21 pm
OK–well, am unmoderated now so apparently something else unintentionally evil and antisocial got my original black balled. So. Never mind, then.

shesnailie: I remember that view looking up at 30 Rock through the statue's balancing act from our first trip to New York in 1956. I was 4. I recall it exactly the way that picture has it. Funny how that stuff works out.

efurman says:
June 24, 2010 at 11:23 pm
swschrad says:
“1 also had to leave home to find that other-culture food can be gotten tasty and delicious, with no cans in sight.”

I had a bizarre experience that was the opposite of this. Several years ago a friend of mine took me to a German restaurant. He had been stationed in Germany while in the Army and told me this restaurant was very authentic and had excellent food. He recommended dishes and when I got my order everything I saw was familiar. To me this was just food. It seems my mother had been serving me German food my whole life. Though she didn't make homemade sauerkraut in the basement like my grandparents did.

June 25 Morning Roundup « The Heavy Table – Minneapolis-St. Paul and Upper Midwest Food Magazine and Blog says:
June 25, 2010 at 4:27 am
[...] Table, find out DeRusha's problem with vegetarians working as restaurant servers, and Lileks digs the Cathay Chow Mein sign. It
does, in fact, possess a certain faded glory. var addthis_pub = "heavytable"; var [...]

GabD says:
June 28, 2010 at 2:42 pm

You haven’t had Cathay?? You must! It doesn’t look like much, but a wonderful neighborhood joint. Not your average Chinese carryout! Try the Pork fried rice, egg foo young, and the basic chicken chop suey. I grew up near there, and it was the only bought-out food my folks would bring home. Living away now, I miss chow mein nights dearly.

Chris Turner says:
June 28, 2010 at 2:47 pm

Two comments.

Cathay Chow Mein on the corner of Nicollet and Diamond Lake Road in Minneapolis was where my parents fed four boys almost every Friday night during the 60’s and 70’s. I drove by it for the first time in decades just last month and was pleasantly surprized it still exists. I remember it as delicious, particularly when drenched in La Choy soy sauce.

I believe the first B. Dalton opened in Southdale Mall in Edina. It was considered quite the book store at the time. I believe someone in the Dayton’s marketing department coined the name “B. Dalton” because it sounded bookish. I spent most of my paper route money there. It went national — hundreds of stores — and was headquartered at 78th and Highway 100 in Bloomington. In 1983 it acquired Pickwick Books. I worked at the general office at the time, and transferred to the Pickwick headquarters out around 94th Street in Bloomington. I never understood the reason for Pickwick – it didn’t have a niche – it was simply a smaller B. Dalton. Apparently, nobody else did either. It folded after I left the book business for good and went to graduate school.

Two references to my past in one Lilek’s column.
WHY A STORK?
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! […]

Thanks for dropping by!
Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Every time it rains (which it didn’t)

So I’m sitting in the backyard working, and hear a sound that can only be explained by a gremlin on the roof whacking the gutter with a wooden dowel. I walk up to the house, shout HEY. The sound stops. Okay, mission accomplished. Back to the chair, back to writing. The sound resumes. I walk back, grab a tree branch, and pull it up and down, so rustling ensues. A squirrel pokes his head over the edge of the roof. He stares down at me. I stare up at him. We go on like this for a while. You hate to lose a staredown with a squirrel.

The situation is clear: I am much, much bigger, but he is up there. The only way I can convince him to stop doing whatever the hell he is doing? Prove my ability to be up there. I grab a tennis ball the dog chewed five years ago and has been hanging around the backyard ever since, surviving snow, thaw, snow, thaw, rain, sleet, snow, and so on, and I throw it up. It hits a window and leaves a big round dirty mark. Sigh. Again: it nearly hits the squirrel, who runs off. Mission accomplished. Back to the chair.

I mention this to my wife later, and she sits up: he was after the window boxes. She’d just replanted them the other day after the little bastiche ripped up the flowers. The sound I heard was the knocking of the planters against the rim of the window boxes. She checked, and sure enough: dirt strewn everywhere, plant-parts hurled on the roof over the porch. The look in her eyes told me that if I rigged up tripwires and claymore mines and she had to squeegee squirrel off the windows, that would be acceptable. That would be fine.

The best way to sum up the day: was part of a podcast interview with John Yoo, then went to the office and did a video interview with the paper’s music critic about Justin Beiber. The ability to speak about anything for four minutes is not a useless skill. It’s the five-minute point that gives you sweats–
oh no, I've exhausted my ability to spin conventional wisdom and obvious talking points as softball questions or springboards for the guest to expound. Better fake a heart attack.

The day began early: Gnat had to get to the demarcation spot for camp, and we had been instructed to be there NO LATER THAN 7:30. The buses don't rumble off until 8, but everyone has to sign in, choose a bus. We got up and out in 17 minutes, made the queue, then milled about: festival atmosphere, all the kids bouncy and happy and ready for camp, except the few weepers and the pale kids already prepared to bolt up the Cheerios due to car sickness. The doors hissed open; the kids clambered on, and we all engaged in pantomimes for five minutes, waving, making sad boo-hoo miss you faces (daughter drew lines down her cheeks with her fingers to indicate tears) then off they went for a week in the woods. I got in my car and sped to Uptown to see how long the line might be at the Apple store.

Looooooooooong. Or, in the tautological way the web puts things, Long Line is Long. Drove to Southdale. Looooonger. Decided to order online. Really, I can wait. But by now it was, oh, 8:35, and I was woozy with hunger and lack of sleep. The day stretched ahead: three interviews, one video piece, one column, five blog posts, and whatever else came up. (Something did: got a column request from the New York Post tonight, so it's frant-o-type after this is done.) While driving home I listened to the XM old radio channel; a Phillip Marlowe, one of my favorites. It's been long enough since I listened to the show, and I've forgotten most of them, so it's time to listen again. They don't have the carefree self-amusement of the Sam Spade shows, but Gerald Mohr is a great Marlowe, the best as far as I'm concerned. No one can ever capture the character of the books, the introspection and the reserve. Bogart came close, but he was Bogart, and that overshadows the character for modern eyes. (He also played Spade, of course – which is like the same actor playing Batman and Spiderman in the space of a few years.)

Did most of my writing outside, and took a break to look through a copy of American Home I picked up at an antique store the other day. 1965.

The last gusts of the confident post-war consumer culture are still blowing; horrible synthetics are starting to infect the decorator's toolkit (Faux-brick vinyl flooring! The warmth of brick and the comfort of vinyl! Or vice versa) and the appliances really have nothing new to offer except different colors. It
Every time it rains (which it didn’t) | The Bleat.

still seems grown-up, but it's all waiting to be knocked away by Mod and Fab and Groovy and With-It. Some of the fonts gave me a brief pang of nostalgia:

That somehow became a Christmas font, didn't it? Anyway: the magazine had a big layout on a new planned community called “Reston,” which was going to change the way people lived. And it did, if people lived in Reston, I suppose. It looks grim today, what with all the raw naked poured concrete, but those were the styles that pointed to the sensible, technocratic future. I spent a year living in an enormous project designed in the brutal concrete style, and it was like a machine for grinding souls into wet paste. Planned communities work best when the visuals go backwards, not forwards.

Anyway – have to finish two pieces and maybe try to finish “Pennies from Heaven,” a spectacular misfire of a movie I saw in the theater. The audience – such as it was; word got out fast – hated it from the very moment Steve Martin opened his mouth and lipsynced a song, because this was not Wild and Crazy. I’ve seen the original BBC Dennis Potter version, and it’s remarkable, if depressing; not as good as “Singing Detective,” but good. The American version is just wrong, wrong, wrong – Steve Martin’s character is, well, a jerk, and while he’s good enough, the whole thing is dank. The soundtrack, however, is exceptional, and constituted my introduction to 1930s pop music. I can still sing the title song from start to finish, and the sad longing version is still the best.

But then . . . there’s this.

No one knew he could do that. Then there’s this:
Enough people may have recognized that shot; “Nighthawks” was a popular painting in 1981. But then there’s this:


The lead “visual consultant” – and the movie’s associate producer – was the great Ken Adam, who designed all the great lairs in the James Bond movies, as well as the War Room in “Strangelove.” And he was a Hopper fan? Nothing inconsistent in that. Variety, life’s spice, etc.

By the way: was the Nighthawks diner a real place? One man’s search to find it.

New today: 100 Mysteries, of course, and four cigarette ads in 30s Magazine
Every time it rains (which it didn’t) | The Bleat.

Pass it along, if you wish

97 RESPONSES TO every time it rains (which it didn’t)

Baby M says:
June 25, 2010 at 12:53 pm


bgbear (roger h) says:
June 25, 2010 at 12:57 pm

*when is James going to send Gnat to Typeface Re-education Camp, hee, hee, hee.*

These here fonts are approved for your use. Any camper uses an unapproved font spends a night in the box.

Any camper using comic sans or hobo spends a night in the box.

Any camper mixes more than two fonts spends a night in the box.

fizzbin says:
June 25, 2010 at 1:01 pm

Man, oh man!! Crossdotcrud must have swallowed the whole bottle of blue pills. No soldier or Marine I've ever talked to fought to "...uphold the noblest American ideals". That sort of thinking gives rear echelon Mi's comfort and warm fuzzies, I suppose, but, believe me, it never enters our minds when the sh*t his the fan. The noblest of American ideals applies only to our fellow Americans, even to Crossdotturd types (oh, my bad, tee hee), but does not apply to our enemies.

Pardon me while I take a chill pill.

Ahhh, much better. In battle, American Warriors fight for three things: 1) for their comrades, 2) for their own survival, and 3) the survival of the American people. In order to accomplish those three things we must locate the enemy, close with the enemy, and KILL the enemy. Wars are never won by telling the enemy our ideals are more noble than their ideals.

Re: water boarding. In a different blog, a heated discussion took place on the subject. I made the mistake of replying that I did not understand why a few people got their skivvies in a twist over it because at least we were now using purified water, heh. In Da Big Nam, dirty water mixed with crushed red peppers was used. Everybody talked, real quick!!

Anyway, I can tell you from personal experience that when it's your a#s that's potentially going to get greased, any thoughts about sacrifices for noble ideals evaporate.

I suppose I'd best stop ranting. I will make myself available for pummeling the eighth Friday of every month.

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 25, 2010 at 1:29 pm

@fizzbin, heh-heh you almost said REMF.
Every time it rains (which it didn’t) | The Bleat.

GardenStater says:
June 25, 2010 at 1:32 pm

@fizzbin: Amen, brother. Thanks for your service.

Another Guy says:
June 25, 2010 at 1:50 pm

Steve Martin is a renowned collector of modern art, and Hopper is one of his favorites. I wonder if he influenced the set design, or that set design influenced him. I believe I remember reading an interview with him that stated something to the effect of “In the late 1980s I gave up cocaine and took up art. The coke was a considerably less expensive pastime.”

If you read an article that Mr. Martin has signed to do something on the order of “Mr. Magoo, the Musical”, expect that somewhere in the world, a Chagal, Mondrian, or Hopper has just gone up for sale.

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 25, 2010 at 1:54 pm

fizzbin, you do me proud with your thanks, but I should make full disclosure, I never served in the military, just in the blue para-military domestically here. Most of the guys I worked with were Viet Nam era vets liek yourself from whom I picked up all manner of phrases like di di mau, you numbah 10, and some others you and I have exchanged some traffic over. Just wanted to clarify, and thanks again for calling me brother. I never had any brothers, but I do have two great sisters.

shesnailie says:
June 25, 2010 at 1:55 pm

_@_v – re: the comic posted on lint… i didn’t know a surfaced u-boat could or would bother to fire a pink torpedo from just below the conning tower on a perpendicular course to its intended target. usually when they surface, it's to give the deck gun crew some target practice…

i'd love to be some leftard on tv go into his bushy mc-chimpler rant just as a report comes about how gw died whilst pulling some kids from a burning car wreck – bonus point lulz if the kids were of some minority…

shesnailie says:
June 25, 2010 at 1:56 pm

_@_v – correction…

i'd love to see some leftard on tv go into his bushy mc-chimpler rant…

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 25, 2010 at 2:08 pm

@shesnailie: if the Rethuglians had not deregulated the auto industry we would the necessary safety equipment to keep the car from catching on fire!

if the GWB and his oil buddies had not blocked clean energy development, the car would not be running on flammable hydrocarbons!

Pencilpal says:
June 25, 2010 at 2:38 pm

@Another guy – Scene 1, Act 1: Mr. Magoo squints at a Mondrian: “Why, what a lovely quilt! What's it doing hanging on the wall?”
Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
June 25, 2010 at 2:38 pm

Re the Lint comic... dang if the baddies aren't decked out in purple again! Whazzup, they makin' some kind of statement? See a dude in solid purple, you cross the street and go the other way.

browniejr says:
June 25, 2010 at 3:15 pm

@bgbear- Indeed, if not for the EVIL right wing, then the car would be powered by modern high powered batteries... “MY EYES! The acid from the burst batteries has burned my flesh!”

@Pencilpal- Snort.

fizzhin says:
June 25, 2010 at 3:33 pm

@GardenStater... thank you very much. It was an honor and a privilege to be of service.

@Mark E Hurling... IIRC, your father was a Marine. Being brought up by a Marine, you qualify! And, being part of The Thin Blue Line (as I was), double qualifies you.

BTW, rumor has it that the civilian version of REMF means Real Enormous Middle Finger. Could that be true?

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 25, 2010 at 3:47 pm

Well is my face red! This is what happens when you don't pay sufficient attention to who's posting what about whom. All I saw in GardenStater's post was your name, fizzbin. My apologies for fatuous remarks about myself here. Thank you none the less.

fizzbin, you're right about the father thing though. 17 years of active duty in basic training until I left home.

As for the civilian version, I think we'll have to consult with the EPA in the Gulf and sadly it appears, the Puddle Pirates (USCG) who do not appear to be covering themselves with glory there. I always thought of them as kind of like the fire department guys, everyone liked to see them, entirely unlike the boys in blue. They seem to attract the same personality type as the fire guys too. By which I mean nothing negative, just a different kind of service ethic.

Borderman says:
June 25, 2010 at 4:16 pm

when it's your a#s that's potentially going to get greased, any thoughts about sacrifices for noble ideals evaporate.

Nice one, fizzbin. Am still agog and amazed by lefties who expound on a subject of which they haven't a single dram of information. I'll have to get over that someday. In the meantime I truly enjoy your posts. Saw a t-shirt yesterday, “I'd rather be waterboarding.” Yow-zuh.

Raymond Chandler, the creator of Philip Marlowe, once said only Bogart could do the role justice. I'm only passing that along.

Lived in Alexandria and commuted to my high school job in Reston on Saturdays, Jan.-Sept. 1968, for a start up electronics firm that I see still has a phone listing at the same address. Was so trendy to mention you worked in Reston back then. As if you were pals with Ayn Rand or something.

DougInWA says:
June 25, 2010 at 5:09 pm
BTW, absolutely loved your Ricochet podcast interview. What did you use for the interview, tech-wise? Skype? Which microphone? etc. It sounded wonderful.

madCanada says:
June 25, 2010 at 6:31 pm

@ Lileks, re Hopper.

I was cruising innocently through L.A. the other day via Google StreetView, and something caught my eye. THIS place looks pretty exactly (maybe?) like the exterior of Hopper's 1929 painting “Chop Suey.” I have no evidence that Hopper ever was in L.A., but this sure looks like the place.

http://maps.google.ca/maps?hl=en&ie=UTF8&ll=34.049577,-118.239742&spn=0,0.015578&z=16&layer=c&cbll=34.049643,-118.239841&panoid=va0wmsyKILsq4wT4M5b_Sw&cbp=12,91.61,,1,-8.18

madCanada says:
June 25, 2010 at 6:33 pm

The two flappers, of course, would be inside, 2nd storey, in the room just to the left of “SUEY”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chop_Suey_(painting)

Bob Lipton says:
June 25, 2010 at 6:43 pm

My favorite Walken story is that he’s waiting around while the director is conferring with the DP and finally asks why. “We’re figuring out the lighting to make you look creepy.” “I can do that without lighting.”

As for a great Angela Lansbury role: Mrs. Lovit in SWEENEY TODD.

Bob

GardenStater says:
June 25, 2010 at 8:58 pm

@Bob Lipton: Check out Walken in “Scotland, PA.” Brilliant. Also “Who Am I This Time?”

As to Lansbury as Mrs Lovett: again, brilliant, especially opposite Len Cariou as Sweeney.

fizzbin says:
June 26, 2010 at 11:25 am

@Borderman… “I'd rather be waterboarding” LOL!!!! I don't put stickers on my truck, but I may make an exception for that one 😊
Thank you for your post.

Crabtree says:
June 26, 2010 at 5:02 pm

That Ricochet podcast was a little weird for me. Athens, GA is home and it was nice to hear them talking about it when I'm halfway across the country. The hotel that Yoo mentioned is about three blocks from my house!

Kevin Pollak does a GREAT Chistopher Walken. Actually, he does a great everyone and is recognized as the best Shatner.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7zEscBHRzs is one of my favorite Walken stories.

Mag says:
June 26, 2010 at 10:38 pm

The Chop Suey resemblance is fascinating. An hour’s googling found
Every time it rains (which it didn't) | The Bleat.

no mention of Hopper in LA.

hpoulter says:
June 28, 2010 at 5:16 am

No updates! Musta been a good weekend. It was lousy here – 100 degrees (and, I discovered, 116 in the attic – no wonder my electric bill is through the roof).

Karen in PA says:
June 28, 2010 at 6:08 am

Squirrel advice for your wife – the only way I've been able to stop squirrels from digging in all newly planted pots. Cover every bit of potting soil with cocoa bean mulch. I think the smell blocks the “fresh soil here” message.

juanito - John Davey says:
June 28, 2010 at 7:31 am

hpoulter says:
June 28, 2010 at 5:16 am

No updates! Musta been a good weekend. It was lousy here – 100 degrees (and, I discovered, 116 in the attic – no wonder my electric bill is through the roof).

Which is why I've been avoiding pulling a few hundred feet of CAT6 in my attic. Waiting for winter…

Russ Shackelford says:
June 28, 2010 at 7:32 am

…and then there was Fess Parker playing Daniel Boone and Davey Crockett. That one confused me for years as a kid.

Brisko says:
June 28, 2010 at 7:46 am

@Russ

Are you related to Rusty Shackelford?

Also, new new Bleat on a Monday? I am freaking out, man. I am freaking. out. man.

Al Federber says:
June 28, 2010 at 8:59 am

In 1964-65, the nation endured the lamentable pairing of peacock blue and lime green. Not just in interior decorating, but also in clothing and sundry other products. It was hellish.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 28, 2010 at 9:40 am

Suppose to be a hot one today and I get to the office and the air conditioning is out and feels like it has been all weekend. Also the too smelliest ladies in the office are here. eek.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 28, 2010 at 9:47 am

Oh, and I blame skwerls for lack of update.

Baby M says:
June 28, 2010 at 9:58 am
@Al Federber — And yet, awful as it was, it was nothing compared to the horrors to come a decade later, when Avocado Green and Harvest Gold formed their unholy partnership.

**Wramblin’ Wreck** says:
June 28, 2010 at 10:12 am

No update? – Blame Global Warming!

**Wramblin’ Wreck** says:
June 28, 2010 at 10:24 am

Still no update? – Time to blame “W”

**Joe Broderick** says:
June 28, 2010 at 10:41 am

I blame the wingbats and the moonnuts!

**browniejr** says:
June 28, 2010 at 10:45 am

I blame society- society made me what I am!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKiaS0lh-uo

**browniejr** says:
June 28, 2010 at 10:47 am

Perhaps Mr. Lileks got his car repossessed, and has to deal with the guy at the repo lot:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76RWWl01JMc&feature=related

**juanito - John Davey** says:
June 28, 2010 at 11:40 am

I blame the accidental raw octopus ingestion.

Bleatage is my methadone. I think I got the shakes.....

**xrayguy** says:
June 28, 2010 at 11:51 am

Yep, I believe Mr. Walken can do that, didja see him in Hairspray?? By the way, that little “man-sandwich grind” they do showed up in Cabaret on Broadway later.

**swschrad** says:
June 28, 2010 at 1:16 pm

yeah, well, pulling wrenches Sunday on the Taurus, I don't feel much like posting, either. got the right side front end rebuilt, and then sheared off one of the strut tower stud bolts at the end.

I have an e-scream in at Monroe to see if this is really, truly, actually an evil thing. and to see if they actually do visit their e-support box. many companies don't.

**RPD** says:
June 28, 2010 at 1:19 pm

I just got rid of my Harvest Gold washer dryer set. I liked them better than the bland white all such machines seem to be now. Still 37 years of service from my HG machines is nothing to cry about, and only the dryer really seemed to be giving up.

**hollypr** says:
June 28, 2010 at 1:56 pm
What is up with no Bleatage today?

swschrad says:
June 28, 2010 at 2:09 pm

@hollypr: Friday our gracious host posited that there would be a little addition Monday.
this appears to be as little as possible 😞
I don't recall that he specified a year, however.

Nancy says:
June 28, 2010 at 2:12 pm

You know he warned us there’d be days like this—and then kept posting. So we are utterly unprepared. Silly me, but I worry—especially after the raw seafood.:-D

GardenStater says:
June 28, 2010 at 3:27 pm

@RPD: 37 years is a good long time for a washer/dryer. It's what I expect from my appliances. Which is why I get so ticked off that my oven (less than five years old) is on the fritz, and requires $200 in repairs.

These things should last forever! (Or at least 20 years.)

Paul in NJ says:
June 30, 2010 at 9:38 pm

Broken page alert:

http://www.lileks.com/30s/30smagads/cigs/22.html

There’s no ‘there’ there.

Every time it rains (which it didn’t) | The Bleat.

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?
Went up to Fargo for a day to see my dad. His wife was out, so I figured I'd keep him company for a night, grab a steak, see how things were. The drive up was longer than usual, thanks to insane cone deployment around St. Cloud: they were having a big air show, and signs for miles predicted congestion along the lines of people fleeing Paris from the Nazis, but by the time I got there everyone had arrived and parked and was sitting down with their skulls craned. The road was divided into two lanes: general and VIP parking. There was no option for “Passing Through,” so if I had been earlier I would have sat there for hours. But no: everything went at posted speeds. Which is the problem. Who wants to drive at the posted speed? It's summer, the road's dry, the sun's out: GO!
So I drove behind a pickup that poked along at a timorous pace. Couldn't pass – the cones were placed so close together you couldn't go around, and the cones extended for eleven miles.

It seemed like a lot of cones.

Stopped at St. Cloud for a bite, since I was famished; back on the second leg, which takes me up to Wadena. They got hit with a tornado a few weeks ago, and thank heavens the downtown was spared.

The damage elsewhere was bad, and I don't mean to minimize their losses, but you can rebuild houses and high schools. Old intact downtowns are the heart and soul of small towns, and when they're destroyed so much of the town's history just dies in the rubble.

Pushed on. The third leg always takes me through Detroit Lakes, and I like to stop at the antique mall. Look at the old things I'm glad I don't collect, because I'd have no room. Like empty soda bottles. Bought – sigh – some matchbooks and some old cookbooks. Because I don't have enough of those. One of the items had no price, and the clerks stood around in a state of confusion: what to charge? I pointed out how the others of similar vintage were a dollar, but this one had more color and illustrations, and I'd go three.

“It's in a plastic bag, though,” said one clerk.

True. It was. Perhaps for no reason? She got the box from which I got the pamphlet, and we found several others of substantially lesser value, also in plastic bags. That seemed to ease their mind. Three dollars it was.

Hahahahah! Fools! It's a rare pamphlet I've been trying to find for years! It's worth fifty, sixty dollars! HAHAHAHAH

Just kidding.

When I got into town I picked up my dad and we went to my sister's for steaks, right off the grill. Sat in the backyard and watched the sun go down. Afterwards, just for fun, Dad and I went to the fireworks stores on the edge of town. They had the faintly seedy air of a carnival that pitches up right outside of city limits; didn't help that one had the name of Generous Jerry's,
which just sounds like you're going to be taken for everything. It's like putting “Honest” in your company's name: people assume the opposite. But the prices were quite good, and they had coupon specials, and one could certainly get one's fill:

That's a three-hundred-dollar box of fireworks. They had shells and rockets, too. A fella could spend a dollar or two there.

We walked outside, and I saw something I am almost ashamed to say I've forgotten. Living in the city you don't see rain approaching like you do in the desert or the prairie.
In the city you read rumors in the clouds over your house, above the trees; the clouds prepare the way, the wind stirs up an oration for the approaching majesty – all kneel! – and then the rain comes in, rolls over, rolls past. You never see the rain you don’t get. In the prairie you watch the rain in the distance, watch it fall miles away, and it seems as if it has a will and a purpose, as if it’s chosen that place, not yours. The clouds almost look alive, as if they’re grazing, a great and unnamable beast.

We drove back into town, heading towards a rainbow that arced up to Valhalla itself, and you wonder how far the first human who pursued the rainbow got before he realized the folly of finding it, and turned back. Or whether it vanished before he could tell he would never find it. At some point we stopped pursuing it. We knew better. Knowledge always kills a mystery,
but there's something to be said for the folly of “perhaps” than the rational certainty of knowing we can’t. Your mind still plays with the beautiful chimera, though, and you wonder is there another side? Does someone facing me ten miles away see it from the other side? It's not over the rainbow Dorothy went. It was the other side.

Had to get some gas, so we went to the station.
I filled up and paid for it. (Point of pride: I’ll not take your gas, dad. I can pay for it.) They just put in new pumps, and when we drove up there was a car at every one of them: good to see. In the old days the company whose brand you carried would pay for the pumps, but not anymore, and those pumps cost money. People have no idea what independent businessmen pay out to make sure you can put your card in the slot and get hydrocarbons to make your vehicle run. In cold climates snow builds up around the card reader, and when people insert the card it pushes snow into the circuitry, and the snow melts, and things short. It costs tens of thousands of dollars to replace the pumps. They make pennies on the gallon. I know everyone would be happy if we all consumed less gas and it cost more, but the end result would be the end of many small gas stations, with local owners, replaced by pumps at Wal-Mart. And I guarantee RJ’s is going to pay better than Wal-Mart. But I digress.

He showed me the new truck – fleet is up to 13 vehicles, I believe. We went back to his house, and he turned on the old Classic Country station on the cable TV, and we had a drink and talked. It was a good night.

Got up early, had a brisk breakfast; I filed three blog posts for later distribution, we shook hands, and I headed off by nine. Took a hella long time to get back, and I don’t know why, but it did. The miles just didn’t go down well; it was like eating molasses, but some trips are like that. I pulled off the road twice when I had a good cellphone signal to call up the work blog and fire off the posts, something that always seems so marvelously futuristic. In Wadena I pulled over in the park by the tracks to call the office, and a train barreled through as I was talking: just held up the phone to give an office worker the sound of the Great World Beyond, the siren blowing that perfect chord, the National Anthem of Anywhere But Here, then the wheels on the rails, clankCLANK, clankCLANK, clankCLANK, then the fussy annoyed aftermath when the commotion has blown through and the signals ding-ding and raise their arms with rote theatrical annoyance. Well that was certainly something, wasn’t it. Such a production.

The XM old radio channel kept me amused all the way back. Didn’t hit the iPod. On the way up, it’s different; heading up Ten, I’m always heading into the Point of Release, the moment when I’m halfway between two homes, the place where I grew up and the place where I live. This road is the line between the two, and unlike the interstate it’s not a bland broad ribbon that exists to get you from the start of your trip to the end - it’s a working road, a farmer’s road, a road most take in small rations, either to get from your small town to their small town, or a road you take to get to the other road that gets you to the cabin, or your parent’s farm, or a nephew’s graduation, or an uncle’s funeral. But for me it’s the only road now, and I wonder how many others start in the cities and end up in Fargo, just because they want the scenery, the towns, the WELCOME TO sign with the badges for Lions and Kiwanis, the necessity of easing your foot off the gas because you’re passing through a hamlet with 262 souls and there’s a blinking yellow over the intersection, and you slow down for the same reason that some people used
to doff their hat when they passed a graveyard. You're always alone on the interstate; you're never alone on Ten.

Two hours into the trip I killed the radio and turned on the iPod; hit shuffle. I always learn what I own when I go for the random. In this case: something I held in total English-major contempt back in college, but now? The sun was bright, the road bone dry, I was dead center between leaving and arriving, and oh hell yes, turn it up; crank down the windows; put a hand to scoop the wind and yell and grin and floor it, pal. Ruins, floods, flowers: summer in America. Drive.

Pass it along, if you wish

71 RESPONSES TO highway ten again

RebeccaH says:
June 29, 2010 at 12:25 pm

I love your road trip posts. Owing to circumstances, I spent almost my entire life moving from place to place. Now, in my dotage, I've been in the same house for twenty years, and sometimes it makes me feel like the antiseptic halls with the hand rails are just around the corner, there just is that hunger to get in the car and go.

FYI, there is no other side of a rainbow. There's only this side. As it should be.

nixmom says:
June 29, 2010 at 12:27 pm

I've had the opportunity to drive to St Cloud both on Interstate 94 and Highway 10 in the last few weeks. Driving Highway 10 always makes me think of this blog and trips to Fargo–which I've only ever done once (on my way to Grand Forks), and James is absolutely right: you are never alone on Highway 10. It's a much more personal, interesting drive.
Max says:
June 29, 2010 at 12:28 pm

Jim,

Great Bleat! More like they were when I began reading it in the ‘90s, funny, informative, poignant, all at the same time. Glad you dad is doing well and have a great day!

DerKase says:
June 29, 2010 at 12:31 pm

When I was an underagrad at Iowa State in the 70s, one of my friends was a meterology major. Apparently, all meterology majors were required to predict the next day's weather. Whoever got it closest won brownie points or something. Anyway, I told him all he needed to do was call somebody in Omaha every day and ask what the weather was like. That would be the weather in Ames next day.

Patrick says:
June 29, 2010 at 12:46 pm

The road trip posts makes me want to take a road trip. Primarily, to towns I've once lived in, to see how much they've changed.

As for seeing the rain off in the distance on the prairie, I remember my great-granddad teaching me that when I was a wee lad of 7 or 8. It never really stuck until about 10 years ago, when I'd be driving down the country road to the old farm house we lived in (US Hwy. 11, heading towards Monticello, GA, birthplace of Trisha Yearwood), and across the vast fields and just over the pine trees I would see that line of rain. I knew it was coming my way, or had already passed over.

Even as recently as last week on the way home from work, while driving down the interstate, if I'm in the right spot, I can see the rain as it's still over in Alabama or west Georgia, and somewhere between where I am sitting now on the highway, and my house, we are likely to meet. I'd prefer us not to meet up in the middle of the highway, but if we must, we must. And I will dodge all trick questions the storm will try to dish out.

swschrad says:
June 29, 2010 at 1:10 pm

as a little guy, bouncing along in the back seat of the station wagon in the 60s, we'd make highway 10 three or four times a year, from Fargo to Iowa and back.

busy, busy, and two lanes at the time.

wonderful when I-94 was stubbed out of the twin cities... we'd cut off at Rogers, take 100 past much of the city, and ride down 218. later, I-35.

it was a much saner ride to take the interstates when they were finished.

yet we now have a son just off 10 around Clear Lake, so in the few remaining trips back to Fargo ahead of the wife and I, we almost always cut back to 10 for the last leg.

the folks are now both gone, and the house is on the market, so those trips are short-numbered.
with road work all the (!) over the place, you don't lose that much more time taking 10. we've got what might be second to last trip for a long time in a week or so. on the way back, might as well do it on 10.

will still have a sister in Fargo, but it will be like a farewell tour.

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
June 29, 2010 at 2:17 pm

@BabyM, you are a caution! “…mess of cottage..” Time to clean the coffee spew off the screen again.

One time, ONE TIME, I persuaded the family to take the US Highway instead of the Interstate. Every ten minutes, and/or every – single – stoplight, I was treated to, “so, is THIS what you wanted to see?”

Sigh.

Kevin says:
June 29, 2010 at 2:42 pm

@BabyM– excellent pun! (And many people have never considered this, but since puns are biblical, they are indeed the highest form of humor!)

And I must agree with others, that the writing in this bleat today was simply sublime. To be able to toss this off with such guileless effortlessness, day after day after day– We are privileged indeed, to have such a fount (or even such a font, knowing his intense preferences).

Bob Lipton says:
June 29, 2010 at 3:19 pm

I grew up on Long Island, and this video makes home look mountainous.

Great pictures of the clouds on the prairies.

Bob

swschrad says:
June 29, 2010 at 4:11 pm

@Bob Lipton: the mountain removal project went well, didn’t it? who says government projects don’t get it done?

Hal says:
June 29, 2010 at 4:13 pm

Driving through the New Zealand countryside in 2003 I was amazed to keep finding little towns that looked almost identical to what you might find on HW 10. A couple of blocks of two story brick buildings, with a cafe, an Ice Cream stand, a feed store, and a farm equipment dealership…

Love New Zealand.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 29, 2010 at 4:39 pm

Flying Denver and then driving to Nebraska next week. Look
forward to the flatness.

**GardenStater** says:
June 29, 2010 at 6:30 pm

Speaking of great non-Interstate road trips:

Took the wife and boys to a family reunion in New Mexico a few years back. We landed in Albuquerque, where we spent a few days, then needed to go to Las Vegas, NM (yes, there is such a place). It was in the general direction of Santa Fe.

I saw a brochure in the hotel lobby promoting the “Turquoise Trail,” which is a 2-lane road from Albuquerque to Santa Fe. Persuaded wife to take it and, since we weren’t in a hurry, she agreed.

What a difference. Not only was it beautiful, not only did it add (maybe) 30 minutes to the trip, but we discovered the weird, wild, and wacky town of Madrid, NM. Stopped off at an old drugstore-turned-art gallery, and we all had phosphates!

A highly-recommended trip, if you’re in the area.

**Stan** says:
June 29, 2010 at 7:09 pm

Lived on the west edge of Hawley Minnesota as a child, nothing between us and the horizon, We could see the storms 3 hours away. Further North in Warren we only had windbreaks to contend with. I swaer some of the thunder heads reached 100,000 feet in elevation.

Two summers ago I was coming from Hwy 2 to Detroit Lakes on Hwy 59 on the motorcycle. 59 is on one of the last beaches of former Lake Aggazi so you also get a little elevation and can see even further. I could watch the storm and the lightning get closer and closer while I tried to figure out if I should attempt to beat the storm or find shelter. Five minutes after pulling into my brothers garage it rained like a cow peeing on a rock for two Hours.

**Pete** says:
June 29, 2010 at 8:18 pm

You can’t fade a video out just as the bagpipe solo is beginning! Are you mad??

**Chuck** says:
June 29, 2010 at 11:32 pm

I do the same...take the old 2 lane highway instead of the freeway. If the old highway is close to the freeway and the towns on it aren’t big, the road is amazingly quiet. You hear stories about the bumper-to-bumper traffic back in the old days, but now you have the highway almost to yourself. But the old motels are still there, along with the supper clubs. But the A&W's and other drive-ins seem to be gone.

**chrisbritter** says:
June 30, 2010 at 12:55 am

99% of our family road trips were from Chicago to Paducah and the scenery was mostly cornfields until we got to around Cairo (pronounced like the corn syrup) where there was a scenic overlook.
from which you could supposedly see three states. After crossing the scary Irvin S. Cobb Bridge we'd head into town and while there we'd head to Starnes Barbecue (still in business today!) for some heavenly hog and the Blackhawk Bakery (long gone) for the greatest layered pull-apart dinner rolls... my grandmother's house was swallowed up by the sprawl of Baptist Hospital decades ago 😊

mac says:
June 30, 2010 at 8:07 am

“I know everyone would be happy if we all consumed less gas and it cost more,...”.

Really?

Mark E. Hurling says:
June 30, 2010 at 10:01 am

@chrsibcritter, you didn't actually stop in Cairo did you? I went to college and then lived and worked in Little Egypt for 8 years, and every time I passed through there, it (and the people on the sidewalks there) gave me the creeps.

Stephen Borchert says:
July 1, 2010 at 11:39 am

Watching that brings tears to my eyes. That was great!

DensityDuck says:
July 1, 2010 at 12:13 pm

Gah. The Missing Price. It's the bane of the modern retail transaction; the registrators have been trained that You Can't Change The Price, so if there's no price on the item then you get a “Computer Says No” moment and everyone just sort of vapor-locks.
Please install and activate the “Twitter for WordPress” plugin to use this section.

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?
Modern media experience: the wondrous satellite dish on the roof pulls down a digitized stream which, when interpreted by the computer under the TV, resolves into a copy of “Stagecoach.” Never seen it. Always wanted to. So I start watching, but the resolution is horrible; looks like it was animated on an Etch-A-Sketch smeared with Vaseline. Does Netflix have a copy? It does, and it’s a Criterion Blu-Ray! Huzzah. So, enable Blu-Ray on the account. Wait. Disk arrives. Insert disk.

Blu-ray player gives a simple, plaintive message on the LED screen:

CANNOT

Huh. Remove disk, clean it, reinsert.

CANNOT

Try another disk. Message:

UNKNOWN

These are two different concepts. CANNOT implies will, thwarted; UNKNOWN means I may have inserted an Eggo. Everything’s a mystery to this thing. What’s the matter? Perhaps it needs a firmware update! Alas, it’s not connected to the internet. I still remember VCRs, which did not need to be connected to tentacular interconnecting cybernetic databases, but those days are gone. So I get the ethernet powerline adapter, connected it, and update
the firmware. Takes a while; the blu-ray reboots. Eventually. Loads the disk.

And now it's time for bed. After I write this, that is.

**As lovely and as dull** as a day can be.

So, there. Daughter's still at camp; at least we got a letter informing us that everything was AWESOME, and that's great. But it just makes the days long and boring – the standard 3 PM Child-readjustment-time, when I get her from the bus or summer school or whatever passes, and I feel like I should be somewhere, but I have nowhere to be. So the day meanders on. I knocked off work around 4:30 and laid down for a restorative interval of unconsciousness, only to get fishhooked back to reality by the phone.

*Hello, is the lady of the house at home?*

For a moment I thought I was being called by 1954. I said she was not, but could I help? It's a survey, said the voice, and the inflection suggested this was a code-word for something a man of the house could not possibly understand. *Mysterious woman matters.* The League of Surveys does not deal with husbands.

Laid down again, thinking of things I had to do. The phone rang again.

This time it was a Fraternal Order of Police fundraising call. The fellow said – ha ha! – you're not in trouble, we're just -

I tried to tell him we don't do phone solicitations, but he kept talking and would accept no interruptions, so I hung up and threw the phone on the bed, where it seemed to laugh: *hahahaha! Nap hell no.* Just as well: lately dreams have been baroque. Last night I humiliated three kidnappers by accusing them of being artistic poseurs. One of them had a narrow-brimmed hipster hat, which I knocked off and stepped on. Hipsters are bad enough, but kidnapper hipsters: the worst.

**Highlight** of the day, aside from its beauty and mildness and pure June perfection: around 3:30 the FedEx fellow showed up with a big box, and hello:
I'm a sucker for the “Art of” books they make about animated films. (I even bought the one for “Robots,” because William Joyce was involved, and I think he's brilliant.) They tell you why something looks the way it looks. These are intentional worlds; every detail is chosen for a reason, even if the reason is small, but they have to appear as if they happened for the usual thousand random reasons. I wish there was more in the book about the technical side of the animation, but I suppose that's a bit dry for most. It must be like a directing a movie whose entire cast consists of skeletons, at least for the rehearsals – is there some poor computer artist who has to spend a month looking at the same sixteen seconds in wireframe mode every day 9 to 5?

There are several distinct visual styles in the book, but one stands out: the fellow in charge of lighting, Dice Tsutsumi. He's incredible:
I'd buy a book that just had his stuff. He did the “color script,” as it's called, which lays out the shifting palettes and light/dark sequences to see how the movie flows, whether it's too dark for too long, or too much sunny-pastel.
happy-kid-land. The book has a huge fold-out of the script, and you can read
the movie just by its visual language. Never knew they had to do that. I
suppose they have to do that for all movies, although it's probably easier for
(“Bright! Loud! That's a color, right?”) Then there's the problems of updating
characters created when computers were, in comparison, primitive, without
making them look different. People can change, and we expect incremental
improvements every year. (I got the feeling with “Ratatouille” that they were
finally starting to be satisfied with animating people. “Up” had fewer facial
pyrotechnics, Carl being such a grump, but more innate humanness,
somehow. It's the small things.) The then-and-now pictures of TS human
characters are startling, but what did we expect in 1995? We were still okay
with Max-Headroom-type plasticity, which made the toy characters all the
more real. They were more human than the humans. If they'd perfected
people right off the start, I wonder if we would have gotten any of the movies
we got.

Anyway, it's a beautiful thing, and there's a button right over there on the
right where you can order it.

I suppose I should post this in the interests of full disclosure:

Uh, yeah. That guy. The director. Bleatnik from way back. You can imagine
how I feel about that. Years ago he sent my daughter (and me) Monsters Inc
T-shirts, and I tried to tell my Boo-aged kid where these came from, and she
was all happy and thrilled and forgot about it right away, probably, kids
being kids. (I saved it from the hand-me-down pile, and it's in the basement
in a plastic bag, wrapped around long-forgotten Hello Kittys.) He's a cool and
generous fellow – which is apparent to anyone who saw the movie. I also
mention this because long-time patrons know what a Disneyphile and Pixar
fan I am, so you have to know how this hits me: Holy Jeezum Crow.
I had intended to launch the Big Thing today, but there are two fargin’ pages that need tinkering, so bear with me and give me another day. We’re talking six months of behind-the-scenes work here, most of which will strike you as a case of “huh? Why?” but it had to be done, and the result will last for a thousand years! Internet years, that is – I’ll have to redo everything in 2015 for wide-screen telepathic internet, but that’s how this all works. Tune in tomorrow: this will be good. See you at tumblr and PopCrush, and have a grand day.

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Pass it along, if you wish

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36 RESPONSES TO the art of june

Mark VandeWettering says:
June 30, 2010 at 2:00 am

I was browsing through anniversary postings from years past, and ran across a link to your gushing review of Wall-E, and thought I’d surf over hear to read your blog again. I’m glad to see that you and your family are still enjoying our films. Sadly, you won’t find my name in the TS3 credits (busy on other projects at Pixar) but I just thought I’d say thanks and that you have more than a few fans among our numbers. I still chuckle at your Gallery of Regrettable Food, which sits along side my collection of cookbooks, serving as part inspiration and part cautionary tale.

Keep up the fine work.

Grebmars says:
June 30, 2010 at 6:14 am

Gawrsh, I’m the first today?

I’m impressed with Tsutsumi–beautiful lighting.

hpoulter says:
June 30, 2010 at 6:38 am

Wow. Pixar swag right from the source. That’s wonderful. The book looks good, too. I have some of the other “Art of” books. I’ll have to put that one on my wishlist.

Nancy says:
June 30, 2010 at 6:39 am

I am very tired of constantly shifting inputs and juggling remotes! There. I said it. I have to want to watch TV pretty badly if the inputs are awry and hubby (or a kid^^) isn’t around. Yes, I can usually sort it out but it is annoying.

Kerry Potenza says:
June 30, 2010 at 6:49 am

Wow! Director Lee Unkrich! Well, of course he would be a Bleetnik
Speaking of Toy Story 3, I took my 7 year old to see it the other day. Wonderful movie! Was it just me, or did the scene of great peril evoke 911 images? That particular scene nearly unhinged me, and I can't stop thinking about it.

Richard Perry says:
June 30, 2010 at 7:04 am

Subjunctive, please — I wish there WERE more in the book about the technical side of the animation…

Sorry to be a noodge, but I truly admire your work, and never haven't missed a day in years.

hpoulter says:
June 30, 2010 at 7:44 am

@Nancy – Next to each of our two main TVs (living room and home theater) I have a spiral bound notebook with detailed instructions for my wife “If you want to watch a DVD – step 1…”

We have integrated PCs, X-Boxes and other appendages, along with stereo equipment, component and HDMI video inputs, optical and digital audio inputs, etc, etc, so she finds it very useful when I am not around.

juanito - John Davey says:
June 30, 2010 at 8:11 am

WE took the now 9 year old (on Sunday – Happy Bday Megs!) with our 5 year old and 4 sleepover friends to see Toy Story 3 on Friday evening. Smashing success. The kids were thrilled. The Great Peril did evoke the requisite emotional response, but as noted by Jaxmom the thing that got to me was the scene in Andy's empty room as both he and his Mom looked at it one last time “Oh, Andy.”

Swag from the source is always keen. My cousin grew up with, and attended High School in Modesto with George Lucas, so I have some signed items, but it's not like he knew who I was. The Pixar swag is from a Bleatnik, who appreciates James' work. And I'm certain that he is thrilled that James appreciates his work as well.

browniejr says:
June 30, 2010 at 8:37 am

First thing I thought of upon seeing the Dice Tsutsumi art: Pinocchio as a boy… Walt would have been impressed, I'm guessing.

Patrick says:
June 30, 2010 at 8:54 am

@browniejr:

Walt would have been impressed with the idea of computer animation, but I think he would have taken it a step further. He would have wanted his “Imagineers” to improve the software and hardware, and not only push both to the limits, but create new limits. Actually with Walt, there were no limits. He would have also challenged the artists who developed the characters and did the backgrounds to try to beat what can be done on the computer, by
hand. 110% wasn’t good enough for him. 220% would suffice.

Also, a little easter egg on the boy: Does the picture on his shirt look familiar?

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
June 30, 2010 at 9:42 am

You’ve never seen “Stagecoach” until now!? Are you sure that one or two of the Boris and Natasha’s they rounded up in Jersey didn’t get as far inland as Minnesota? Turn in your man card sir! The two great scenes in the movie were when John Wayne is first sighted and he stands up with rifle in one hand and saddle in the other and fixes the audience with that piercing gaze from under his hat brim. The other is the archetypal old West con man, daddie Carradine oozing his oily way around the the inside of the stagecoach with all and sundry.

**EG** says:
June 30, 2010 at 9:45 am

That’s a pretty stinkin’ awesome signed book.

On a related note, today is the last day of the Disney Store annual sale with free shipping if you buy Toy Story anything, and their SITE IS DOWN. Really, I know Disney is known for doing everything with excellence, but I’ve had multiple crap experiences with disneystore.com. Grr.

**Nancy** says:
June 30, 2010 at 10:14 am

@hpoulter
Thanks for a great idea–now getting him to DO it….

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
June 30, 2010 at 10:15 am

@patrick: i think that is Bonnie and yes the little fishy is familiar.

Hope the Disney/Pixar critics are busy today.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
June 30, 2010 at 10:21 am

It is easy to get my wife to master the military industrial entertainment complex in our home. Not only is she clever but, if you let her set up any new component, she will forever be the expert.

Side effect is that I then have to figure it out by trial and error.

**swschrad** says:
June 30, 2010 at 10:24 am

oddball dreams. woke up in the middle of the night with one... getting calls for hot servers from an outfit that I worked at almost 20 years ago.

yes, got into the computer room in the middle of the guarded facility with no problem in a T-shirt at 2 am.
new ethernet disk appliances, consumer-grade, behind the facade of
a long-gone mainframe manufacturer.

not a fan in the computer room.

need that week off folks, speed up the earth a few spins.

Kev says:
June 30, 2010 at 10:25 am

I tried to tell him we don't do phone solicitations, but he kept talking
and would accept no interruptions

I have a solution for that: I never answer the house phone, ever.
Even on my cell phone, I don't pick up for unfamiliar numbers, and
since there's no Caller ID on my house phone (and there never will
be, so long as there's a charge for it; why pay for something that cell
providers give away?), that means it gets ignored on a regular basis,
since very few people/businesses ever bother to leave a message
anymore.

I don't get that concept, by the way--calling someone and hanging up
on the voicemail; it happens on my cell quite often. If a business
wishes for me to return their call, they will clearly state the name of
their business and the nature of their call; you'd think that would be
common courtesy, but I guess not anymore. Hanger-uppers simply
get ignored by me.

*descends soapbox*

Derkase says:
June 30, 2010 at 10:33 am

I see on the top photo slide show that NoDak has to import wood
from MN. Not a bit surprised.

Also, in the same photo, the green Element must be the
Lileksmobile.

juanito - John Davey says:
June 30, 2010 at 10:36 am

Patrick says:
June 30, 2010 at 8:54 am

Also, a little easter egg on the boy: Does the picture on his shirt
look familiar?

Sure, Bonnie has a keen shirt. I'm certain that Marlin is making a
fortune licensing his kid's image!

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 30, 2010 at 10:50 am

“Stagecoach" is not only a great film, it establishes or solidifies so
many of the stereotypes you will encounter in later westerns.

JamesS says:
June 30, 2010 at 10:54 am
I remember somewhere on the first “Shrek” DVD the animators were discussing how they did the humans, and said they actually had to cartoon them up more because they looked “disturbing” when they were too real. I guess they entered deep into the Uncanny Valley on some of their tries.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 30, 2010 at 11:02 am

Cartoony humans are also easier to animate. It is a lesson many animators can’t figure out and waste a lot of time and money on and the results do not usually look that good. Disney made the error early on.

Check out John K (Kricfalusi) on the subject.

browniejr says:
June 30, 2010 at 11:43 am

@Kev- concur with your solution on phone solicitations.

My late father had a different solution. Back when they had actual people making the calls, and he had just retired and had the time, he would talk gibberish to them- absolute nonsensical answers, no foreign words, etc. When they didn’t take the hint, and kept talking/badgering him for information, it would turn into loud, angry gibberish until they gave up.

Lately I have been getting a robo-call that says a person’s name (not me), and offers to end the call if I hang up. I let my answering machine handle it, and the robot on the other end thinks that since I didn’t hang up (never answered, really!), that I am “admitting” that I am the person they are trying to contact, and that this person owes them money. Get this call about once a week. The robot talks “normally” until it says the name phonetically, and this is pretty badly garbled.

hpoulter says:
June 30, 2010 at 11:47 am

For creepy human animation, you can’t beat the baby in “Tin Toy”. Hyper-real humans, as in the lamentable “Beowulf”, just look undead.

I prefer the cartoony humans in “Up” or “The Incredibles” but I have to admit the humans in TS3 were about the best I have seen.

Jennifer says:
June 30, 2010 at 11:53 am

I started following Lee on Twitter a little while prior to the movie’s release. I got such a happy, positive vibe from him that I thought surely he needed to read your review—that he would love it. So I tweeted him with a link to your site. Little did I know…

swschrad says:
June 30, 2010 at 12:18 pm

blu-ray: that's not a blue player, it's a severely-depressed player. needs electroshock therapy. get a model-T coil from JC Whitney and
D-I-Fry it yourself.

JimK says:
June 30, 2010 at 1:45 pm

The FOP! I worked for that fundraising company for awhile. That's all they do. Badge magazine exists solely to place ads in it. They do nothing else. I was 19, high as hell EVERY DAY and my boss? Sold me weed. We were what, ten, maybe fifteen layers away from actual police in any form. But...

We were trained to speak like cops. Old school TV cops, to be specific.

I eventually quit because – get this – I couldn’t take the sheer amount of weed being smoked. It was too much for me. The office looked like a bar in the 60’s at 2am.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 30, 2010 at 1:54 pm

My pet peeve for telemarketers is how they make you say hello twice before responding. Obviously they are trying to determine if you are real or an answering machine. I understand their motivation but, THEY ARE CALLING ME.

My wife and I are in the habit of just saying “hello” once and waiting. Sometimes they hang up, sometimes they get confused and finally speak up.

I am tempted to make answering machine message that says hello twice and then pause to let the caller start speaking and then continue with the “we are not available” part.

bgbear (roger h) says:
June 30, 2010 at 1:57 pm

re: The FOP

So, if they are not real cops on the phone can you get away with saying “I thought you guys had balls”?

Patrick says:
June 30, 2010 at 4:08 pm

Not only are cartoon-y humans easier to animate as far as movement and posture, but the more cartoon-y their faces, the easier it is to animate or show their expressions, especially when the eyes need to be changed in size from shifty, narrow, suspicious-of-every-living-thing to wide, frightened, holy-crap-the-bomb's-going-to-blow-us-to-Kingdom-Come!

Plus it's easier to identify the character's role when made more cartoon-y. It's sometimes easier to distinguish the hero from the villain, and the clothing isn't all of it.

Am I the only one who felt a pang of sadness, even a bit depressed when looking at that picture of the toys reentering Andy's room, with all the boxes stacked around and the room pretty much bare?
GardenStater says:
June 30, 2010 at 5:49 pm

@swschrad: “...getting calls for hot servers from an outfit that I worked at almost 20 years ago.”

You worked at Hooters?

As to telemarketers, one of the few things I’m grateful to the Federal Government for is the “Do Not Call” list. Best thing ever. I signed up right away, and have had few calls since. But before that, I had a great experience:

Phone rings.

Me: Hello?

Guy on Phone: “Hello, this is Radeesh, from XYZ Company.”

Me: Radeesh? Hey, I’m glad to hear from you! Hang on a second, will you?

Radeesh: “OK, sure.”

I put the phone down, for about a half hour. Came back.

Me: Radeesh?

Radeesh: “Yes?”

Me: Never mind.

(Click)

Crabtree says:
June 30, 2010 at 6:55 pm

My favorite of those “Art of” books is the one on Ray Harryhausen. It is absolutely amazing how talented this man is. In one of his movies he has the hydra, its heads all moving in different directions. He had to move each of those heads incrementally over weeks to get the footage he needed. The only time he wrote down what each head was doing was when he went home for the night. I think the Pixar guys respect him too… they named the sushi place in Monsters Inc. “Harryhausen’s”.

swschrad says:
June 30, 2010 at 7:26 pm

@GardenStater: primo, excellent! ayyy, laddie, may your blood be bottled in bond!

Vixie says:
June 30, 2010 at 8:12 pm

Since we are on the topic of Pixar, last year I got to meet Pixar storyboard artist Jeff Pidgeon. Not only is he an artist for them, he supplied the voices for those cute little three eyed aliens in the Toy Story movies. What surprised me was his voice was not electronically altered, but done the old fashioned way, inhaling helium. He’d inhale the helium, do the lines, then inhale more. The trick was to not pass out.

I also got the chance to puppeteer alongside his wife, she and I are both pro puppeteers. Jeff also was nice enough to do a sketch of my
main puppet, which you can see here:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/vixie/3252080000/

Patrick says:
June 30, 2010 at 9:50 pm

@bgbear:

I remember when I was a kid a friend of mine’s parents let him record the outgoing message on their answering machine. I called his house one time, forget now what for. This was the message:

“Hello? Hello?! (long pause) Sorry, we’re not here right now, but if you leave your name, number, and a brief message we’ll get back to you as soon as we can.”

Steve Green says:
July 1, 2010 at 6:50 pm

@hpoulter said:

>Next to each of our two main TVs (living room >and home theater) I have a spiral bound >notebook with detailed instructions for my >wife “If you want to watch a DVD – step 1...”

At the risk of sounding like a commercial, you don’t have to go through all that. Logitech makes a different type of universal remote that once programmed is quite intuitive, and works very differently from the usual ones. You plug it into your computer, enter all your component model numbers, and answer a few questions about how you use your system, and hit “program”.

Then you can essentially put all your remotes in a drawer. You just push a button telling the remote what you want to do (“watch TV”, “listen to music”, “play DVD”, etc) and the remote automatically turns all your components on in the proper sequence and correct modes. Just that easy.

My GF is eternally grateful. On the rare occasion that something is left on and throws off the system, there’s a “help” sequence that straightens everything out, without fail. I’ve become a bit of an evangelist among my friends about these things, and friends that have purchased one have thanked me profusely.
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