I don't feel old when I think of the 80s, but maybe I should.

First and foremost: today is the day I finally put up the Big Thing I've been talking about. Bad news: it's pretty much the same old thing. Good news: not entirely, and certainly not for long.

I am at a coffee shop, because I had to get out of the house and be around other human beings. Not talk to them, mind you, but be around them. If I wanted to talk I'd go to the office and get nothing done. Here I can work and be reminded I am not living on an island at the top of a hill with a dog.
Did some column research at a fireworks stand, where they had the usual ugly packaging. It's all ugly. Every year I lament the end of the cheap Chinese fireworks graphics, and every year criticize the work of three guys who have a pirated copy of Illustrator, and so this year will be no different. The proof, tomorrow.

Went to the grocery store for lemons, because I like to put some fresh-squeezed lemon in vodka now and then. I chose Lunds, because they had a post-office box outside. (It's things like that must make grocery-store managers crazy. Ads? No. Prices? No. Selection? No. Atmosphere? No. Availability of pre-made food? No. Mailbox out front I use because my usual box has been rendered inaccessible by road construction? Yes.) There was a nice Minnesota lady making sandwiches for all to try: Thai-peanut ground turkey sloppy joes. There was nothing sloppy about them. Little in the way of traditional Joe, either. But it was good. I got my lemons and wandered around the empty store, feeling hideously bereft. Used to come to this store all the time in the mid Oughts, when I took daughter shopping; this one was nice and comfy, a big cocoon of reassurance: you're the sort of person who may not buy this exotic cooking sauce today, but likes to think he'd buy it some other day. It's here! It's all here. Also organic artisanal ketchup!

Then my industry started to crater, and I felt the cold, Scottish hands of thrift clasp my wallet, and it's been that way ever since. I probably save five bucks a week not shopping there, and have traded the money for the efficiency of Target (“Surprise-free grocery shopping!”) or the other Soviet-flavored bargain places. To hell with it. I'm going back to Lunds, I decided.

But then I realized that I stopped going to Lund's when my daughter stopped going to the grocery store with me – when she had a choice, that is, and preferred to stay home doing stuff she liked, even though we still have fun at the store. That was why I stopped going. Pushing the cart with no one looking back.

Sigh.

Well, she comes back Thursday, and I can't wait. This has been a preview of stuff I prefer not to think a great deal about.

Speaking of previews, here you go:
It's the New Institute. Careful observers will note that it resembles the main index page, and also has echoes of the Bleat; this is intentional, since those are the three main “brands,” if you will. But it's not just a new front page: I've been rehabbing all the sites, and I'm about 70% done. This means consistent fonts, navigation, image sizes, quality control for links, and so on. It means rescanning ten tons of material and adding new pages to existing sites, and oh, it means a completely new Gallery of Regrettable Food, more or less. I'll be rolling out additions to that one through the end of the year. And then I am DONE.

So. Enjoy!

I'm sitting outside. The speaker is playing “Blinding Me With Science,” very quietly. I've heard this song three times in the last three days. This song was released 28 years ago. This is like being in 1982 and hearing 1954's #5 song, “Make Love To Me” by Jo Stafford, over and over. Didn't happen. On the other hand: the #4 song was “Sh-boom,” which you could hear from time to time. (The other songs are forgotten.) But “Sh-boom” owed its persistence to the trailing edge of 50s nostalgia, which was a product of the mid-70s. (The early 70s Depression nostalgia did not last, perhaps because the musical vernacular seemed too foreign.) “Sh-boom” made people think of the happy 50s when everyone had tailfins and went to sock-hops and everything was peachy except for the whole atom bomb thing, but since it didn't happen then we can retroactively remove the anxiety from the retelling. It was all “Sh-boom” stuff and innocent and carefree!

Well, no.

Apparently the store's music is set on 80s synthpop today, because it's been Dolby, Real Life (Send me an Angel, of course) and now OMD, one of the smarter and more interesting bands of the era. Really: they get slagged for having A) a few hits, and B) angular hair, but they had an experimental side,
knew the virtues of a groove, and did a nice job riding the wave from tingly
dinky synth sounds in '81 to cool well-constructed stuff like this:

This is the time of rejoicing. Always liked that. “Sugar Tax,” was the album;
listened to it sitting in my cubicle by the window in Washington DC. A million
years ago. Some day soon there will be more time between today and the
song than there was between the song and the event it described. That seems
impossible, but I know better.

Now it's Annie Lennox wailing over “Sweet Dreams,” which was mysterious
and haunting and angsty-modern when it came out, mostly because she had very short hair and wore a tie. This
was not a trend that swept the nation. As opposed to the Pat Benatar look,
which had not-so-short-hair and angry eye makeup and legwarmers; high
school girls adopted that en masse and went around looking for ballet barres
to stand next to, on tip-toe.

After Howard Johnson – cheerful forgettable guy who looked like every other
scrawny English synth-pop guy with a head full of exploded hay – came Joe
Jackson, with “Is She Really Going Out With Him.” Turns out now we know
he was mad at him. After this, it's Herbie Hancock's last big hit, “Rockit,”
which I remember hearing and disliking on the spot. (Never liked
scratching.) What set it apart was the video, which was unnerving, and came
from the difficult team of Godley and Creme. Yes, the guys who did “Cry,” and
were the creative force behind 10cc.
They split up in 1988 after an unsuccessful album about the impending nuclear war, and have managed to live at least 22 years more; Creme joined up with Art of Noise, which produces exactly that. On the drive up to Fargo I heard the remix version of “Paranoimia,” a batch of bleats and pretension that achieves perfect mid-80s glory with its frequent use of Max Headroom. The original was better, but not by much. Come for the Matt Frewer, stay for the phallic mouth-worms:

![Paranoimia](https://i.imgur.com/3Q2.png)

Now it's “A-ha” on the speakers, which brings everything full circle: the man who directed that animated video directed the video for “She Blinded Me with Science.” Annnd I'm out of here.

Mostly because there are people at the adjacent table, and they're talking so loud I can hardly hear the music I don't want to listen to.
59 RESPONSES TO this is the day of rejoicing

B Finster says:
July 1, 2010 at 5:49 pm

After the release of their excellent debut album: “Architecture and Morality, OMD were touted to be the next Beatles in some publications over in the U.K I guess that never happened and I'm pretty sure we all know why.

hpoulter says:
July 1, 2010 at 5:58 pm

@Marjorie –
But we were so desperate for subversive video in those days. Sure, Max H became formulaic, but we still loved it for breaking some new ground.

These kids today and their “youtubes” and their “social medias”…
grumble

shesnailie says:
July 1, 2010 at 6:39 pm

_@_v – white ford bronco… it's a show stopper. grabs the attention of every passing chopper!

white ford bronco… for work or play or sport. when you drive a bronco you get a police escort!

MikeH says:
July 1, 2010 at 8:50 pm

I remember a lot, sort of, of the 80's, since I graduated high school in 1984.

Folks, the 80's are dead. they died a long time ago. I re-visit the relics sometimes of the 80's but it's dead and buried. I know a few people who want to live the decade again. GO THEN!! I may not be a fan of modern technology myself, but I am happy with myself in the present. The 80's are as dead as the 70's, 90's, and all the other decades.

I have no idea now where I am going with this.

Mark E. Hurling says:
July 1, 2010 at 9:42 pm

MikeH, your point is well taken. I don't believe many of us want to re-live the time, I know I don't. The here and the now, with all the attendant foibles, cares, etc. are the best of times and the worst of times. I also suspect that none of us knows where they are going with this life as it arrays itself for all of us across the decades.

Just think of Jethro Tull and “Locomotive Breath” where the lyrics go “See his children jump off at the stations one by one . . . and the train it won't stop going, though it could slow down.” That's as good
a metaphor as any for how life and time moves on. Have a good evening.

Fruitbat44 says:
July 2, 2010 at 3:27 am

I recall the “craze” for androgyny, but for me it lost all credibility when the young Elvis Presley was used as an example of androgyny.

Frankly I've seen un-neutered tom cats which where more androgynous than the young Elvis.

Kev says:
July 2, 2010 at 10:20 am

@Cory: In a way, you can’t really say that “there were no Archies.” Of course, they were studio musicians, because they were the band that played on the Archie cartoon show on Saturday mornings, and I'm pretty sure that, even as a little kid, I knew that the actors who were voicing the cartoon characters weren’t the same ones performing the music. (My copy of “Sugar, Sugar” came off the back of a cereal box—one of those soundsheets that were affixed to the cardboard and then you cut the whole thing off, and it actually kinda sorta worked on your record player.)

And re the #5 song above, I didn't actually do any research; I was assuming that our host meant that “Science” and the Jo Stafford song were either #5 for the year or in the exact same week of their respective years. I realize that it might not be a perfect comparison, but it’s interesting all the same.

Marjorie J Birch says:
July 2, 2010 at 11:37 am

everybody who corrected me about the OJ chase car — thanks!
There's a reason I don't work as a car salesman…

D Palmer says:
July 2, 2010 at 11:44 am

In 1985 Godley & Creme put out a Euro only EP called History Mix (I picked it up on CD off Ebay a few years back) that is a mash up of various G&C songs, including Cry.

Cry is the 2nd part of a mix with some other, rather annoying songs, but the transition to Cry is the whispering voice and angelic synth “big boys don’t cry, big boys don’t cry…” from 10cc’s “I’m Not In Love”.

I used a MP3 program to separate the track so that I have ‘Cry” alone with the intro, it’s a very cool combo.
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

3: Black & White World  April 2013
4: Sears 1934  March 2013
5: Comic ads  February 2013
6: 100 Mysteries  January 2013
Institute of Official Cheer  December 2012
Lint: the Institute Tumblr  November 2012
PopCrush  October 2012
Screedblog  September 2012
Shorpy.com  August 2012
StarTribune Column

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

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Late start on this – heck, late start on everything. Thursday just piled up like 42 semis braking hard in a fog bank, and now it's over and I have a moment to write something that isn't job related, and I can’t THINK because the dog has been traumatized by a bath. He went in the creek tonight, and of course decided to walk up to his chest in a pit of mud, and so off to the tub he went. Dogs know when a bath is imminent, and have all sorts of denial mechanisms, every one of which boils down to “I will look in the opposite direction and insist by my posture that this is not happening to me.” Sort of what you see when very famous people are arrested. But I hoisted him into the tub, and my wife commenced to getting out Nature’s Filth. The water pressure, however, was unaccountably poor, and it took my wife half an hour to get the shampoo and dirt out, during which he sang an aria of misery through his nose. Once out I chased him around the house with a towel and a brush, just for extra added indignity – it’s like he’s on fire and I’m trying to put it out with a rake.

So that took half an fargin’ hour. Sometimes the evenings just evaporate like that, and you’ve no idea where the time went. But! Daughter is back from camp, which means she’s back in her room catching up on all the Warrior Cats / Anime fun on YouTube that flourished while she was out in the woods. Camp was AWESOME, she assured us, even though there was one girl in the cabin who made up stuff, and insisted she was part of a clan of cats and had been a vampire for a week and got really mad when the other girls insisted...
she was just making it up. WAS TOO A VAMPIRE. AND A CAT. Her favorite incident seemed to be making up parody lyrics for a Justin Bieber song – she can’t stand him, thinks he’s “weak” – and performing it in the camp’s talent show. It involved swapping the word “baby” for “bacon” and this was the height of hilarity for all and sundry. Of course she would not reprise it; the moment has passed. You had to be there.

But parents can never be there, not when it’s Camp. That’s why this whole week felt like a precursor of College for me, and yes, I did got back to Lunds today. She wanted the next volume of a book series, so I drove to Barnes and Noble to get it, then stopped at Lunds for the reasons described a few days ago. The Powerful Nostalgic Pull of the Grocery Store. Then I picked her up from the church parking lot; the big wifi-enabled air-conditioned split-level buses with TV sets – four buses! Four! – pulled up one after the other, honking their horns, parents cheering, and the kids spilled out with big grins, the great adventure over. Tell us all about it!

It was great!

Details.

It was really great!

And that’s all you get. What do I have, after all? A few photos from 1968:

Look at that: summertime, and kids are wearing long pants and high socks. I’m pretty sure the kid on the right was the Tormentor of Us All, the
designated smug bully who had a line of taunting patter.

Same year:

My best friend and my cousin. Okay: guess which one was the sci-fi geek who read the Hobbit six times and loved comic books. Go on, try.

She didn’t take pictures; she took movies. To keep her from completely vegetating tomorrow, we will transfer and edit her summer camp videos, and if she finishes the project we’ll go back to Barnes and Noble to get the right book, because I was misinformed about the one I should get. (I got indistinguishable bears-in-peril book number 5, not number 4.) We will not set the video to Alan Sherman’s “Hello Muddah” because I don’t like Alan Sherman. Sorry. I think he’s interesting as a cultural phenomenon, the wacky Jewish song parodist, Stan Freberg for people who didn’t finish college, the guy who figured he’d be standing after those silly “Beatles” were done and everyone was tired of yeah-yeah-yeah pop music, but his work annoys me, and two minutes of his artless braying is about all I can take. I may defend the use and value of middlebrow culture, but that doesn’t mean that everything middlebrow is worth defending.

Then there’s Highbrow: here’s a photo gallery of the best architecture since 1980, thanks to Vanity Fair. The second one makes me laugh, because it’s a 1987 building that uses every single played-out cliche from the early 60s. The rest are mostly machines for advancing careers; once you get a Leibeskind or a Gehry or a Koolhaus you’re a real city with real architecture, even if you got a library that has no relation to its function or its surroundings – or, for
that matter, a front door. The most amusing may be the Parc de la Villette, which has chairs that prohibit both comfort and conversation, and a fireengine-red . . . thing that either serves as a piece of playground equipment on loan from hell, or an object adults can use to contemplate the futility of endeavor.

I do like the addition to the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Missouri – it’s like the chrysalis for a building, and at least it respects its neighbor; unlike the rest of the structures, it seems to be made by people from my species.

But your mileage may vary. Hey! 100 mysteries will be up late, very late, if at all – hardly had time to watch anything, but maybe because I had a spare 43 minutes today, and I slapped on the new Skype headphones and tried them out to see if they might work for Diners. **Meaning, yes, new Diner, today. Fourth of July edition!**

Also: my annual Fireworks column, at [startribune.com](http://startribune.com) – no live link at post time.

Back on Monday with some fireworks graphics, so we'll see you then. Have a grand weekend.

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**57 RESPONSES TO weekend! new diner!**

**Kev** says:
July 3, 2010 at 3:20 am

@shesnailie: Great link. I like this quote:

17 – I call architecture frozen music. – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

**Doug Sundseth** says:
July 3, 2010 at 1:09 pm

Pat In Colorado:

The first thing I thought when I saw the Lloyd's building was ‘oil refinery'.

You’re not alone. I immediately thought “Commerce City” when I saw that photo.

**chrisbcritter** says:
July 3, 2010 at 8:06 pm

Good ol' Allan – it was a brief career but he had fun while it lasted. He and Mad magazine's scribes were my biggest influences for the many song parodies I've written for my car club's annual awards shows (like “Pinto Inferno”). One I wrote based on “Bandstand Boogie” was as close as I've come to his style:

“My voice is droppin'
Went down an octave today
My zits are poppin'
Put Clearasil on my face
My hair is sloppin'
Greasy kid stuff in place
I'm on Bandstand…"

I'm surprised he never wrote that one; it would have fit right in with “Dropouts’ March”.

madCanada says:
July 3, 2010 at 9:23 pm

anyway, Well . . . i wish all doodle-dandy bleatniks a happy July 4th.
And many starzy-stripsy happy returns. Serious. // MC

Michael says:
July 5, 2010 at 7:38 pm

I agree the Menil ain't all that on the outside. But step inside and you'll see why it's thought of so highly. It's a beautiful space.

Charlie Young says:
July 6, 2010 at 12:52 pm

The HSBC Building reminds me of The Matrix. Just need the threatening spider-bots to complete the look.

The library in Seattle photo was taken from the 5th Av. side. The main entrance is on the opposite side, down on 4th Av. I do like the building. It sets it apart from the rest of the city architecture. Also, it stands in juxtaposition to “The Box the Space Needle Came In” in the background of the photo.

Fred says:
July 9, 2010 at 8:26 am

“HSBC Building, Hong Kong” This is the kind of thing that looks really awesome until you realize that everyone in the building can hear everyone else's cell phone ringing.”

Plus, anyone can see the sites you access on your computer. No Bleat or any other non work sites.

“What happened in the last 50 years to make architects hate us so?”

Whatever it was can I offer a blanket apology to all of them and beg them to please forgive us?
Pass it along, if you wish

**POST-FOURTH**
on J U L Y  5,  2010 ·  2 7  C O M M E N T S  ·  i n  D O M E S T I C  L I F E

**Perfect Fourth.** We’d expected rain; we had been told that thunderstorms and torrents would pop up throughout the day, ruining everything. It rained a bit in the early morning and never rained again. It was hot and humid, but clouds kept things civil; a mild breeze roamed the neighborhood. It was all quiet and peaceful and perfect right up until the moment I lit the Screaming Hornets, which erupted with such gusto it knocked itself over, shrieked in terror and confusion, set fire to the lawn, then set fire to the charred remains, then set fire to itself. All in all, quite entertaining. And that was just the afternoon works – everyone leaves around 8:30 so they can head off to other family gatherings, and I fire off the rest of the stuff in the dark, as it’s meant to be. Later in the evening some neighbors who must go to Mexico for fireworks put up some stuff with enough percussive force to liquify the yolks in the eggs in the fridge.

So. More to say, but it’s a day off. Everyone else have the day off? Whatever will you do with it?

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**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

**140 OR SO**

Error: Twitter did not respond. Please wait a few minutes and refresh this page.

**CLICK – AND SAVE!**

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**27 RESPONSES TO post-fourth**
Chrisbriet says:
July 5, 2010 at 3:25 am

Watched the Yucca Valley fireworks display; nice small-town gathering. Never heard anything going off otherwise, unlike where I used to live in Baldwin Park where everybody started setting their fireworks off at four @$%&ing o'clock in the morning of the Fourth. (At least I hoped they were fireworks.)

GardenStater says:
July 5, 2010 at 3:57 am

Here in the Garden State, we’ve had a stretch of gorgeous weather. A little hot yesterday and today, but I’ll take it.

Put spice rub on three racks of ribs yesterday. They’ll go on the smoker at about 8:30 AM today, and come off at 4:30 this afternoon. I’ll be making a blueberry pie this morning, so it will be ready for dessert.

And I’m contemplating putting together some Bloody Marys for breakfast. I wish every day could be like this....

ExGeeEye says:
July 5, 2010 at 6:08 am

The niece and nephew (13 and 11) have stayed over and we’ll be doing some sort of goofing off today (though with 40% chance of thunderstorms, we may just stay inside and play Scrabble). I bought their dad's line trimmer and promptly broke the pull rope, so I expect to spend some time today replacing it and possibly going after the places the mower won’t go.

The mower will not come out today.

Gene Dillenburg says:
July 5, 2010 at 7:44 am

I hope to spend the entire day reading. I am so far behind on my magazines it is pathetic.

Nancy says:
July 5, 2010 at 8:13 am

I plan to take an extended beach walk and perhaps a bike ride now that the craziness of the weekend is over. Our little island (Tybee, on the Georgia coast) always pulls in a huge crowd, but this had to have been the most maybe EVER. I think people were taking no chances and avoiding the gulf.

Jennifer says:
July 5, 2010 at 8:41 am

Day off for hubby and I. In L.I. with my parents and will travel back to Brooklyn today. It’s extremely hot here—not pleasant.

John says:
July 5, 2010 at 8:42 am

Not too noisy last night – Austin is embarrassed by indications of
patriotism, though I recall it did show a pagan pyrotechnic gusto at midnight on 1/1/00. The operation of the calendar, a device with no moving parts, awes certain minds. The town also flies more Mexican flags than would be the case with people actually condemned to live in Mexico.

Anyway, today it's bicycling – but I do that every day – completing some legal paperwork, and making chutney. You know how it is.

Kevin says:
July 5, 2010 at 8:54 am

So where to draw the line? I live in an apartment, and some Gen-Y punks were still lighting off noisy fireworks in the parking lot at 12.30 AM. Isn't that pretty obnoxious? Or have I now become the old “Get Off My Lawn” guy?

Brisko says:
July 5, 2010 at 9:01 am

I have the entire week off. No idea what to do with myself, since my wife does not also have the week off and we cannot go on a trip as we had planned months ago. She's a nurse and cutbacks at her employer have left her more or less the only full time employee in her department who works days; nice to be needed, I suppose.

So far I have read a lot (read Tim Truman's entire “Scout” / “Scout: War Shaman” saga in 2 days without meaning to) and watched a movie (“The Fourth Kind”, creepy as hell).

mln84 says:
July 5, 2010 at 9:17 am

Aren't egg yolks already liquid?

Like others, smokin' ribs and making blackberry ice cream today.

Patrick says:
July 5, 2010 at 9:33 am

Have today off as well. The company I work at technically gave employees both Friday the 2nd off as well as today. Depended on when your main clients had off.

Went to see fireworks at the veterans' park in Tallapoosa, GA on Saturday. They did it on Saturday because the Fourth fell on a Sunday, and the ultra-conservative religious types around here hold true to the 3rd Commandment to the letter. That didn’t stop some people around here from shooting them off last night. Luckily I think the latest I heard any go off was around midnight.

Didn't buy any of the overpriced, nasty food at the park. It's not just fireworks; there's a full-out Redneck Hootenanny goin' on at the park. Rides, music, games, overpriced junk, boiled peanuts, pony rides, the works. Mom and I took some burgers and corn we had on the grill at home (home-grown corn, thank you very much), stopped at Jack's to get some fries, and also stopped at CVS for some snacks. Only thing we bought at the park was a couple of pairs of rainbow glasses, or as they were marketed, “Fireworks Viewing Glasses”. I will say this: If you go to a local fireworks show, and someone is selling these things, get a pair. They are awesome. Makes the fireworks seem like they're going to actually come to you. No,
they're not 3D, but the lenses in the glasses actually help to break up light into the different colors of the spectrum. It's awesome.

RebeccaH says:
July 5, 2010 at 10:11 am

We had a lovely Fourth of July weekend here in my little part of southwest Ohio. I walked in the Saturday parade with the local Liberty Group, a subchapter of Ohio Tea Party. They had a decorated hay wagon in the parade, but I and some others walked so that we could hand out pocket Constitutions and candy. Enjoyed seeing all the fire and rescue trucks from surrounding townships (hope no one had an emergency that morning), the antique cars, the Corvette club, the antique tractors, etc. Fireworks in the evening, viewed from my backyard.

Kevin says:
July 5, 2010 at 10:12 am

My school has the day off today, but I don't teach there on Mondays this summer anyway, so it's a wash. I do some freelance teaching at the house, and I'm open for business today, because it's payday (first week of the month and all).

I hope to spend the entire day reading. I am so far behind on my magazines it is pathetic.

I'm just now getting to May in my ginormous pile of Sports Illustrated, so I feel your pain.

I live in an apartment, and some Gen-Y punks were still lighting off noisy fireworks in the parking lot at 12.30 AM. Isn't that pretty obnoxious?

If you knew which apartment they lived in, you should have stood outside their window at 6:30 this morning and repeatedly blown a vuvuzela. That'd show 'em...

Nancy says:
July 5, 2010 at 10:31 am

@Kevin
They stopped THAT early? On the beach you will often here them till 2 or 3 AM!

Geoff says:
July 5, 2010 at 10:57 am

Well, I just took two weeks of vacation, so today is my LAST day off for a while. So, I'll probably spend part of the day dreading returning to work. Isn't that horrible.

Here in Greeley we're supposed to have the grand finale of the Stampede celebrated with a bodacious fireworks display on the Fourth. Postponed until tonight due to a heavy, soaking rain that started about 7 pm and didn't stop. The standby was supposed to be the Greeley Country Club fireworks, which you can see pretty well from the WalMart parking lot. Several hundred people waited in their cars until half an hour past the appointed time with no fiery displays in the sky, then drove off. Looks like they just plain cancelled their fireworks. Guess they'll store them until next year? What's the refund policy on pyrotechnics? Anyway, it looks beautiful
today. I'll enjoy it.

MikeH says:
July 5, 2010 at 10:58 am

Today's a reading day, since it's raining. It rained Saturday. It rained yesterday. It rained last night, delaying the Tampa fireworks for 45 minutes.

However, I understand rain doesn't impede the bar business much, either, so that's another option.

Kim says:
July 5, 2010 at 11:28 am

Fireworks are illegal here, but that didn't stop the neighborhood sounding like a war zone for four hours! Sparky the dog kept looking over for reassurance.

Saw Toy Story 3 (needed a box of Kleenex for that one.

Spent the rest of the day reading – I swear the Kindle is THE best purchase I have ever made – finally read “Brave New World”.

Today is the exciting stuff, though. An entire den awaits reorganization!

Mark E. Hurling says:
July 5, 2010 at 12:05 pm

Because I am programmed now to not be able to sleep past 0600, I got up and took a walk along the beach myself. Yesterday's festivities left it appallingly trashed. Veteran's Park along the pier was a little less so, but the Public Works guys had been at it for a while when I strolled through. Pretty sad, the lack of respect by others, intent only on their own desires. This was a good reminder that rights have closely attendant responsibilities to live up to.

fizzbin says:
July 5, 2010 at 1:14 pm

Yesterday I hosted a grill-out for my eldest son and family, and my youngest son. We had two types of hot dogs, polish sausage, and ground sirloin patties. Cole slaw, fresh strawberry/blueberry mix, and banana cake and ice cream made a memorable 4th. My two year old grandson does a good impression of The Hulk, Korean style, so we did not lack for entertainment 😁. I took great delight in taking number one grandson out of ear shot of his dad and, especially, his mom in order to teach him some mild Airborne oaths and affirmations. He immediately ran to mom and repeated them while pointing at me!!! He mixes Korean and English so I got away with it – this time, heh.

Fireworks started Thursday and continued through the night of the 4th. They stayed away from my house this year, so I did not end up hanging from the ceiling like a scared cartoon cat.

Today I'm hanging loose. The only work I'll do is taking all the papers, magazines and other junk out of the bags I put them in and hid 'cause I had company over, dontcha know. It's a guy thing 😐
browniejr says:
July 5, 2010 at 1:47 pm

@Kevin: know just how you feel:
http://i210.photobucket.com/albums/bb50/matthie34/EastwoodMyLawn.jpg

Dr Alice says:
July 5, 2010 at 2:22 pm

I've got most of today off but signed up to work a four-hour shift at the after hours clinic tonight. I have been running errands and bought a new laptop this weekend; now I have to get a wi-fi router for it. (Hence the volunteering to work tonight.)

Yesterday I went to my neighborhood block party but skipped the fireworks and treated myself to a Perry Mason/Burn Notice marathon courtesy of Netflix. Good stuff.

Leslie in AZ says:
July 5, 2010 at 2:41 pm

My small community does itself proud with its fireworks display, and has gotten it down to a wonderfully short, but completely satisfying 25 minutes. As it is usually about 104 at 9:00, so, the shorter, the better, but last night we had an unusually nice breeze that made the whole thing lovely. Fireworks are not legal in the desert, but still saw a few stray ones brought up from Mexico going off here and there.

John says:
July 5, 2010 at 3:46 pm

Just thought of another thing to do today, though it's a little painful to admit: check Uruguayan websites to see how the big soccer game went. I have a soft spot for the country, if not for soccer, which is, as they say, a torment not threatened in hell itself. Anyway, I'll wait until AFTER the game must be over, since of course nothing ever happens DURING the game. (One good thing about soccer: it runs on a clock. It may not finish but it does end.) Just think, by this time next week we can celebrate an upcoming FOUR YEARS of INDEPENDENCE from the World Cup! Huzzah!

Joe Broderick says:
July 5, 2010 at 5:05 pm

We watched the D.C. fireworks from the Iwo Jima Memorial in Arlington. Pretty freakin' awesome.

swschrad says:
July 5, 2010 at 6:18 pm

no fireworks for us this year, unless you count what was going on in the garage.

what was going on was about $450 in parts, a whole front end job on the Taurus. freakin. beat.

so we hit the rack about 11 pm, decided to set the alarm after all, and got up at 7 to pick blueberries.

17 quarts. the bushes were excellent, full and plump, and we walked
out of there with 19 quarts, winnowed of the leaves and stems and
greenies to 17 at home.

not bad for a week off. after supper, will try and get the air
conditioning hoses replaced and get the system pumped down and
charged again on the Taurus. hopefully, alignment shop can see us
tomorrow.

Spud says:
July 5, 2010 at 7:23 pm

I’ll second what Joe B. said and recommend going to see the
fireworks in DC at least once in your life. Just sit along the Potomac
with the Mall as the background – no need to fight the crowd at the
Mall itself.

The minor league baseball team usually has fireworks every year.
This year they were in town Saturday, not Sunday, so we got ours a
day early. On Sunday I put two racks of babyback ribs in the
smoker, but I messed up somewhat on the rub (need to buy a
commercial blend). They were still edible.

Took the family to see “Toy Story 3” today on my “holiday”. My wife
squeezed out a few tears on the scene with the mom hugging her
son in his room before he left. A few tears happened to exit my
ducts at the end of the movie, but it was more for the beauty of the
scene then sadness about the end or what happened to the main
characters. As parents we identify with the toys and pouring our
lives out to our kids. When they grow up and put us aside it can be
sad, yet there’s that hope of grandkids to give us the chance to relive
the joys of children and the wonderful neck-hugs they give.

lanczos says:
July 6, 2010 at 6:00 pm

Well, if you don’t get your dad to drive you out to “the country”
where you find a discarded sofa and set it on fire by careful
detonation of 20-30 Black Cats, then you really haven’t had a
legitimate “Fourth Of July.”
Recall the gripping tale from a few weeks ago re: the old printer that refused to recognize a genuine HP ink cartridge? The same affliction struck the new printer. In the middle of a job it suddenly started shouting warning messages like someone yelling from a nightmare: *the ink-cartridge door is open! The ink-cartridge door is open! Ma, close the door! The cows will get out and we'll lose all our magenta! Ma!* When I made sure the door was, in fact, cinched shut, the machine decided that the cartridge was not genuine HP after all, declared it no child of mine and disowned it entirely. Nothing could convince it otherwise.

So: either the HP cartridge is defective or the printer is defective. Or, what the heck, both, for both printers. It makes you despair; you realize “well, now it’s Canons for two years, then Lexmarks for – oh, for three months, then back to HP when you tell yourself they’ve fixed the quality control issues.” Junk, all of it. Junk.

JUNK, I tells you.

Well, at least I didn’t have much to print. So there’s that! I just fear dealing
with the Canon scanner interface, although it can't be worse than HP. Yes, yes, I know, buy VueScan. But I had just gotten used to the HP interface on the new scanner. It was designed, as usual, by engineers with no taste who presume Great-gramma is trying to scan something so she can send it by the inter-mails to someone, and needs to be shown in the most obvious way possible that she is old and stupid and should not use computers. Hence it has two icons: one says DOCUMENTS, with a little badge that says “300,” and another says IMAGES, with a badge reading “200.” I assume that means dpi, but who knows? You can make custom profiles, but it never remembers them. There's no button that actually says SCAN, which would be helpful. It's as if the GUI team is a bunch of malicious bastiches who came up with the most non-intuitive interface ever, then said “Okay, now let's add one more step between deciding to scan and actually achieving a scan. Johnson, you're good at this. What would you recommend?”

“Well, just off the top of my head, I'd say have the default setting for saving put it into some proprietary image-collection program buried deep in the User's library, so it can't be found no matter how hard they look.”

“Excellent! Make it so.”

—

Great weekend, despite that. Although my keyboard feels tacky and I do not know why. I have cleaned it. I have washed my hands so much I make OCD sufferers look like germy slackers. It may be the humidity; it's been warm all weekend. We had the air conditioning on, which makes us bad people according to this Salon article. The author is well-intentioned, because he wants to save us all, but like many of his ilk he views just about every boon of modern life to be a Worrisome Thing, and he would like us to stop being so comfortable. I will have more to say about this over at Ricochet, a center-right blog I joined last week. (I had a piece in defense of advertising here, which is here.) The idea for the site is simple: free to read, pay to contribute. Hence the level of comments is a bit better than, oh, our newspaper, which had these comments about the surprisingly poor showing Toy Story 3 had in Russia:

The Russians don't fall into line.
Like we americans. So who's free after all?

Well, if there's anyone who has practice at falling in line, it's Russians. You have to love the easy contempt: Americans go to see something because they are SUPPOSED TO, not because they want to. I find this idea on the right and the left – there's no free will, only conditioning. Each side has its own reasons, and are attempts to explain why people with free will do things with which the Brave Iconoclast finds uninteresting or illogical. Sheeple: it's one of those words that instantly makes me dismiss the speaker, along with “rethuglican” or “teabagger” or “libtard” or “wingnut” or “demoRATs” or anyone who uses a pet name for the president every – single – time.
Whatever. But just luxuriate in the sheer bright stupidity of that statement: “So who’s free after all?”


Update on something I may not have mentioned: I hired a lawn service to fix my lawn this year, because they promised they would make everything verdant, even the difficult boulevards. This they have done. It’s magnificent. What was once a scraggly embarrassing expanse is now lush. But the fellow who spilled the seed upon the ground – call him Onan – did so with gusto on the back brick patio, and grass grew between the bricks. Ugly. I called and noted this; they said they would send someone out. They did. He sprayed. He managed to kill the grass all along the border of the patio. All the way around.

It doesn’t seem that hard: don’t kill the grass where there is supposed to be grass. Do not put grass where there is not supposed to be grass. It’s not tough. It’s not like you look at an expanse of brick and say “judgment call; I’m going with seed” and it’s not like you wave your Wand O’ Poison around and say “a little deadness between the hard, lifeless brick and the lush lawn provides a psychological buffer between the two states of being and non-being, right? Something to think about it.”

Criminey Jebus.

Okay. Here’s a pop-culture quiz: name this guy. Imdb indicates his last few roles were small and pathetic, although I’m sure he was happy to get the work. He was a fellow of great charm and talent in the right role, and a wonderful singer; he made four movies starring as his most famous character – but he made an incredible miscalculation, and killed his career momentum. If you recognize the voice this has to be startling, because he doesn’t look old enough. People who belong to dead mediums should not be showing up in new mediums looking this unlined. As ever, Color is the dividing line between old and new; if someone appeared on color TV, they’re part of the great stew, as current as the cast of the Jersey Shore, ready for remixing. His earlier movies were B&W, as befitted his character – I came across one on TV the other night and was amazed to discover it even existed. But more about that tomorrow.

Let me put it this way: you’re looking at the man who appeared in the first “spin-off” ever. In other terms: the McLean Stevenson of his era. Who wants to be the first to name him?
Later today: Comic Sins. PopCrush starting at nine, and Tumblr starting its non-holiday resumption around ten. Fun stuff coming up this week, including more Gallery of Regrettable Food and a enormous new site on Los Angeles restaurant culture c. 1962. If summer is Mahler's first, we're done with the awakening movement. Time for the dance.

79 RESPONSES TO the dirty giggle

Patrick says:
July 6, 2010 at 11:11 am

@Garden Stater:

I was thinking of the same cartoon. I remember hearing a snippet of The Great Gildersneezesleeve on the XM channel that played classic radio shows, and while listening to the narrator's voice, I was trying to place it. I then remembered the Bugs Bunny cartoon “Hare Conditioned” when the store owner said “Kind of outsmarted you, eh, little chum!?”

Spud says:
July 6, 2010 at 11:18 am

Is there a desktop shortcut icon for “Brave Iconoclast”? Is there such a thing as a timid iconoclast? Hmmm, guess I’ll have to ponder awhile …

Interesting how the Russians did not “cotton” to TS3. I wonder if they just don’t like animated features?

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
July 6, 2010 at 11:27 am

You can have my tractor-feed paper when you pry it out my cold, dead, daisy-wheel printer.

Really, that's not a metaphor.
William Overby says:
July 6, 2010 at 11:47 am

Personally, I love the Canon scanner interface. All in what you get used to, I suppose.

The anti-ergonomic design of scanners « Quotulatiousness says:
July 6, 2010 at 12:42 pm

[…] because it stopped being willing to play nice with her computer, I found that if anything, James Lileks is being over-charitable to scanner ergonomic design […]

Johnny_Bigodes says:
July 6, 2010 at 1:24 pm

HP travails! Oh yeah! That was very funny because we can all relate to it. My HP packed up because I did use some dodgy inkers, but pack up it did. . . .

I did the opposite to y’all, I heard Lileks on Ricochet, came here to his blog.

James, thanks for coming on Ricochet and reminding me of your great sense of humor!

Johnny_Bigodes says:
July 6, 2010 at 1:39 pm

“Bought an HP 3-in-1 a few months ago, and already it’s almost out of ink. The scanning interface leaves something to be desired. That desire being I wish it was easier.”

My last one was on special for €49. HP 3 in 1. Think ink lasts about 20 pages unless it dries out first. And color + black cartridges cost almost the same as the printer at Staples.

swschrad says:
July 6, 2010 at 2:03 pm

evil and murderous printers: remember the day when you sent ASCII bits that mean “letters” to a printer, and it printed? if you didn’t like the way it looked, tough, dude, buy another?

things worked, then. daisy-wheel and tractor feed, oh my.

next stage was the DeskJet in which things just worked with PCL v2.

and then they started fooling with bitstreams and duplexing and multiple paper trays and wonderful dancing icons that did rings around Clippy.

and when stuff stopped working, you had to get rid of the printer and buy another, and maybe even reinstall the OS and the apps.

and the ink cartridges came with individual little serial numbers in them and “die by” dates.

and the forces of pure raw evil took over the land.
bgbear (roger h) says:
July 6, 2010 at 2:15 pm

A made a joke on Facebook that Carly Fiorina's deficit reduction plan, if she is elected US senator, is to replace all government budget related printers with HP printers and then charge normal overprice for black ink and price red ink like it was made from the fine ground sands of Mars.

Ian S. says:
July 6, 2010 at 2:52 pm

It's been mentioned before, but if you don't need color and you aren't using a low-end laser printer you really should be. I have an HP LaserJet 1300 that was like $150 about 5 years ago. Still on the original toner cartridge after several hundred pages, everything speaks PCL5 quite well, and it generally Just Works unless it's out of paper.

Pencilpal says:
July 6, 2010 at 4:16 pm

I recognized Gildersleeve's voice but never knew the fellow's name, and the radio show was before my time but I've heard mention of it. What fantastic voices radio actors had! Mr. Peary packed so many fluctuations into those few little lines of script, and then to cut loose with that buttery chortle! Guess you had to squeeze 150% worth of nuance into a role when all you had to work with was your voice.

hpoulter says:
July 6, 2010 at 4:33 pm

@Johnny_Bigodes:

Besides the Bleat, be sure to check out the Institute.

Start at the top, and you might not leave for a long time:

http://lileks.com/

juanito - John Davey says:
July 6, 2010 at 5:04 pm

Back in 1989 when I worked at Georgia Pacific, we had just gone six months injury free, so local management team elected to hold a drawing for a $500.00 TV – I walked into the meeting last, and was summoned to draw the name of the winner out of a box. Of course, I drew my own name.

Since I had just purchased a $600.00 TV, I asked if I could opt for a printer instead. This is how I came to own my $500.00 Citizen GSX (I want to say it was a GSX-145, but the model detail is lost to ether of my memory). Complete with FIVE (count 'em! five!) typefaces. You could also pick up a ribbon that would permit you to print in RED!

I believe that I still had a carton of tractor fed paper when we moved to our current house in 1995.

InkJet printers are essentially disposable in these mod-ren tymes we live in. Multifunction InkJets are marginally only less disposable. If they re-make The Graduate instead of Plastics, the Future will be Consumables.
NerveBag says:
July 6, 2010 at 5:15 pm

Everyone's prolly going to say, "Duh," but is the other guy Jerry Van Dyke? I'm a little young for whatever that clip is from, but that certainly looks like Luther, the assistant coach from Coach. He was always one of my favorite characters. Him and Dauber... who is now Patrick Star from Spongebob. So odd, but so perfect for that character. Speaking of Patricks, it's almost as perfect as Patrick Warburton as Brock Samson in the Venture Brothers, which is probably the best casting choice in the history of animated-kind. Argue if you will, but you'll be wrong. 😊 Awesome voice artist.

NerveBag says:
July 6, 2010 at 5:17 pm

Oh, and just buy a laser printer. Almost as cheap, and I've had zero problems with my Brother wireless printer. What do you REALLY need to print in color on an everyday basis? Take that stuff to Kinky's.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 6, 2010 at 5:50 pm

Not only is it JVD, it is from that TV classic “My Mother the Car” which was probably better than TV history has given it credit for.

GardenStater says:
July 6, 2010 at 7:17 pm

bgbear, you beat me to it. I remember watching that show, along with “The Mothers-In-Law,” in the late 60s.

Kids these days....

cnyguy says:
July 6, 2010 at 7:25 pm

Since I often found it cheaper to buy a whole new printer (with ink supplied) than to just replace the cartridges, I've gone through a lot of printers. I was quite fond of the Lexmark, at least until it caught on fire. My least favorite was the Canon that automatically performed a self-cleaning function every time it was switched on--roughly equivalent to shooting the ink through a garden hose. Worked great otherwise--but so did the Lexmark until it burnt up.

Mike Gebert says:
July 6, 2010 at 8:25 pm

Peary is one of the voices you pick out instantly when you listen to The Cinnamon Bear (I can't remember if James and Gnat listened to that when she was of an age, but offhand, I find it impossible to believe they didn't). As is Gale Gordon.

Matt Springer says:
July 6, 2010 at 8:25 pm

The problem is not the word “sheeple” in itself, it's that pretty much to a man everyone using it is in lockstep doctrinaire conformity.
with some utterly rigid and humorless ideology. Many times it's not even the ideological minority.

In short, if you think of yourself as special and everyone else as mindless sheep, you probably have things precisely backwards.

Patrick says:
July 6, 2010 at 8:46 pm

RE: Tractor-fed paper

I once found an entire case of the stuff sitting on a bookcase at work about a year ago. I remembered seeing it when I first started working there 8 years ago.

We also have an HP Laserjet 2000-series printer in my department that has seen the test of time, and then some. My department has sent at least 2 million pages to it since its induction into our department back in 2000 or 2001. Over the years it has at least 4 toners replaced, a couple of wheels and bearings that feed the paper replaced, a tray replaced, and the spring to show how much paper is left in a tray, replaced. To this day it's still chugging along.

The issue I had with my Lexmark printer was it was top-feed, and when the paper fed, it went every which way but straight. After the second Lexmark did it, I decided not to get a Lexmark anymore, and to never use top-feed printers. I bought the Samsung at Office Depot one hot June afternoon back in 2006, and it still runs great. The only issue I have with it is I have to remember to turn it off when not in use, or else one of the cats will stand on it and print a test page, as helpful as they ever are.

Tom in Clareville says:
July 6, 2010 at 8:56 pm

James,
As much as I have loved the photographs of the flora around Jasperwood, I am glad to see you get back to the mid-century illustrations for the masthead. It is the signature of your blog.

efurman says:
July 6, 2010 at 11:05 pm

OK, at first I thought you were referring to JVD, because of the “he made an incredible miscalculation, and killed his career momentum.” remark, but you have to actually be referring to Peary because JVD's last roles were not small and pathetic. For those who don't know the story Jerry Van Dyke was a big up and comer in the 50's and 60's and TV producers were trying to find a good fit for him. He had done some shows, but nothing really clicked. “My Mother the Car” being his most famous disaster. Then before he was to appear on ‘The Tonight Show’ he got three sheets to the wind drunk and royally bombed, which pretty much killed his career for the next 20 years or so.

browniejr says:
July 6, 2010 at 11:35 pm

@efurman- your post prompted me to check JVD's page on Wikipedia- “After turning down the role of Gilligan in Gilligan's Island, and also turning down the chance to replace Don Knotts on The Andy Griffith Show (both moves he would later regret), he
accepted the lead role in the short-lived My Mother the Car (1965) ...

efurman says:
July 7, 2010 at 2:03 am

Yes, I checked his Wiki page also and found it very odd that one of the most significant events of his life is not mentioned there. Where I got my information was from JVD himself in an interview that he gave some years ago. I could probably find it myself somewhere on the Internet, but I will leave that as an exercise for the readers, because I just don't feel like it at this moment. 😊 I love Jerry and he was the main reason to watch ‘Coach’, but unfortunately I am not making this up. It was a tragic turn of events...

PersonFromPorlock says:
July 7, 2010 at 3:55 am

As an alternative to VueScan (which I use and recommend for serious photo scanning), consider the freeware program SANE (Scanner Access Now Easy), which handles a large variety of scanners in a standardized way. It's competently designed and is now standard on Ubuntu; it's also available for Windows, Unix and OS/2.

dustbury.com » TWAIN in vain says:
July 7, 2010 at 8:00 am

[...] Lileks has seen one too many of these scanner interfaces: It was designed, as usual, by engineers with no taste who presume Great-grandma is trying to scan something so she can send it by the inter-mails to someone, and needs to be shown in the most obvious way possible that she is old and stupid and should not use computers. Hence it has two icons: one says DOCUMENTS, with a little badge that says “300,” and another says IMAGES, with a badge reading “200.” I assume that means dpi, but who knows? You can make custom profiles, but it never remembers them. There's no button that actually says SCAN, which would be helpful. It's as if the GUI team is a bunch of malicious bastiches who came up with the most non-intuitive interface ever, then said “Okay, now let's add one more step between deciding to scan and actually achieving a scan. Johnson, you're good at this. What would you recommend?” [...]

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 7, 2010 at 10:12 am

@Mike Gebert, re: Cinnamon Bear. My favorite voice heard was Slim Pickens, odd thing was that there was a cowboy character in the story named Slim Pickens yet, that was not the character Pickens played. I wonder what the story there was.

Mike Gebert says:
July 7, 2010 at 7:49 pm

I think “Slim Pickens” was kind of a standard vaudeville/rodeo/whatever nickname well before the actor (who was a rodeo cowboy well before he became an actor and is not, I don't think, in the Cinnamon Bear). On the other hand, the cast list
at the IMDB doesn’t list Peary, either, so I wonder if I mistook Frank Nelson (“Yeeeyessssss?”) for him.

Still not finding what you're looking for?
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!
My favorite moment of the day wasn’t nailing down the final version of the new daily vidcasts, coming to the StarTribune site next week, and it wasn’t enjoying an interval in the sun in the backyard, typing away, and it wasn’t even waking with a song in my heart knowing there was coffee and a small sausage with Rooster sauce waiting downstairs. I took my daughter to a rescheduled piano lesson, went into one of the private rooms, turned on the air conditioner, got out my iPhone, set the alarm, put it in my hand, put up my feet, and fell asleep.

The ability to fall asleep anywhere is a great thing, and I am glad I have it.

Things on a notepad you probably need to explain if someone comes into your studio and looks over your shoulder: the words KILL FAMILY

See, I knew what it mean. Erase the family movies from Backup Disk 3, because I needed the room, and it was the 6th backup.

Yes, sixth. I have hella backups, as they say, but managing them all is an
enormous bother. An automated program puts stuff on the removable USB drives, but they slowed down my system to the point where every time I wanted to save a file the computer would have to check all the drives: hello? You here? Spin up, dude, the boss wants us. So I took them off, and now they're backed up weekly. There are automated back-ups and off-site backups and cloud backups and DVD versions. It's insane. But here's why:

As far as I can remember, I've never had a main drive go south.

The hammer has to fall sooner or later.

Still doing Wii Fit; thank you for inquiring. The trainer in the “Strength” programs changed her hair; she now has a strange two-pronged quiff sticking out of her head. No less unrealistic than the off-center spherical boobage or her disconcerting way of speaking without moving her lips and gesturing in a fashion utterly disconnected to the words. And she still shows up late every third day, saying “I stayed up too late last night,” after which she tells me it's important to get a good night's sleep. Thanks, coach. That's the sort of pro-tip I came her for. Sleep, you say? I'll look into that.

Speaking of which, it's time to relieve my daughter, and spend 20 minutes stepping up and down on a board for the purposes of cardiac health. I bought a device that lifts it up seven inches, so it's actually something like an exercise now. Before it was as tasking as climbing up a Saturday newspaper.

Another day, another building that brings me to tears. It's odd to feel distant from modern architecture – for so many years I was right alongside the new styles and theories, and thought we were heading in two interesting directions: classical revival and gorgeous abstraction. The former wasn't the return to pillars and pediments, but rather buildings that had the grace and proportions of the old skyscraper styles, or at least nodded towards their ornamental vocabulary. This would be “post-modernism,” at least as the term applied in America. The other style has no name I think of, but you might call it Theatrical Modernism – it had the materials of modernism, the shapes of Depression Moderne, and the ability to command the spotlight. Think 333 Wacker, which is just pure and perfect and the only possible building for the spot – that would be the slightly sedate corporate version of the style. The other end: the work of Archetectonica, evne though their signature building, the Atlantis, looks a bit dated now, what with the self-conscious and obligatory early 80s Geometric Shape perched on the roof. But at the time, the colors, the hole in the building – it was a new way to have fun with glass boxes, and was infinitely preferable to the Brutalist heaps. If you know the style, you know what I mean: Naked Concrete, Proudly Formed in Immense Masses! To show the honesty of it all the concrete usually had the mark of the forms into which it was poured. Thank God that's over.

Of course, it's never over; every bad idea rolls around again. I read today a piece in the Times about a city that's built a new modern masterpiece, and naturally it's a museum, the modern version of the Church. (That's Tom Wolfe's theory, not mine, but he's right.) It's mostly dull except for two things:
it appears to be made out of concrete, complete with holes to indicate where the stuff was injected, and it has a box laid on top, jutting over the side. It cost $223 million.

Yes, it's a Transformer Turtle. Where is it? Rome. (Picture from here, which has views you may like.) The article discusses how Rome is trying to reinvent itself, sort of, and make it new! and exciting! and a destination point for moderns, because God knows there's precious little else for anyone to come to Rome. They need museums and art, right?

Sweet Jeezum Crow, look at this.

The article notes that there are already a few pieces of architecture around Italy that could stand the application of a lire or two, since they're A) ancient, and B) falling down. It's called “As Rome modernizes, its past slowly crumbles.” Two quotes stick out:

Contemporary architecture now promises to be the engine and symbol of a new creative identity for Rome that, if development is done right for a change, would complement the city's glorious past.

“What does Rome want to be when it grows up?” is how Richard Burdett, a planner from London with Italian roots, put the situation the other day. He meant the situation of Rome at a crossroads, struggling ahead, falling behind.

Is that what he means? Because surely he's being waggish here about Rome “growing up.” It's pretty damned well grown. Then there's this:

What's clear is only that the effort to push Rome's livable, cultural space outward from the center is a step in the right direction. Just a step.

Or, as Mr. Fuksas phrased it, “Architecture is interesting, but by itself it means nothing.”

That statement is interesting, but by itself, it means nothing. Architecture, by
itself, should mean everything about the culture that produced it, and you should be able to tell by looking at it what sort of people made it. In much of modern architecture, particularly the museum genre, it is impossible not to sense that the artistic elites and their credulous backers have lost all connection with the cultures that produced them, and where it has been. They are interested only in arranging shapes and empty spaces in ways that say nothing.

Don't read this as a modern = bad screed; I live in a house that was quite modern for its time, in a neighborhood that broke with the grid and tried to bring new ideas to the standard city model. I love most architecture that tried to do something different, right up until the point where the expression of one individual became the only thing that mattered. Architecture has always been a collaboration – even if there's one Genius designing the building, he or she collaborates with the developers, the occupants, and the street where the building exists. Now we have enormous mounds of narcissistic concrete and metal, housing the yawps and shouts of artists who cannot put the past into the shredder fast enough.

I hate feeling this way.

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Later today: I have no idea. Tumblr isn't posting my queued posts; they just sit there, and I get busy, and forget to manually inject them into the internet. But yet life goes on. Quite possibly be another week where everything piles up into Friday, but that's fine, no?

Oh, to complete what I posted yesterday about Gildersleeve / Harold Peary: wikipedia says he didn't mean to quit the show, but the Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio says he did. I go with the latter. He struck out on his own, created a new character that had the tone and foibles of the old without the backstory and supporting cast, and the show flamed out and died. He never recovered. As Harriet mentioned in the comments, his role on Gildersleeve was taken over by William Waterman, who sounded exactly like him – although he didn't use the “dirty laugh,” or “buttery chortle” as Pencilpal wonderfully called it, out of respect. Or out of inability: Orson Welles could never do the Shadow's chuckle, either. Apparently Waterman got a standing-O from the audience after his first show; everyone was stunned that he had inhabited the character completely right off the bat.

I know I do go on about old-time radio, but it is a wonderful thing, if you've the time. Gidy is one of the only comedies I can take (as noted before: Benny is superb, and the spin-off, Phil Harris' show, is equally masterful. And jarring: when I was a wee tot my life revolved, for a month or two, around “The Jungle Book,” which had Phil Harris as Balloo.) The stories on “Gildersleeve” have long arcs; people grow up, things happen. And to repeat what Bill said in comments:

Wow! Reading wiki about Gildersleeve reveals this: “Many of the
Isn’t that just amazing? Anyway, it’s not to everyone’s tastes, but it has less corn than most, and I’ve always enjoyed it. The movie I watched the other night, “Gildersleeve on Broadway,” was enjoyable throughout, and made me think that the sort of media cross-over it represented wouldn’t be possible today. To hear the characters, then see them – we’ve no modern analogue. Even more jarring: the kid who played the kid on the radio wasn’t a kid at all, so he couldn’t play the kid in the movie. But he plays a bellhop in the movie, and it’s the same voice. People knew. It’s almost as if a certain amount of sophistication about the media didn’t begin with Us.

Oh, at the end? Gildersleeve ends the movie as he ended the radio. He turns to the camera and says “Good night, folks,” with worrisome exasperation. Breaking the fourth wall? Back then? But they were rubes!

Well, I wouldn’t say that.

41 RESPONSES TO zzzzzz and then something else

Terry says:
July 7, 2010 at 3:19 am

You would have thought that, oh, say, about 1978, the architects would have thought that designing buildings that were used to illustrate a bad, dystopian future in sci-fi films weren’t good buildings.

Giovanni Fogliato says:
July 7, 2010 at 3:36 am

Hail from Italy Mr. Lileks, weaver of remembrances!

Well, looking at the tax chrisys, the gov chrisys, the political chrisys, the value chrisys I wouldn’t say that concrete is our worst problem here. Ooops. Just a quick observation. Cheers.

hpoulter says:
July 7, 2010 at 5:05 am

I’ll have to give Gildy another chance. I hear an occasional episode on XM, and as Lileks says, it had long story arcs, and I don’t always know what’s going on. Time to listen in order (I listened to every...
available Jack Benny program in sequence).
I do recognize the “Well, I wouldn’t say that” tag from the show – Mr Peavey.


Sue Dunham says:
July 7, 2010 at 6:46 am

“…the artistic elites and their credulous backers have lost all connection with the cultures that produced them…”
Living in Toronto, Canada, with the new Lee-Chin Crystal and the Frank Gehry Art gallery addition, this really hits home.

Bob Lipton says:
July 7, 2010 at 6:48 am

Context, James, and purpose. Architecture means little outside its context and purpose.

And if its purpose is to say “Look at me!” then just paint yourself purple and stand naked in Times Square. But don’t wear a cowboy hat.

Bob

shesnailie says:
July 7, 2010 at 7:07 am

_@_.v – yoko ono used to say ‘you can’t unknow what you know’

modern architecture – and current economic policy – has thoroughly disproved that notion

Tom T. says:
July 7, 2010 at 7:21 am

Heh-heh: “Mr. Fuksas.” No wonder he's out to destroy the world, one horrible building at a time.

Darrell says:
July 7, 2010 at 7:37 am

Quiff? The word has a very naughty slang meaning, James.

Grayhackle says:
July 7, 2010 at 8:04 am

It certainly does have a naughty slang meaning. Several, in fact. Quite common in the UK.

RPD says:
July 7, 2010 at 8:08 am

Sadly, I’d never encountered Gildersleeve before yesterday. I only knew Peary as the occasional odd voice on TV reruns.

ice to finally know what the holes in the expanses of concrete are
for. I'd always assumed they were pick up points for craning prefab blocks into place. Live and learn.

**RPD** says:
July 7, 2010 at 8:10 am

Don't you hate when you spot your typo just a heartbeat after you've clicked submit? You want to click the un-submit, but alas.

**rick mcginnis** says:
July 7, 2010 at 8:55 am

Sue Dunham – also live in Toronto, also forced to agree about the egregious “exploded crystal.” (Who, I have to ask, even though a detonated sharp jaggedy thing was a good idea for a building?)

As for the building James is talking about, I looked at the other pictures, and my eye kept wandering past the tedious gray planes and spheres to the warm terracotta and ochre walls of the adjacent neighbourhood. It's bad enough that this sort of architecture just looks like a physicalized computer rendering; even worse that no one can see the abiding virtues and attractions of the (far more mundane – like that's a bad thing) structures already there. The ones that made Rome a cultural magnet even when it was an abandoned capitol where peasants salvaged building materials from the Forum, say?

**Peter** says:
July 7, 2010 at 9:20 am

Great post! Allow me to make a correction, though: the man who replaced Peary as the Great Gildersleeve was Willard Waterman, not William. I don't know much about Gildersleeve, but I do know Waterman played one of the adulterous executives in The Apartment. "But it's her birthday, I already bought the cake!"
bgbear (roger h) says:
July 7, 2010 at 10:39 am

I believe some of the marks on concrete construction are where the rebar stuck out for tensioning.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 7, 2010 at 10:46 am

Another Gildy trivia is that niece Marjorie eventually married Bronco Thompson played by Richard Crenna who did squeezy teenager voices on the radio that seems far from the voice we are used to in TV and movies.

Crenna also did Walter on Our Miss Brooks. I recommend OMB if you get hooked on Old Time radio (OTR). The plots are often silly but the one liners from Eve Arden are really funny and modern.

GardenStater says:
July 7, 2010 at 10:56 am

I think perhaps James meant to say “coiffe,” not “quiff.”

And Rooster Sauce is also known as sriracha. The most popular brand features a picture of a rooster on the bottle.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 7, 2010 at 11:05 am

“Quiff” is that Elvis impersonator thing.

hpoulter says:
July 7, 2010 at 11:11 am

Look it up. It has another, naughty meaning, but it also means exactly what he used it to mean – a hairstyle.

My sister got mad at me and my other sister for not warning her that “cooter” has a naughty meaning. To us, it is the name of a type of turtle, which my niece had as a pet. Sis was somewhat embarrassed when she told the other nurses at work about “my daughter's cooter”. Ah well, don’t let the dirty meanings win, folks.

Ike Jones says:
July 7, 2010 at 11:26 am

A question: Wasn't Gildersleeve a spin-off from the old Fibber McGee and Molly show? I know one of the actors was on the show. He may have played Mayor LaTrivia though – it's been a long time. Speaking of the mayor, I didn't get the name for many years.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 7, 2010 at 11:34 am

@hpoulter: that is funny, your sister really pulled a boner.

Bizarcane says:
July 7, 2010 at 11:35 am

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7506  
Page 8 of 12
Possible modern corollary to radio stars crossing into films: Film actors lending their voices to video games and vice versa, representing video game characters in filmic media.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 7, 2010 at 11:39 am

IIRC Peary played a variety of characters on Fibber McGee and Molly and many of them shared the last name Gildersleeve.

Fibber and Molly once made an appearance on “The Great Gildersleeve”.

browniejr says:
July 7, 2010 at 11:58 am

I really miss Lance Lawson, and the editing ability of the Buzz site: http://buzz.mn/?q=node/5727

jglor says:
July 7, 2010 at 12:06 pm

I know not of Gildersleeve, but that voice and chuckle sounded so familiar, I had to figure it out. Wikipedia was less than helpful, but IMDB has a very long list of Harold Peary parts. It turns out I remember him from Rudolph’s Shiny New Year. He played Big Ben, the whale.

John says:
July 7, 2010 at 12:38 pm

I can’t get worked up about architecture anymore. It has done its jibt too well. Alienation was the mission and the mission was accomplished. Architecture is like environmentalism: its practitioners hate people.

Re To hear the characters, then see them – we've no modern analogue: we could, if movies suddenly starred bloggers. Which reminds me of something I was going to say about ricochet.com yesterday: it looked interesting enough to join, then I noticed the same few monickers cropping up all over. There is insufficient difference between “don’t have enough to do” and “don’t have enough to do but do have $3.47.” (And also “do have enough to do, spent the $3.47 on Big Red, and post on forums.sun.com,” but that is another story.) Improving comment tone by making commenters pay is a fair idea but a better idea is make them reveal their real names.

Bill Peschel says:
July 7, 2010 at 12:48 pm

Thanks for the quote, James. I love love love those weird Connections. In fact, I just ordered James Burke’s “Connections” from the library to watch with my kids (I’m old enough to have watched Jakob Bronowski’s “Ascent of Man” in high school, which was a more erudite “Connections.”)

Anyway, let me add another link, this time about architecture. Vanity Fair’s latest issue has their best of modern architecture survey, so take a look and see if you like them any better:

http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2010/08/architecture-
I love the HSBC Building, Hong Kong, if only because it looks like an outtake from Terry Gilliam's “Brazil.”


Joe Broderick says:
July 7, 2010 at 1:46 pm

You know, that concrete building in Rome isn't so bad. All it needs is a Water Feature...

Aodhan says:
July 7, 2010 at 1:55 pm

Wow, past is prologue(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism). I think there are genuine architects occasionally, Thomas Jefferson comes to mind. It's a shame it's been downhill since 'history ended' in 1904 or so.

madCanada says:
July 7, 2010 at 3:27 pm

@ Sue Dunham & Rick McGinnis

As a fellow Torontonian, must agree. We (TO) were all starstruck by a celeb architect; stuck with napkin-drawn wonky vanity-space for dinosaurs. White museum interiors covered with dust & scuff-marks days after opening. Not so chrystally now. Dinosaurs want old Art Deco digs back (I divined that psychically).

Writeaway says:
July 7, 2010 at 4:17 pm

It was WWII that ruined architecture. Bahaus, Art Deco, Streamline Moderne were all great styles and spoke to a joyful human spirit and all that was gone after the war. Just another reason to hate Hitler, as if another was needed.

Writeaway says:
July 7, 2010 at 4:37 pm

Oh and I forgot about the Arts & Craft movement with Craftsman architecture. True it started in the late 19th century, stayed strong though until the '30's.

Ian S. says:
July 7, 2010 at 4:43 pm

I will admit to having played Bioshock just to gawk at all the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne stuff – they did a lovely job on the art design.

Oh, and Writeaway? Stalin, not Hitler. The Venona documents showed the USSR funded a lot of the early proponents of ugly post-modern art and architecture with the aim of demoralizing the West. (It sounds so cartoonish now – I can almost hear Rocky and Bullwinkle trying to foil that plot in my head). It pretty much backfired when hipsters and art critics decided the ugly new stuff

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7506
was Teh Awesome.

shesnailie says:
July 7, 2010 at 5:20 pm

_@_v – yeah, but hitler made the moderns fashionable by his hatred of the stuff

hatless in hattiesburg says:
July 7, 2010 at 8:07 pm

re “surely he's being waggish here about Rome growing up.” – either that, or he's writing from Damascus, Athens, or Aleppo…

swschrad says:
July 7, 2010 at 9:11 pm

Rooster sauce: indeed there is a hot sauce with that name, saw it once at Marino's Deli on the Nordeast. for some silly reason, that Italian spot had 40-odd different hot sauces for sale. also at least one of every oddball soda ever made in the cooler.

mike hollihan says:
July 8, 2010 at 3:52 am

Just a quick “thank you” to James for getting me to listen to The Great Guildersleeve. Yeah, it's a bit formulaic, and the characters can be thin or stereotypical. But I'm enjoying it! And I can almost visualise the actors on stage at their mikes, the sound crew hard at work, the audience laughing. These episodes are a welcome break from today's TV shows.

Someone mentions “Our Miss Brooks” up above. I love Eve Arden, so I'll check those out, too. Thanks!

Kev says:
July 8, 2010 at 10:02 am

@browniejr: Thanks for bringing up buzz.mn; I miss Lance Lawson as well, and it was nice to see it again for a second. It was also good to know that somewhere, in an alternate universe, Minneapolis will still pay me to buy a house. (I wonder if I could get them to buy me one here in Dallas?)

Switcheroo says:
July 8, 2010 at 11:05 pm

The Rome museum's architect is described as a “deconstructivist” on Wikipedia. So she undoes what constructivists do? So she does nothing constructive? So her work is the architectural equivalent of complaining? And maybe the whole point is to increase the amount of complaining in the world, or lying to oneself, or engaging in Socratic monologues, or self-referential thinking, ad nauseum, etc.
Still not finding what you're looking for?
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

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

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

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Thanks for dropping by! Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Didn’t do anything worth writing about today except write, and that will have to speak for itself. I did discover a new way to embarrass my daughter in public: imitate a chicken. Even the smallest, subtlest cawwww brings fits of pain – but only if you introduce the subject by putting your hands in your armpits and BAWKing while waiting for the Chinese take-out to be ready.

Once outside, it goes without saying that you have to go full chicken and do the walk, too, just to grind it in.

GOSH DAD. DON’T.

Oh, will. This probably has nothing to do with her desire this morning to head off to class by herself, and not have me walk up to the door, as I’ve done in years past. Part of the growing desire to do things for herself, by herself, and it’s wrong to object. You can’t object. This is what you were supposed to teach them to do, right? Self-confidence, growing up, all that stuff. Of course you can’t help but see an immense chart titled THINGS FOR WHICH YOUR PRESENCE IS NO LONGER REQUIRED with half the boxes ticked off, but that’s how it works. You walk back out to the car, another day underway, just as sunny and warm as the last . . . with another millimeter of space between the this and the then.

But it is warm, and it is sunny. Later it turned dark and damp, and the clouds
threw down big fat raindrops like we’d been complaining about the small size of the previous drops, ungrateful swine that we are. FINE you want BIG here you go hope you LIKE it. Well, good for the crops. As they say. Soybeans should be the size of tennis balls this year.

**Had a door-to-door salesman** come by tonight, selling miracle cleaning fluid. My wife, kind soul that she is, indulged the pitch; I’m more inclined to say “sorry, no solicitors” and leave it at that. But this fellow was persistent. Loud and cheerful, with a great line of patter. You want to support people who have tough lines of work, but A) a little internet investigation revealed that the company sends out traveling sales crews who roam the land selling $37 jugs of Miracle Fluid, and B) they have a D- minus from the BBB. Also, C): Really? Door to door cleaning fluid? I suspect many people buy it because they want to support the salesman, not the product. He's so good! And he was. But those skills would shine in retail or restaurant work and make him a hell of a lot more money.

After a while I could tell the pitch had gone on looong enough, so I got out my cell, dialed the land-line, and called to my wife: Phone's for you.

“How you doin', Dad!” said the salesman.

Don't call me Dad, I thought. “Aces,” I said.

“Aces! I like that! I’m going to use that!”

I have no idea why I said “Aces,” but I say it from time to time as an expression of satisfaction. It's one of my irritating tics: I never say “fine” when asked how I am. I have a repertoire: Aces. Dandy. Jack-dandy. Keen. Nifty. Everyone should have a few of those. You can only say “great” so many times before you realize you should drop in a “Rockin’ good news” every so often. I’d say “copacetic” more but it’s too much of an affectation, and I have no idea what it means. No one does. Although the theory that it’s Yiddish filtered through Black is fascinating, and very American.

**So:** here's this week's Black and White update.
Bad movie, but it's summer sci-fi / monster season, so I have to watch them. See you at PopCrush (the blogs went down yesterday, so only two posts) and Tumblr, where five posts are queued and ready to be automatically ignored, then manually spanked and sent into the world. See you around!

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66 RESPONSES TO bwak bwak (he’s everywhere)

**steve** says:
July 8, 2010 at 2:01 pm

Like you, my goal in life has been to embarrass my children. Walked my fully-grown daughter down the aisle this weekend, and found myself doing everything I could to not embarrass her (don't step on the dress, don't trip, don't cry). She gave me a sweet kiss and said she loved me while I was trying to choke out something as I handed her off. It's all worthwhile.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
July 8, 2010 at 2:24 pm

@swschrad, that would be Yog-Sothoth.

**old unkajoe** says:
July 8, 2010 at 2:35 pm

When asked how I am, my two responses (depending on my mood) are “fit as a fiddle and twice as musical” or “up and taking nourishment.” I'll let you guess which mood is which.
browniejr says:
July 8, 2010 at 3:13 pm

My father would always respond to the question “What’s new?” with “So- what should be?!”

RPD says:
July 8, 2010 at 3:48 pm

@John Robinson: I wonder if he got it from Mike Royko, a longtime columnist for the Chicago Tribune. He often referred to conversations with his imaginary working class friend “Slats Grobnik”. He was widely syndicated, so Slats was around for decades.

raf says:
July 8, 2010 at 4:09 pm

Way back when, “slats” was a common nickname for any boy (never heard it applied to a girl) who was relatively tall and thin. I always just assumed it referred to the slats which one might find in a picket fence or corn crib, but I was relatively comic-illiterate at the time, so what would I know?

I like to respond to “How are you?” with “Much better, thanks for asking.” It really confuses them.

raf says:
July 8, 2010 at 4:12 pm

Another good response is “It doesn’t get any better than this.” This is usually taken as an upbeat thing, but upon reflection can be understood to be deeply pessimistic.

Larry says:
July 8, 2010 at 4:32 pm

That spider looks like a bulldog with a foot ball helmet on his head

John English says:
July 8, 2010 at 4:46 pm

Usually what sputters out of me is “been better, been worse.” I may try “Aces” though. Try it on the wife tonite. If she rolls her eyes it’ll never pass my lips again.

Ellbeedee says:
July 8, 2010 at 5:02 pm

Worked with a woman whose reply was “never had a better day!” which often sounded forced. Try that cheerfully through clenched teeth a few times. Wanted to wring her neck after about the hundredth time I had to endure it.

lanczos says:
July 8, 2010 at 5:28 pm

Any guy who doesn’t like “Missle To The Moon” has never been 13 and spent the night at a friend’s house, and his mom took the two of
you downtown to the Paramount theater and you watched This Movie!

And “If I had a tail, I’d wag it...”

**NerveBag** says:
July 8, 2010 at 9:26 pm

Missle to the Moon is much better when watched with a RiffTrax. There is one, and it's hilarious, of course. [http://www.rifftrax.com](http://www.rifftrax.com)

I don't work for 'em. I just love 'em. 😊

**NerveBag** says:
July 8, 2010 at 9:30 pm

@raf

I've used a version of that myself: “Never been better!” People always say, “Great!” And occasionally, depending on how well I know the person and the mood I'm in, I'll respond with something like, “You never know... that COULD be a bad thing,” or something to that effect. I don't think they get it. 😊

Good to see someone else has picked up on the double meaning behind that phrase.

**fizzbin** says:
July 9, 2010 at 11:07 am

Re: How are you. I would usually stop what I was doing, drop all expression from my face, mouth agape, eyes wide and unblinking and reply (while slowly thrusting my face toward theirs), “The doctors say I'm MUCH better now”. Most people laughed or took a step back.

When I was on the Thin Blue Line this earned me a butt chewing from the Lt. of Patrol – LE administrators have no sense of humor 😃

**spinetingler** says:
July 11, 2010 at 10:33 am

I've started using my grandfather's reply to “How are you?”: Fat and sassy.

We had door-to-door home security salesmen today. Probably casing the homes with out security systems.

**Vlad the Impala** says:
July 21, 2010 at 7:22 am

“How are ya?”

“Just enjoying the Unbearable Lightness of Being”

And the conversation stops.
I still don’t know what to make of this.
Wall to fargin' wall, this one: drop off child at the morning "class" – it's actually web-design workshop, where she learns some code – and then race home to plug in Skype and have an interview with the Governor for the Ricochet podcast. During the chat I fired off a few posts I’d penned right after I got up: the clock now starts ten minutes after I get up, which is the downside of working at home. Also the upside: you can slide down the dino tail before the Official Quitting Time of 5, because you know you'll be working later that day. I prefer the endless smear to the hard-and-fast demarcations of the old-style workplace, but it has its problems. When there's no quitting time, there's no sense of being truly free from the machinery. But the incremental freedoms throughout the day compensate.

It'll only get worse next week, when the daily videos start up. But I mean "worse" in the context of “being busy being employed doing stuff I like,” which is not “worse” at all, but “reasons for weeping fits of gratitude.”

Oh, I could be watching a movie right now; started one last night, and regretted it right away. “An American Dream.” Mid-60s, which means
“American” is intended in the sense of “inflated, unexamined, inherently poisonous thing whose meaning is barren and ironic.” Based on a book by Norman Mailer. It’s about a TV talk-show host who kills his wife. By “talk-show” I mean he answers phones, on TV, and we hear only his side of the conversation, and then he fires loaded questions at jelly-kneed guests. Did such a thing ever exist? The dialogue is overheated and ridiculous, but the credits intrigued: produced by William Conrad, of all people, and there’s a small role for George Takei. So I will watch it in 15 minute intervals over the next week, eating my small bag of popcorn to stave off the gnawing hunger of the diet, shutting everything down before I trudge up to bed with the conviction nothing more can, or should, or must, be done.

**Tomorrow** I begin the computer equivalent of a fast and a high colonic: swapping out the main hard drive for a new one. Oh do tell me more, you say. Fine: the old “green” drive,” which is slow – I mean Wilfred Brimley walking on ice slow – will be replaced with a faster one, but I will not restore the data from the backup. Everything will be added one item at a time. Including iTunes.

Now. I have a billion songs in my iTunes, and I don't like most of them. It's a wasteland of stuff I think I need to have in iTunes because I may have liked it once. Or thought I needed it. This is what annoys me about iTunes – you can't just use it to play a song, you have to store the song in the program, and – you there, in the back, waving your hand?

*I'm sorry but you can play songs in the Finder, either by using QuickLook or the preview pane in the columns option. Most power users know this.*

Why, you're right! You can use QuickLook, except that the window disappears if you do anything else. And while you can play it in the preview pane, the new improved version does not allow you to scrub through a song as you could before, so if you mistakenly close the window you lose your place. Satisfied, you smug little prig?

Where was I? Right: pruning. So I'm adding everything back with an eye – or an ear, ha! – to whether I actually want to hear the song again ever as long as I live. Same with fonts. Same with all the programs. Nuke & pave and clear out the cruft, install Windows 7 as well, and while I'm at it, completely rejigger the way I store and sort information. You get set in certain ways, certain styles of saving and arranging, and I'm just in the sort of mad, crazy mood to rethink my filing paradigms.

**Mentioned** “Pennies from Heaven” a few weeks ago. It's one of the soundtrack that will stay on the playlist; even after all these years those versions make me want to slide down the hallway Christopher-Walken style and annoy my daughter. As you may know and not care, the movie came from a Dennis Potter BBC series, which was better in almost ever possible way. Compare-and-contrast gives you an interesting look at Hollywood vs. BBC TV. These are short but telling – and it's a great tune, anyway.
First, the American version. There's so much about this that doesn't work – the kids, for one – but Lordy, Bernadette Peters. It's a great song, and the modern addition really starts to earn its keep around 1:54.

And here's how it was done in the British version. Darker, creepier, cheaper. Better.

Friday links:

Bleonplus!

100 Mysteries!

And 30s ads, with a batch of peculiar cigarette ads.

And the usual here and there and everywhere – Popcrush, Strib column,
Twitter, Ricochet. It's Friday! That means pizza, my friends, and the glorious summer weekend. Enjoy, and I'll see you soon.

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### 47 RESPONSES TO *friday! (with out of context ad solution)*

**Irish Al** says:
July 9, 2010 at 3:10 am

You can file the remake of “Pennies From Heaven” in the same dustbin as the equally pointless remake of “Get Carter”. Both were perfect in their original form.

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**Ross** says:
July 9, 2010 at 3:41 am

The reason you've never heard someone exclaim with disgust as they grind out a “dusty” smoke (“germy”–I dunno: when I worked as a tobacconist, the few all-natural specialty cigarettes on the market, like Nat Sherman's, might harbor tobacco bugs–or mold, if they got & stayed very damp, but that's pretty rare in these days of climate controlled buildings) is it's been a few decades since commercial coffin nails rose or fell on the merits of the tobacco used alone. In order to have the same (more or less) flavor for a given brand & not have it dry out (as the demon weed will when stale), cigarette makers use a _lot_ of additives. And trust me, the “dust”–powder from repeated handling/crumbling of tobacco–even from a blend of excellent tobaccos, does not smoke well. I make my own, & it's always a debate with myself about how cheap I want to be about the tiniest bits left in the humidor. Hate to waste it, but it's usually a raw, nasty smoke.

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**hpoulter** says:
July 9, 2010 at 4:39 am

And not to quibble (much) but “humidor” has nothing to do with germs. It has to do with keeping tobacco moist (humid), and prevent drying out.

Besides, everybody knows – LSMFT.

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**GardenStater** says:
July 9, 2010 at 4:56 am

OK, I don't want to start a whole thread here, but.

I think there are a couple of differences between the BBC PFH and Steve Martin's:

1. The remake was trying to evoke not just the songs of the 30s, but the movies, as well. That classroom scene (and many others) could have come right out of a Busby Berkley movie. Talk about creepy, just rewatch the Chris Walken scene from a few days ago.

2. If the BBC had decent budgets, they might have done the same
thing. The scene was well done, but “darker”? “creepier”? Cheaper, certainly (no costume or set changes, fewer and less-talented kid actors/dancers). “Better”? I guess, like everything, it’s in the eye of the beholder.

I say that having never seen the BBC version, apart from that short clip. But I love the remake.

**Obi-Wandreas** says:
July 9, 2010 at 5:24 am

Anything that can be played in iTunes can be played in QuickTime Player. You can right-click (ctrl-click, two-fingers-on-the-trackpad-click) and select “Open With”.

**Orebaugh** says:
July 9, 2010 at 5:27 am

Speaking of Lawrence Tierney (weren’t we?) … “Born to Kill” (1947) with Claire Trevor and bonus Trek connections in Elisha Cook, Jr. and director Robert Wise. Not a redeeming character in the lot, but you watch to see just how low everyone can sink. Recommended by … me! That’s right, me! Void where prohibited.

**browniejr** says:
July 9, 2010 at 8:21 am

How about a “MST3K connection:” Gene Roth or Merritt Stone?  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8yUsNqynHo

**Al Federber** says:
July 9, 2010 at 8:32 am

Re “Pennies…”: The main difference in the two versions is that Cheryl Campbell is sexy and Bernadette Peters is not.

**Geoff** says:
July 9, 2010 at 8:41 am

I’d just like to say, Al, you’re insane.

**Gene Dillenburg** says:
July 9, 2010 at 8:42 am

ad #2:  
“Congratulations on your improved cellophane wrapper. I can open it.”

This must be close to the definition of “damning with faint praise.”

ad #3:  
You don’t hear “That’s white of you” too much anymore.

And, to whomever made the PFH YouTube video, it’s lipSYNCHing, not “sinking.”

Jeebus…
Ah, you sad sacks with your silly “GUI” applications for enjoying audio.

> mplayer -novideo -shuffle /home/Music/*/*.ogg

Actually, your slightly insane Mac probably has a build of mplayer and I know y’alls have a terminal emulator (does OS10 use tcsh or bash by default, though? I can’t recall).

No, the British version was creepier. Look at the looks on the kids’ faces. The kids in the British version are sharing the teacher’s sexual fantasies. The American kids are just on the job, doing the Busby Berkley thing for the sake of the spectacle and a paycheck.

Tierney on Seinfeld is one of my favorite episodes. I’ve never really seen him in anything other than that (and, of course, Reservoir Dogs). Wow, did he change!

Al: While I agree that Cheryl Campbell is way sexy, I must defend Ms. Peters’ allure. Maybe not so much anymore, but back about 30 years ago, she was a major hottie.

A side story about Bernadette: Back in the mid-80s, I dated a girl who helped run an animal talent agency. They’d supply dogs, horses, whatever was needed for things like ads or TV, etc. I was invited along to a LIFE Magazine photo shoot featuring Bernadette in a bubble bath, holding a dove aloft on her finger. She was wearing a flesh-colored bathing suit with a top that came straight across the decolletage. The photographer tried a few times to get her to lower the suit (just to get a better shot, you know…). She refused. Had to hand it to her.

And yes, that “lipsinking” annoyed me, too!

He can open the cellophane wrapper. What I want to know: were other ciggy packs’ cello wrappers glued better? Thicker? Reinforced with steel threads? Why I’m even asking/wondering?

AS good as the BBC Pennies From Heaven Was, The Singing
Detective was even better and the difference between that the American version with Downey was light years, not even close.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
July 9, 2010 at 9:57 am

Al, I must respectfully disagree with you here. I mean we all have our own tastes, and mine have never run to redheads, but come on man! Bernadette Peters, (as he runs through Tex Avery’s pantheon of inappropriate male reactions to hotties) was just too much!

**browniejr** says:
July 9, 2010 at 10:09 am

Bernadette: Go for the song tribute for George Burns, stay for the Farm Film Celebrity Blow Up:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1QRxu-FLB0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1QRxu-FLB0)

I had the same Tex Avery reactions to the still photos in the above link...

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
July 9, 2010 at 10:30 am

There was a TV show in LA called “Talk Back with George Putnam” (there was also a radio version). It was pretty much a conservative version of Phil Donahue.

Putnam is best known outside of LA as the guy in “Perversion for Profit” a now humorous anti-porno film from the 60s.

**James O** says:
July 9, 2010 at 10:33 am

Pennies from Heaven has one thing going for it: it’s from an era when Steve Martin was still trying to do something new and different; not The Jerk 2.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
July 9, 2010 at 10:47 am

MS. Peters had the greatest line in a sadly short lived sitcom called “All’s Fair.” She commented to her co-star Richard Crenna, “By now, even our germs are shacking up together.” A line my then fiancee, now my dearly beloved wife found hilarious and has used ever since.

**old unkajoe** says:
July 9, 2010 at 10:48 am

“Bernadette Peters Lipsinking.”

So many jokes, so little time.

**juanito - John Davey** says:
July 9, 2010 at 10:49 am

I liked *Pennies From Heaven*, and I also liked *Dead Men Don’t Wear Plaid*.
I vigorously condemn Steve Martin's turns at Sgt. Bilko and Inspector Clouseau.

Bernadette Peters back in the late 70s and early 80s had a toned down Betty Boop quality. But man, can she belt out a tune.

James, you should really think about a few virtual machines and replicate your data and programs there. A linux box acting as host for the various OSes with some big drives (RAID) and a bunch of RAM, and your backups / snapshots are fast, easy, and portable between machines. said the man with four servers, and a network rack at home, complete with the requisite electric bill. Sorry – don’t listen to me…

GardenStater says:
July 9, 2010 at 10:51 am

@Mark E. Hurling: I remember that sitcom, but could never remember the name. I think Bernadette must have been 18 years old when she did that show!

Ricochet says:
July 9, 2010 at 10:57 am

For anyone that is interested, the podcast James appears on can be found at Ricochet.com or on iTunes here: http://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/ricochet-podcast/id353005490

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 9, 2010 at 11:01 am

Bernadette Peters did the voice of Rita the cat in “Rita and Runt” part of the “Animaniacs”.

There is one episode called “Les Miseranimals” and she really belts out some great songs.

Kurt says:
July 9, 2010 at 11:44 am

Don't shame me, folks, but I watched “Beach Blanket Bingo” on TCM last night. What a mess! But Linda Evans was lovely back then, and Don Rickles had a scene where he was insulting everyone right and left (to Frankie Avalon: ‘You're 43!’) that had me chuckling.

juanito - John Davey says:
July 9, 2010 at 11:54 am

Just noticed that everyone hawking Luckies “Protects Their Voice With Luckies!” . I imagine it's the same way that Julie Kavner protects her voice. Only, she probably uses Smooth Smoking Laramies!

I dearly wish that the “Mache’ing With Bits of Newspapers” has been entitled Mache’ing With Bits ‘O Newspapers”. So much more satisfying.

The “Staining Glass” fad of the Seventies, rolled into the Home Pottery fad, which evolved into the Crochet fad, and ended with “Polishing Rocks” fad. That is, I thought it had been the end of the line, but that queer amalgam of dreck was reborn in the Nineties as the Scrap Booking Fad. Rust never sleeps.
chrisbcritter says:
July 9, 2010 at 12:07 pm

A mess? In a good way. Even though BBB didn't have any Brian Wilson songs (those were in “Muscle Beach Party”), the music in this one makes it my favorite. Donna Loren has returned to performing and has a new CD out in which she gives “It Only Hurts When I Cry” the ballad treatment it has long deserved. Too bad the widescreen print TCM runs is still missing Annette's great uptempo “I'll Never Change Him” (it's on the old fullscreen VHS version).

And anyone else notice that when Jody McCrea (“Bonehead”) is dressed in a suit in BBB, he looks eerily like Ted Kennedy?

tterrace says:
July 9, 2010 at 12:34 pm

The warden giving Tierney the electric chair preview is Gene Roth, who the same year appeared in the serial “Captain Video, Master of the Stratosphere” as a pudgy megalomaniac planetary ruler named, believe it or not, Vultura (not to be confused with the sultry babe megalomaniienne of the same name in the earlier cliffhanger “Perils of Nyoka”). Roth later helmed at least one “Perry Mason” trial, though the imdb omits this factoid, and later became one of the select number of Hollywood personages to meet an untimely end by stepping off a curb at the wrong moment.

chrisbcritter says:
July 9, 2010 at 12:43 pm

Oh – almost forgot my favorite line from BBB; Paul Lynde responding to Harvey Lembeck's singing aspirations:

“Oh perfect. You'll hear from us. NEXT!”

tterrace says:
July 9, 2010 at 12:44 pm

And another thing: Staunch, granite-jawed, Lucky-smoking Jack Holt was so darned granite-jawed that his profile was the inspiration for Dick Tracy's. Also father of Tim Holt, one of those guys who met up with those other guys who didn't have no badges down there in Mexico somewhere.

browniejr says:
July 9, 2010 at 1:42 pm

Slightly off topic, but since this happened yesterday/today, do any of the Font Experts here have any comments on this:

Andrew says:
July 9, 2010 at 1:54 pm

Tierney was very good in Tough Guys Don’t Dance, which Norman Mailer adapted from his novel. It's a weird, dark comedy, but very good if confronted with the right attitude. Highly quotable, too.
Kurt says:
July 9, 2010 at 3:49 pm

By the way, Bernadette Peters will be taking over Catherine Zeta Jones' part (Desiree) in “A Little Night Music” on Broadway starting July 13. And the great Elaine Stritch will be assuming Angela Lansbury's part (Mme. Armfeldt). Both are Sondheim veterans. I saw Ms. Peters as the Witch in “Into the Woods” back in 1987 and still remember it well (she also starred in “Sunday in the Park With George”). Stritch, of course, originated “The Ladies Who Lunch” in “Company” way back in 1970.

GardenStater says:
July 9, 2010 at 5:54 pm

@Kurt: I saw Ms. Peters about 3 days into her run as the witch in ITW. She was terrific, though I could have seen other actresses in that role. As to Ms. Stritch, I think it's time to say good night.

GardenStater says:
July 9, 2010 at 6:04 pm

@Lars Walker: “Look at the looks on the kids' faces. The kids in the British version are sharing the teacher's sexual fantasies.”

Hardly. It's the same look I've see on countless 10-12 year-olds in community theatre. They don't even know what a sexual fantasy is, let alone being able to mock it.

Sorry, folks. I've watched it again, and come to the same conclusion: BBC = Low budget.

shesnailie says:
July 9, 2010 at 7:51 pm

@@_v-- – i prefer morleys...

NerveBag says:
July 9, 2010 at 8:09 pm

This is, admittedly, not Bernadette's best work, but come on! She was preternaturally good in The Jerk and a hundred other things. She's absolutely adorable. And she seems like a nice lady to boot. I love her! Compare her to today's heartthrob, Angelina Jolie. Fish lips. Flat face. Zero talent. Bitchy, hateful persona. Slut.

No comparison.

You go, Bernadette!

John Robinson says:
July 9, 2010 at 11:19 pm

Bernadette Peters.

Annie

Easy Street

Lock thread.
Browniejr and any other font-natics out there.

After 30-some years of working with typefaces, I actually took a class called “Design & Typography” and yes, even after three decades of so-called practical experience, there were still plenty of things for me to learn.

The instructors stressed that for better or rose, typefaces convey psychological or emotional messages and that the challenge for the designer is to choose appropriate typefaces for whatever message that is being sent, particularly with advertising/display/logos and more subtly with text.

A good text typeface is like a good radio voice — interesting and appealing without being so noticeable that it drowns the information. It can be surprisingly difficult to choose a text typeface, which is why a lot of people play safe and choose Times Roman. Nothing wrong with that — Times Roman and Helvetica are the vanilla and chocolate of the typeface world. (in my humble though biased opinion)

It's always fun (or maybe just puzzling or really boring) for the un-font-enlightened to listen to font mavens get together.

Example: my friend Harry and myself.

Harry: You wouldn't believe what I had to read yesterday, for the magazine…

mjb: yeah?

Harry: An entire article typed in Bookman…

mjb: (interrupting) Hey, nothing wrong with Bookman. Nice x-height, very readable… makes a really elegant headline in lightface, all lower case, say about 60 points…

Harry: (irritated) Wait for it! An entire article typed in Bookman SWASH!!!!!!!

mjb: (groans in sympathy) SWASH?? an entire ARTICLE? Dear GOD! What were they THINKING! How did you not go blind???

Scott and Bill (who are listening, bemused) So what's the big deal?

mjb: You guys both cook, right? Typing an entire article in a swash typeface like dumping a pound of oregano into a recipe that only requires a pinch. Get it?

Scott and Bill (cautiously) uh, yeah… sure, we get it… (thinking “get the net” no doubt.)

I meant “better or worse” though I kind of like “better or rose.”

Oh well, it's six of two and twice of the other…

MJB: After reading your comment I just had to go and look up
Bookman Swash and I completely agree. It's got 1970's written all over it.

**Martin Fenton** says:
July 11, 2010 at 8:05 pm

I love the Lucky Strike adverts' insistence that each of the stars received NOT ONE CENT for their endorsement. I bet none of them had to buy cigarettes for a long time, though.

MJB: I too have just Googled Bookman Swash. Thanks for inadvertently tipping me off – I've wondered for years what that font was called.

**swschrad** says:
July 12, 2010 at 10:26 am

@browniejr: he's cute when he's typing mad.

**Friday Factory Tune: Pennies from Heaven » Shopfloor** says:
July 23, 2010 at 7:26 am

[…] to James Lileks for prompting these explorations. VN:F
[1.9.1_1087]please wait...Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes
cast)SHARETHIS.addEntry({ […]

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Please install and activate the “Twitter for WordPress” plugin to use this section.
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?
Summer afternoons are wonderful when you're a kid, I think – a great expanse to fill as you choose, wandering, exploring, dreaming, feeling the long pull of time draw you through the wide long hours. For an adult – this one, anyway – they're a brick you have to eat with your teeth. I love the mornings, and I love the evenings; the time in-between is just hot thick duty-time. But still better than any day in winter. Except Christmas Eve.

Good weekend; hope you had the same. Much rain, much sun. Snapped this outside the Lund's grocery story after a pounding storm bustled through. I love that tree. It's not a friendly tree, but it commands its corner:

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**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  
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**ABOUT**
Took that picture with . . . my new iPhone! Finally. I'd gone to the mall to get a gift certificate from a store called Claire's, which is devoted to little girly stuff in all its imaginable forms. Last chance for happy sunny cute world before Twilight-related glumness hits you and everything gets TRAGIC, I guess. On the way back I passed the Apple store, thought: what the hell. By now a few clerks know me; I showed one my busted iPhone, which had also suffered permanent screen whiteness. “Are you on the reservations list?”

I said that I was, and had gotten an email that said I wasn't ready, but Apple was still thinking of me.

“We're always thinking of you,” she said. “Let me go check.”

She came back with an iPhone. Seems I would have gotten the call the next day. Huzzah! O great day! O . . . oh, well, this is nice, I guess. Since the phone busted a few months ago, it has slipped out of my gadget rotation, and I work mostly at home the iPad now fits the bill. So it wasn't like the first iPhone. Nothing is like your first iPhone, perhaps. The second one was cool, because it was White! and because it was Shaped Differently! but this, well, this would just be another one, right?

Oh my no. I'll spare you the review, but I'm loving it, and have now a marvelous thing: thanks to the Kindle app, I always have the book I'm reading with me. Unfortunately, the book is “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo,” which is the most poorly translated book I've ever read. At least I hope that's the problem. It's pedestrian in every way, and while everyone assures me it will get better! really! I was expecting much more. Perhaps Swedish hard-boil is untranslatable. Or perhaps it's just a poorly-written
book.

So that was Saturday's delight. In the evening my daughter went to a sleepover, and my wife and I went to an Indian restaurant. Sample:

Wife: I will have the Jalfrazzi, mild.

Waitress: would you like it mild, medium, spicy?

Wife: Mild.

Me: I will have the chicken vindaloo, medium.

Waitress: would you like it mild, medium, spicy?

Me: Medium.

So I'm thinking she's accustomed to asking that question. For thrills and excitement, I spent a few hours after dinner rebuilding my computer, then watched part of a movie that may have been one of the first movies I ever saw: The Great Race. I specifically remember the pie fight at the end, but the rest of the movie has a strange haunting familiarity. It's often a pleasure to revisit these things after so many years and plug in what you know now, because everything – from the actors (Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon) to the director (Blake Edwards) to the soundtrack composer (Henry Mancini) to the look of everything – ultra-wide-screen 60s big-budget comedy reinterpreting the early part of the 20th century through the lens of exhausted, TV-competing Hollywood – has additional context you couldn't possibly provide as a kid. It's like the moment when you discover that the voices of your favorite childhood Disney movies had long careers that preceded their appearances in the cartoons. The fun in life? Filling in the details, making connections.

One in particular: Lemmon plays the villain, Professor Fate, always accompanied by a wonderful dolorous melody.
His hapless flunky, Max, is played by Peter Falk. Fate has all sorts of mechanical contrivances designed to foil the hero, and commands his subordinate to unleash the devices thus: “Push the button, Max.” I realized that may have been the genesis for Mystery Science Theater’s line, “Push the button, Frank.” Was it? I have put in inquiries, and await a reply.

Forgot to add this on Friday: the Gallery’s redesigned / rewritten addition, Gel Cookery. Part of the Aspic Series, here.

Also: a brief introduction to a new site that will grind on for many months: the total and complete scanning of a 1962 Los Angeles dining and entertainment guide. Four pages per week, starting now! Enjoy.

See you at Twitter, PopCrush, Tumblr, and Ricochet. Have a grand day!

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62 RESPONSES TO hello monday

**gemartini** says:
July 12, 2010 at 5:41 pm

For even more delicious recipe ideas, try to find Joan Morris’ recording of “Lime Jello, Marshmallow, Cottage Cheese Surprise”

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**cnyguy** says:
July 12, 2010 at 7:08 pm

It’s gratifying to see that so many people love The Great Race as much as I do. I’d have to say it’s my all-time favorite movie too; I’ve lost track of how many times I’ve seen it. I even have the Henry Mancini soundtrack album in my iTunes library; when I hear each selection, I can visualize the scene from the movie that goes with it.

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**dcmatthews** says:
July 12, 2010 at 7:17 pm

I saw the reference to Monte Cristo sandwiches on page 4 of the brochure, and it just reminded me that I haven’t had one of those things since the Bennigan’s chain closed down... dang, I miss them!

They have to be one of the most evil foods ever created: a club sandwich of ham, turkey and white cheese, dipped in batter and deep-fried! Then sprinkled with powdered sugar and served with raspberry preserves for dipping (although I usually skip the preserves and ask for extra powdered sugar instead).

Beware the skillet-fried ones; they are but imposters of the genuine Monte Cristo in its deep-fried splendor!

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**bgbear** says:
July 12, 2010 at 8:11 pm

Here is a question for TGR fans. In the Great Race, the saloon singer
is Lily Olay in Blazing Saddles the saloon singer is Lili von Shtupp. If you know your yiddish slang, you see the connection.

Ross Martin's character in TGR was Baron von Stuppe.

I say tribute or nod to Blake Edwards.

Angie says:
July 12, 2010 at 11:20 pm

I would love to ask the translator of TGWTDT if he substituted an English-language cliche every time he encountered one in the original, or if he just likes the nice familiar sound of all those stock phrases. Glad someone else noticed. They came close to ruining the book for me, along with that endless exposition.

Jay says:
July 13, 2010 at 12:27 am

Girl with Dragon Tattoo. I read a couple of chapters in the library and realized it would be a waste of time to check out. I'd never finish this plodding clunker. I hadn't considered it might be poorly translated. Hope that's it.

Kev says:
July 13, 2010 at 1:16 am

Me: I will have the chicken vindaloo, medium.
Waitress: would you like it mild, medium, spicy?
Me: Medium.

So I'm thinking she's accustomed to asking that question.

More like “programmed” to ask that question, IMO. My typical order at Chick-Fil-A, just to cite one example, is a Number One, no pickle, wheat bun, with a Dr Pepper, for here. And nine times out of ten, the next thing the cashier says is “Is that for here or to go?”

jamcool says:
July 13, 2010 at 1:44 am

Is not the blanc monge the British answer to the All-American Jello mold? We know a blanc monge from outer space tried to win Wimbledon;)

PersonFromPorlock says:
July 13, 2010 at 5:21 am

Bridey says:
July 12, 2010 at 5:02 pm
“…the unspeakable Pete Seeger”

It's interesting – and unspoken of, indeed – that if you go far enough back in Seeger's career he was doing protest songs (“Plow the Fourth One Under,” “Reuben James”) that were functionally pro-nazi and factually pro-communist in aid of the Hitler–Stalin Pact.
David says:
July 13, 2010 at 11:05 am

WoW. Convergence. I went to the Volo Museum in Volo Illinois yesterday... they have Professor Fate's vehicle (from The Great Race) and deadly land torpedo, on display!

For sale, see it at this link:


Andre says:
July 13, 2010 at 12:36 pm

It was KTLA in Los Angeles that ran The Great Race, and they ran it Saturday and Sunday too so you could see it seven times in one week if you chose to do so (and I did). One small detail that always amused my dad was the moose head on the wall in Fate's house with the rest of the moose on the other side (yes, I know Ernie Kovacs did that gag first).

Lily Olay: Honey your smile is downright painful!

Andre says:
July 13, 2010 at 1:30 pm

Also, to this day, I don't understand why a two-person, bicycle-propelled dirigible isn't a feasible form of transportation.
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?
An utterly ordinary day of wonderfulness, to use a word I think Bill Cosby coined. I remember when Cos was that cool guy our parents listened to, then became the cool guy who was on TV as a tennis-player spy, and then there was the long Years of Jell-O. (Never watched his sitcom.) I still remember the bits: “Chicken Heart” I understood, sort of – and it would be 30 years before I heard the show on which it was based. (And a few more years after that before I assembled a song about it.) “200 MPH” had that killer last line, which made all the uncles laugh no matter how many times they’d heard it. The “Noah” routine was our favorite, because it was easy to imitate – riiiiight – and to this very day I find myself whistling that five-note theme Noah tootled before he was so rudely called to duty. Lost interest in him over the years; catch him on the comedy channel on the radio now and then. The edge is gone and the bits have no structure, but that’s okay. I recall seeing a Cavett show on which he appeared, and realized that the real guy was probably incredibly self-confident and self-possessed, without a hint of arrogance. Someone brought him up to believe in himself, and he supplied the reasons.

Anyway. Wonderful and ordinary. Went to pick up three kids from a summer-
school program, but it's not summer school; it's the sort of thing kids do now to keep them from turning into slugs. Me, I was allowed to do nothing, and hence I did nothing. (Much. There's a much larger piece about this coming in the first late-summer edition of Flotsam.) I watched game shows. Summer was comic books and game shows, which is why I don't really worry too much that my daughter likes to spend her time drawing and watching YouTube videos of other people's drawing, and IMing – although I'm still not used to the celestial sound her computer makes when a friend comes on line; sounds like an angel has alit in the corner of her room, and done so rather theatrically. I find stories on her computer as well, and I know I wasn't spending summer writing tales when I was ten.

Ten! So quickly, so fast – but only because we don’t remember every day. I wonder why we don’t. There's probably no evolutionary requirement to recall every detail; we have the Joe Friday imperative: just the facts. Where the food is, where the tigers live, what happened when Ogg fell in the thick black water and sunk up to his hear-holes and then his see-holes and then he was gone. So, don’t go in the thick black water. We remember the moods of the months of the year, the emotional plots that emerge over the course of time, and either shudder away from recollection or indulge ourselves with the old Rosy Glow. A few nights ago, in a fit of regret, I tivo’d the only children's shows from her toddler era that were still on TV, just to remind myself of the days when that was the background noise – I worked at the kitchen table, of course; couldn’t work upstairs and leave her downstairs alone, because she might get a knife and put it in an electrical socket. Most of the shows hold no interest, but the themes are potent. (And lovely: never liked Miss Spider's Sunny Patch, or whatever it was called, but it had a sweet theme.) It was the interstitial bits that reminded me how annoying toddler TV could be, with its constant encouragements – can you find the red heart? Great! Incredible! Fabulous! Now Hortense can have her bypass, and we couldn’t have done it without you! You’re terrific! God Himself holds you up above all others in His creation! All of this is beamed at kids staring blankly at the screen, hearing these remarks knowing they did not, in fact, pick out the red heart, and the TV is just an empty machine.

My child hated Dora the Explora, and used to delight in saying absolutely nothing when Dora asked “what was your favorite part?” then stood there with an idiot grin for ten seconds before saying “Mine too!”

I wonder why these shows just don’t keep going, why some are cancelled – kids outgrow them, and a new batch comes along, right? Why should the schedule in 2010 be different than it was in 2003? Why not just whip up a decade's worth of pablum and pump it out over and over again?

If I sound bitter over the cancellation of Rolie Polie Olie, I suppose I am.

Anyway. Picked up the kids, and on the way home I asked them what they had done. “Stuff.” Of course. Stuff. Always with the stuff. The other kids like my car because of the doors, and because it's clean – they always mention that; it's so clean – and we all get along well. I turn up the radio loud and we
play slugbug and it’s all good. Today they sang along to “Mr. Roboto” and, to my surprise, “Video Killed the Radio Star,” although they only knew the line “Video Killed the Radio Star.” Kids being kids, they probably take it literally. “That was the first video.”

“Played on MTV,” said my daughter. “I know.”

“Oh. Well then. Who was the member of the band who went on produce the comeback top 40 hit for progressive-rock darlings ‘Yes,’ then? Huh?”

Silence.

“Trevor Horn, that’s who.”

“Dad, who cares.”

Went home, took a nap. Got up to listen to Hugh Hewitt’s 10th anniversary show while I made supper. At one point he played part of the notoriously uncomfortable Andrew Sullivan interview, and I thought, uh oh: he’s going to play my parody. Now. I remember when I heard the interview, thought it pointlessly spiky, and decided to have fun doing a parody. What followed was great fun, and one of those “my life is just very peculiar” moments, because: think of your bathroom. Okay? Think of your sink, your countertop, the towels on the hook. It’s probably off your bedroom. That’s where I do my evening radio interviews. I walk back and forth from bedroom to bathroom, talking, and get this – I’m usually dusting. Yes. Sometimes before the show I get one of those wood-wipes, and clean surfaces as I pace back and forth. Then I hang up and brush my teeth and go back to whatever I was doing and forget what I just did, because I usually go downstairs and my wife says “nice job,” and then I do the dishes. To hear a repeat of my stuff is mortifying.

But I had to listen. Stood in the kitchen, stirring the pasta, listening to myself talk as I walked around upstairs in the bathroom, dusting.

It’s an odd life.

Now to finish the printer set-up. Yes, I have a new printer. Sunday I went to OfficeMax – or was it OfficeDepot? Or DepotMax? – to get a printer. Walked right past the HP printers, sneering. No. Die. To repeat what happened before: two printers simultaneously refused to print because the cartridges were not HP cartridges. Since both were, in fact, HP cartridges, I decided that the machines had lost their minds, could no longer recognize loved ones, and would now join their brothers in the long line of hell-spawned machines kicked to the curb by millions of angry owners everywhere.

Passed the Lexmark. Bought a Lexmark wireless once. I did not even print a single page. It never found the network. It was like expecting a book to sing a song.

I was looking for Canon printers, but hello, there were some Epsons. Fine, let’s take a look. Pointless color display: check. Lots of flimsy jointed plastic parts around the sheet feeder that sat on top of the scanner? Check. It faxed! I
never fax. It was a copier! I never need to copy. I just need the damned thing to print each-and-every-fargin’-time I want to print. There was another model without a fax – $30 cheaper, too – and as I appraised it a manager came up. After hearing my tale of woe about the other printers, he asked if it was purchased here, said he'd seen me in here a lot (?? Every other month, if that) and offered to give me all of my money back.

Well, yes. Well, sure. So now I have a new Epson (someone already tweeted me to warn me off – no! The nozzles dry up! Sigh) and I need to begin the process of connecting it to the wireless network, which I expect it will find with the same success as a blind armless man attempting to find a grain of sand in a warehouse with his molars. Stay tuned.

Later today: Comic Sins, Tumblr, PopCrush, Ricochet. There, that ought to hold the little bastards. If not, send them the bedbug letter.

(obscure?)

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75 RESPONSES TO wonderfulness

NeonCat says:
July 13, 2010 at 12:13 pm

I printed stuff at home so rarely, and had the usual troubles of expensive ink, etc., that I just gave up on it. If I need something printed out I take it to Kinko's, er, FedEx Office (you just know they were itching to make the change for years down in Memphis). Granted, if the Xerox color printer is down I'm out of luck – just have to go to a different FEOff.

Plus if you need to have more than one copy of a color document, you can just print the first one and then make color copies of the rest. I guess the same goes for B&W.

sanssoucy says:
July 13, 2010 at 12:19 pm

So. What the heck was the last line of “200 MPH?”

Patrick says:
July 13, 2010 at 12:27 pm

Love Cosby. Back in 1998 I had a couple of cassette tapes that had various comedy skits, with pieces from greats like Jerry Clower, Buddy Hackett (Chinese Restaurant and Chinese Laundry, primarily. "No tickie, no shirtee"!), and of course, the Cos. I had heard the Noah skits, my favorite being when he finally goes out all over God, and God says, “Noah… "WHAT?!" “How long can you tread water?" 

Another one being hist stories featuring Fat Albert, including the one story called “Buck Buck".
I have (or did have, may still have it) the DVD and CD “Himself”, in which he talks about natural child birth, how children have brain damage (still holds true 30-some years later), and, of course, chocolate cake for breakfast.

If I ever get married and have kids, and they start acting stupid, I'll use his famous line: “Just remember, I brought you into this world, and I will take you out. It won’t matter to me, because I can make another one just like you.”

You should definitely watch the show with Gnat, especially the first few seasons. It wasn’t all that great when Olivia and Pam were introduced, IMHO. Some of my favorite episodes include the pilot episode, the episode when Vanessa played the alphabet game, and when Theo had Denise make him a shirt.

crossdotcurve says:
July 13, 2010 at 12:28 pm

http://townhall.com/MediaPlayer/AudioPlayer.aspx?ContentGuid=4cfd6acb-23ec-4993-8c47-11d1c6787024

Grayhackle says:
July 13, 2010 at 12:41 pm

Ahh, mea culpa. I contacted my radio friend to get the clip and he says now that he thinks the ‘Uncle Don’ blooper was faked. ‘Fake but accurate’ LOL.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 13, 2010 at 12:51 pm

The most memorable Cosby story for me was the Frankenstein story.

For years I used “faster, faster, you fool”

Janice says:
July 13, 2010 at 1:00 pm

We drove to Florida from Texas last summer. The one thing that made the 1,000 mile trip bearable was listening to Bill Cosby routines. The 6 and 8 year old girls loved Fat Albert! Also, I couldn’t tolerate Dora, but I’ll still sit and watch Max and Ruby with the girls!!

Pencilpal says:
July 13, 2010 at 1:15 pm

Always loved Cosby and Newhart – saw Newhart live about 3 years ago at the Keswick Theater, the man did 90 minutes of hilarity, standing, from memory it seemed, amazing. We bought for our son (so we said) some of Cosby's DVDs a few years ago, he loved them. This past Sunday our son competed for his second time in Philly's Funniest, a stand-up contest at a comedy club. (This, the kid who used to hide in his room when we had company) The top 3 comedians by audience vote all had clean acts – just funny & clean. (Son's was clean too – he knew he needed a ride home) Most of the others were face-meltingly raunchy, including, embarrassing to admit, the two women who entered.
GardenStater says:
July 13, 2010 at 1:25 pm

@Grayhackle: I knew it was a fake, but I didn't have the heart to break it to you.

juanito - John Davey says:
July 13, 2010 at 1:36 pm

Janice says:
July 13, 2010 at 1:00 pm

We drove to Florida from Texas last summer. The one thing that made the 1,000 mile trip bearable was listening to Bill Cosby routines. The 6 and 8 year old girls loved Fat Albert! Also, I couldn't tolerate Dora, but I'll still sit and watch Max and Ruby with the girls!!

Friday night, the 9 year old was catching up on the last Harry Potter DVD with the Child Bride, so I had to occupy the 5 year old with some popcorn and a DVD “just for us”. Her selection: Max and Ruby. Brain cells are precious, but I lost several Friday night. I know it's pitch perfect for a preschooler/kindergartner, but it's like Kryptonite to an Adult.

My favorite Cosby bit is “The Belt” Nine feet long and eight feet wide, with meat hooks at the end. Also, “The monster under the bed”. Both of which are included in “To Russell, my brother, with whom I slept”.

shesnailie says:
July 13, 2010 at 1:59 pm

_@_v – snopes has the 'fake but accurate' soundclip…

http://msgboard.snopes.com/radiotv/audio/uncledon.wav

DryOwlTacos says:
July 13, 2010 at 6:04 pm

Never had a problem with HP. I've got three of them networked right now: two of them are what may be called “legacy” Laserjets but are still chugging along reliably, and the third is a late-model inkjet photo printer that guzzles ink but has never disappointed.

Fond memories of Cosby and other comedy albums of the late 60s/early 70s. I have the “8:15/11:15″ album. He does a gratuitous birth control joke in the late night set; otherwise, the two shows are virtually identical. (It was only a gimmick to sell a double album.) I completely wore out the original Cheech and Chong, and Monty Python's Matching Tie and Handkerchief.

Tim says:
July 13, 2010 at 6:12 pm

Thinking of Bill Cosby makes me think of “High Fidelity” in the record store where Jack Black tells John Cusack that “by the way, you know you're wearing a 'Cosssby sweatah!... a Cossby sweatah!"
David Mitchell says:
July 13, 2010 at 8:22 pm

How odd: just yesterday I borrowed ‘I Spy’ on DVD from our library. I hadn’t known that Cosby was acting at that time until I picked up the box and read who the leads were.

Betsy says:
July 13, 2010 at 9:22 pm

We had Dora on for my 15-month-old granddaughter the other day and I wanted to set fire to the stupid map with the identity issues AFTER ABOUT 45 seconds. “I’m the Map! I’m the Map! I’m the Map! I’m the MAPPPP!” Well okay then.

Give me a roadrunner, a coyote and an Acme anvil over that nonsense any day.

spintingerler says:
July 13, 2010 at 10:10 pm

You can hear the one of the Shafer albums at my blog:

Leslie in AZ says:
July 14, 2010 at 2:34 am

I clean when I talk on the phone too…hmmmm.. I think I just cannot sit and talk. I actually get a lot done when I have a lengthy call.

MeanDean says:
July 14, 2010 at 2:39 am

So. What the heck was the last line of “200 MPH?”

“You take this car… And you give it to George Wallace.”

J.Paul says:
July 14, 2010 at 8:35 am

I have 3 of Kermit Schaefer’s “Pardon My Blooper” LPs – they are a frustrating mix of real bloopers, recreations of real bloopers for which there are no recordings, and complete fabrications. The worst part of the recreations is that he seems to assume that all radio announcers on rural stations sound like somebody's toothless grandpa!

nixmom says:
July 14, 2010 at 12:15 pm

My oldest son did precisely the same thing with “Blues' Clues”, which I think started the whole “interactive but not really” children's programming. “Steve” would ask a question, Nick would shout out a complete non-sequitur, “Steve would beam and agree. Nick would get so disgusted because “Steve” wasn't listening.

So glad I'm past that whole phase of my life. Max and Ruby alone would make me want to slit my wrists.
Gina says:
July 14, 2010 at 3:06 pm

The Cosby records!! Love ‘em! I found them in my dad’s record collection when I was about eight, and listened until I could practically recite them all by heart. My dad and I still talk about the Chicken Heart that Ate New York City. 😊 Good times.

Paul in NJ says:
July 15, 2010 at 4:51 pm

no! The nozzles dry up!

Two words: Laser printer.

Paul in NJ says:
July 15, 2010 at 4:52 pm

@DryOwlTacos: “Never had a problem with HP. I’ve got three of them networked right now: two of them are what may be called ‘legacy’ Laserjets”

Wouldn’t be HP-4000s by any chance? Got two in the office. Ancient, can’t kill ‘em.

jasony says:
July 15, 2010 at 9:38 pm

Laser printer. Laser Printer! LASER PRINTER! You buy once, you cry once. Just spend the $100 or so at Fry’s (or online) on a Samsung and get it over with. Mine super cheap $49 Fry’s special (Samsung ML-1710) has printed almost -get this- 15,000 pages without a single problem. Once a year I replace the cartridge with a “new” one from the mom-and-pop laser refill place (Cartridge World, I think) and get on with my life. Costs me $45 per year.

Just do it, James. Once you go laser you never go back.

Will says:
July 19, 2010 at 11:35 am

I’m late to this one. I was on a road trip, and its soundtrack was Bill Cosby and Bob Newhart on my ipod. Just funny, funny stuff, even the thousandth time you’ve heard it.

Oh, and seriously. Just buy a freaking laser printer already. Inkjet printers are just too much bother. 99.9999% of what I need to print is just fine in greyscale, and when I want to print a photo, I send it to the grocery store’s kiosk online for 10¢.
Still not finding what you're looking for? Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

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

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

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?

© 2011 The Bleat.
We have a new baseball field here. You may have heard. Not being a baseball fan of any great enthusiasm, I haven’t gone yet, but as a special member of the All-Important Media I got to experience it like few mortals today: I was down on the field. Well, next to the field. We were asked not to step on the field itself.

The subject of the story: the field.

The dirt under the field, to be specific. This was a story commanded a long time ago by our video boss, who has since left, but whose dead hand apparently still guides and shapes us. But this was easy. All the interviews and B-roll stuff had been shot and edited, and all I had to do was show up, make up an opening statement, then make up a closing statement. The voice-overs were done in the hallway off the dugout. Annnnd . . . I’m done!

That ain’t workin’. That’s the way you do it. You give the intros on the Strib TV.
Want to see a panoramic shot I took with the iPhone? Really? Gosh, thanks. It's here.

I got to touch the grass, though. And I was able to explore the Bowels of the new stadium. Backstage is always exciting the first time, no matter where it is. You feel the thrill of seeing something most won't, even if it's just endless concrete corridors with huge pipes overhead – a few of which surely carry the ceaseless torrent of urine from the bathrooms. Think of it: a giant loading dock is built to bring in the beer; dozens of beer-dispensing points are built throughout the complex; wide long troughs are stationed at convenient intervals to receive the end product of the beer, and complex systems of pipes are installed to carry away the end product of the beer. It all depends on a crowd of thousands who will consume and strain the beer. The entire stadium is a machine built around the human kidney.

When signing in I noticed that half the names before mine on the sheet listed DNC as their position; they were giving tours to DNC reps considering the stadium for the 2012 convention. There were also school kids who thought we were famous because we had a big camera, and I was talking into it. They
gave me big waves and I waved back and pointed at them: ka-ching! The “point” was taught to me by a Secret Service agent when I was on a train with the President on a campaign stop in 1992; as the train passed through towns, you’d see people gathered by the tracks to see POTUS-bearing train slowly rumble through the hamlet. The agent said “watch this.” He’d point, and people would smile and cheer. He called it “lighting them up.” I tried it later myself: just being on the train conferred enough juice so people lit up when I pointed.

That was the highlight of the day, and there’s precious little else to report – honestly, I’m

Hold on -

The unmistakable sound of a policeman issuing requests through an amplified speaker.
There’s a traffic stop on the main artery to my east. It’s night right now.
Warm, nice breeze, perfect, and someone is being held at taser-point within earshot.

Hmm. Now nothing. I’ll never know any more than I just heard. These things never make the paper. COPS can’t be everywhere. For all I know they just Hoovered up a genuine bad actor; for all I know someone blew the light, had plates that came back wrong, made Furtive Movements, or just had a vehicle that screamed HINKY. (Wonder if anyone had the nickname HINKY, put it on his plates, and wondered why he kept getting pulled over.) Whatever is going on, no doubt there's a rich backstory.

No more voices. People along the street probably stirred, woke up, peered out the window, shrugged, went back to bed. The other day while heading to the grocery store I saw cars coming in the opposite direction slow down, make a wide berth; when I got to the spot that bollixed the traffic there was a knot of people, six or ten, most on cell phones, standing around a man face down in a driveway with a blanket over him, bloody as a newborn. Quick check: no bike no car. You can only guess. You note, you rue, you drive on. You never know the whole story. But somehow the fact that this happened in public means you’re owed the story, like you could pull over, shout “WHAT HAPPENED?” and someone would tell you.

Well, it you make it past the midnight stroke without a red dot jittering on your back or the feel of concrete on your face, you’re ahead of the game.
Anyway. As I was saying: for me, nothing, blissful nothing, ordinary nothing. Productive, sunny, cheerful, with all the basics. . . . Sweet mother of Jove, there’s an ad on TV for a DQ Pecan Pie blizzard. It looks delicious. But I’m in that frame of mind that puts such things in the realm of impossible delights enjoyed only by those who have abandoned all pretense, and are enjoying life and all its sensual manifestations. I have reached the damnable point in a diet / fitness regimen where one is so satisfied with the results you dare not indulge in anything. You hone yourself down, whittle away the bulges and soft expanses, and thus shaved to your ideal you find yourself in a prison
composed of rules and mirrors.

DAMN I miss ice cream.

I wonder if the guy they pulled over was trying to make the DQ before it closed.

**LATER:** Black and White World, sci-fi edition. With this guy:

If you’re up on your pop culture, you know his pig's first name. Also: *PopCrush, Tumblr,* and *Ricochet.* See you around.

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**37 RESPONSES TO weight, weight, don’t tell me**

**Baby M** says:

July 14, 2010 at 9:41 am

Mr. Ziffle?

**Orebaugh** says:

July 14, 2010 at 9:47 am

I am first to comment? I’ve never had that opportunity before. I feel as though I should say something profound.

The pig's last name was Ziffle, if that helps.

And there's nothing wrong with a little ice cream from time to time. Just ask my 52-inch waist.

**GardenStater** says:

July 14, 2010 at 9:50 am

That pig's name would be Arnold.
hpouler says:
July 14, 2010 at 9:56 am

And if you are an MST3K fan, you will know the same actor as the cranky janitor in Earth vs. The Spider. I'll bet that is the upcoming Black and White World offering.

hpouler says:
July 14, 2010 at 10:01 am

And I'm pretty sure it's Ziffel, not Ziffle. Better Germanic spelling.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 14, 2010 at 10:03 am

It is Hank Miller from Gunsmoke!

Kim says:
July 14, 2010 at 10:17 am

I was talking about that Pecan Pie Blizzard Extravaganza or- whatever-it's-called at work last night. Saw the commercial and I can't get it out of my mind!

And yes, I'm dieting – not at goal, though…

MikeH says:
July 14, 2010 at 10:24 am

Actually hpouler, Mr. Ziffle here is in a scene of Beginning of the End, the giant grasshopper film where they invade postcard images of Chicago and are battled by the ever cool, godlike Peter Graves (who as Crow pointed out, went to the University of Minnesota)

But you are right about him in Earth VS The Spider, and was also in Amazing Colossal Man. Must have been best friends with Bert. I Gordon.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 14, 2010 at 10:27 am

Let's see, Fred Spig? hmm Fred Spig? No, I am not familiar with the fellow.

hpouler says:
July 14, 2010 at 10:47 am

I forgot he was in Beginning of the End. Earth vs. the Spider features the same postcard-based “special” photographic effects, but they are nowhere near as ludicrous as they appear in Beginning of the End. Sometimes Bert I. Gordon made Ed Wood look almost competent.

A fun review by real-life scientist and bad-movie buff Liz Kingsley (And You Call Yourself a Scientist) here:
https://www.aycyas.com/bote.htm

swschrad says:
July 14, 2010 at 10:47 am
The entire stadium is a machine built around the human kidney.

excellent. support motherhood, apple pie, and the trot to the trough in the bottom of the 4th inning, or you're a d4mn commie!

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 14, 2010 at 10:56 am

I think I mentioned this here before but, my favorite line in BOTE is when Peter Grave's scientist character says something like “Somehow I feel responsible for all this” when the story up to that point was all about how his experiments created the giant grasshoppers.

Send that man to Washington.

Tex Lovera says:
July 14, 2010 at 11:22 am

I have the distinct feeling I've seen our man in a Star Trek episode...

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 14, 2010 at 11:24 am

I have the distinct feeling I've seen our man in a Star Trek episode...

Yes, I think he is the Earth Ambassador to Tellar Prime.

John says:
July 14, 2010 at 11:26 am

For some reason – a good one, I like to think, like “having a regular job,” or “just not traveling on foot in darkness anymore” – I no longer attract the attention of cops. Let's see, the one in Picayune MS; the one in Mena AR; they were just curious, and courteous. On either side of WV cops bugged me about hitchhiking, which was after all illegal. An off-duty cop from Bryan TX picked me up once, but just to give me a ride; he drove so fast he passed motorists who'd passed me a good 20 minutes earlier; when I mentioned this, he asked, “Want to give ‘em the finger?” Then there were the police in Sivas, Turkey. I was a foreigner, alone, walking in a residential area, and I knew some of the language: short of wearing a T-shirt reading Kürterleri seviyorum! I could not have looked or acted more suspicious. They searched my hotel room, but not me, which was good, as I was carrying $3000 in cash; then they took me to the station, asked some more questions, and fed me a nice lunch.

Good times. No red dot dancing over me, no concrete under anything but my feet. For that matter, no zipper being pulled up over my face, no kin being informed in their new capacity as next-of. Ahead of the game, indeed.

kevin says:
July 14, 2010 at 11:29 am

Mr. Kimble the extension agent is my favorite from “Green Acres”. Well, not my “favorite”, but definitely in the top 3. Well. Maybe not top 3, but surely in the top 10…. My friends and I would call his ramblings “Kimbalisms”.
juanito - John Davey says:
July 14, 2010 at 11:33 am

Amazing the things the ear picks up. When we first moved into our house in 95, I could be in the yard 20 feet below the house, 180 feet away, next to the creek and hear my wife's conversation on the phone in the family room. Sound carries forever... something lost on the new neighbors on the other side of the creek and two houses down. I can hear every argument, conversation, and inebriated party they have ... and they all happen at 1:00AM! Last week I took a 1:30AM trip down to our backfence (there's some Lileks name droppin' for ye!) along the creek, shouted "HELLO!" just to get their attention. Then I bellowed "OTHERS!!!". In the shameful silence that followed I offered a quiet “Thank you”.

More significant is the things you don’t hear. Two years ago, we returned from our traditional June trip to Avila Beach CA. The entire state of California was then in flames. A solid month of smoke, everywhere. After a six hour car ride with a 4 year old and a 7 year old, I finally fell into a deep slumber. So deep that I didn’t hear the 4 fire engines, and the helicopter dropping water on a fire in the greenbelt where the creek behind our house flows. Dead To The World.

It’s funny that our newspaper includes a tally of fire department responses to rattlesnake removal for the week, yet has no interest in reporting the termination of a police chase that ended up at the parking lot of the kids' school at midnight. Go figure...

DensityDuck says:
July 14, 2010 at 11:38 am

Fun fact: The ice cream you see in commercials and advertisements is not ice cream. Usually it's Crisco; sometimes it's lard.

Sydney Brillo Duodenum says:
July 14, 2010 at 11:39 am

Regarding the bloody sheeted body, there's never a reporter around when you need 'em.

Gary says:
July 14, 2010 at 11:55 am

Looks like the exact same hat he wore in Green Acres.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 14, 2010 at 11:56 am

@juanito: when I was about 13, the house across the street (that we once lived in) burnt to the ground in the early AM and no one in our family woke up.

Years later a house a mile up the road from where I was living burned and I was awoken by the “crack” “crack” sound of the fire several minutes before the fire engines arrived.

it is odd.
Baby M says:
July 14, 2010 at 12:12 pm

I've got you both beat — when I was 11 or 12, someone used a couple sticks of dynamite to blow the corner off the garage of the house behind ours. (We lived in Youngstown. The man who lived behind us was an officer in the Teamsters. Need I say more?) Slept through it, and my parents didn't tell me about it—first I heard about it was the six o'clock news.

Mark E. Hurling says:
July 14, 2010 at 12:13 pm

I could be wrong, but I think the Beginning of the End was the only monster movie set in Chicago. The grasshoppers started out about 30 miles south of where I lived then and headed for Lake Michigan. That movie always scared the heck out of me. After all, monsters went after New York or LA, they left the Midwest alone. The Midwest made up for it though with real life, prolific serial killers.

@juanito, I remember that June myself. There were fires on all sides of I-5 and in the median a few times when I was making the Great West Coast Road Rally 2.2 to retrieve my daughter from Oregon State U. At one point, we weren't sure we were going to be allowed to proceed south. It was not the kind of drive you like to make.

nixmom says:
July 14, 2010 at 12:26 pm

This reminds me of our first pilgrimage to Lambeau Field in 2007; my eldest (who wanted to "be Brett Favre" when he grew up—he's since come to his senses) was in raptures during the stadium tour because—he could he bear it—we Got To Go Out Onto The Field. The hallowed Frozen Tundra itself. The place where men were men and History Was Made, blah blah blah.

Except the field was being watered or fertilized or sprinkled with fairy dust or something, so we were all asked politely to please observe the 'barriers' (string tied to yard stakes, all the way around the perimeter of the turf) and not go on the grass.

He was crushed. I probably didn't help by sticking the teeniest, tiniest bit of the toe of my sandal onto the very barest edge of the turf, thereby making me the only one in the family who can brag that I have Been On Lambeau Field. In all honesty, I did it in the hopes he would see me doing so, and follow suit discreetly. Alas, I am also the only one in the family who can say that I Broke The Rules On The Stadium Tour (but did not get caught).

Later that year he got to meet a couple of players and run drills on the Official Packers Practice Field, so that removed a little of the sting, I guess.

Aodhan says:
July 14, 2010 at 1:42 pm

Oh, that's easy. You can always tell from the name of the image that pops up as you mouse over. He's #3.

juanito - John Davey says:
July 14, 2010 at 1:59 pm
bgbear (roger h) says:
July 14, 2010 at 11:56 am

@juanito; when I was about 13, the house across the street (that we once lived in) burnt to the ground in the early AM and no one in our family woke up.

Years later a house a mile up the road from where I was living burned and I was awoken by the “crack” “crack” sound of the fire several minutes before the fire engines arrived.

it is odd.

Back in 1973, there was a munitions train explosion in Roseville CA that we could hear and feel 18 miles away. You'd hear the bomb go off, then feel it minutes later, then watch the kitchen curtains wave on a breeze, and lower again. It went on forever, and yes, we heard the explosions before we saw it on the TV news.

It was, kind of a big deal as these some olde-tyme photos would indicate. 6000 bombs on a single train.

The Mayhem-ist in me wants to revel in its glorious release. The 7 year old who lived through it doesn't need it so much. The tiny town of Antelope was obliterated.

They were still digging up unexploded ordinance at the rail yards in 1997. My sister-in-law lives there today, about two miles away.

hpoulter says:
July 14, 2010 at 2:08 pm

@Mark: Alligator (1980) was also set in Chicago. Giant alligator in the sewers, so it qualifies as a monster movie.

huddydrvr says:
July 14, 2010 at 3:26 pm

James,

The nice aspect of getting older are that you can mostly quit worrying about your weight and what you eat, because your doctor will have a fit about it regardless. So enjoy.

The other nice aspect is that the range of interesting females expands exponentially with each additional year.

The downside is that you can do nothing about it.

RPD says:
July 14, 2010 at 3:26 pm

In '79 there was a game called “The Creature that ate Sheboygan” where the goal was one player would create a Godzilla like creature that would attack Sheboygan WI while the other player controlled the Authorities and defended the city. Good clean Midwestern mayhem.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Creature_That_Ate_Sheboygan

swschrad says:
July 14, 2010 at 3:42 pm
@RPD: ‘spect if the creature ate Sheboygan, there were spot shortages of beer and cheddar in the Dairy State as well. a true disaster!

NerveBag says:
July 14, 2010 at 6:16 pm

Too many MST fans here. I thought I was going to pwn everyone on that screenshot. 😊 LOVE Beginning of the End, as I do most MST/Rifftrax work. Non-committal on the CT stuff.

And Green Acres was one of my favorite shows as a child. That, Gilligan's Island and the Brady Bunch ruled my world for a few years — not including Saturday morning TV, which I could go ON AND ON about (Loony Tunes, Shazam, Sigmund the Sea Monster, ARK II, Electra Woman and Dynagirl, that show with Charles Nelson Riley and the hats). And, yes. Mr. Kimble was definitely a high point in GA. But Mr. and Mrs. Douglas were also fantastic. And the butch chick was really well done. And Mr. Haney was such a lovable louse. He (Pat Buttram) was in another MST delight: Angels Revenge. A bona fide classic.

TV's a pretty useless reality-show-conveyor-belt now (although Dirty Jobs, Mythbusters, LOST and the Office have been exceptions to the rule), but it definitely kept me entertained for years as a child. Much as this site does as an adult. 😊

browniejr says:
July 14, 2010 at 7:45 pm

@NerveBag: ..."that show with Charles Nelson Riley and the hats..." Lidsville... Some of Butch Patrick's best work after "The Munsters"— unfortunately, the whole Kroft body of work was in the period AFTER most of the best Saturday morning cartoons, involving actual animation, had been made. The whole live action/ the writer's are on an acid trip writing this stuff pales in comparison to the earlier stuff that cost more, like Jonny Quest. Grew up with both, prefer the earlier work.

Marjorie J Birch says:
July 14, 2010 at 9:28 pm

SO: some of you slept through mere explosions and fires?

I managed to “miss” the Cuban missile crisis. And I wasn't even asleep. (Some would probably envy me.)

I don't know how I accomplished this. I was ten years old and certainly capable of paying attention to the news (though I was already aware of how a thorough knowledge of current events could destroy sleep). I had no idea of what the situation was while it was happening and didn't know about it for YEARS. Possibly my parents decided not to tell me, since they were already aware of how pitifully easy it was to frighten me. (“Yep, world's going to end, let's not tell her.” “Sure. Why ruin the surprise?”)

What I did notice was that the bomb drills at school suddenly ramped up in frequency and intensity. We were even required to collect our books and put on our coats before lining up for the school buses. (Which never arrived — we were always sent back to class.)

Having to take our books along seems absolutely absurd now —
apparently Armageddon was insufficient reason for skipping math homework.

Tony Dickson says:
July 15, 2010 at 5:19 am

Speaking of ice cream, I went to buy some yesterday. I picked up a promising looking container and noticed that the words “Ice Cream” did not appear on it. Instead I found the phrase “Frozen Dairy Dessert”.

I finally found a nice carton of actual non-“light” ice cream after some searching and fogging up of the glass freezer doors.

Atomizer says:
July 16, 2010 at 12:53 am

I surmise that the “DNC” you saw on the log book was for Delaware North Companies. They run the concessions and retail outlets at Target Field.

Lileks says:
July 16, 2010 at 1:03 am

You no doubt surmise correctly, Atomizer. The things one learns!

Atomizer says:
July 16, 2010 at 2:11 am

It’s quite rare that I surmise anything correctly. Just ask my wife. Perhaps it would be in Delaware North’s best interest to distance themselves from the commonly recognized acronym “DNC”.

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Good Gott in der Himmel it was hellishly hot today. Soupy and glum and mean – humid from the start of the day, then hard rain, then ominous clouds that made you certain twisters would be scribbling all over town, then rain, then SUN BLARING OUT and making the temps pop up to scrape the bottom 90s, plus humidity. I like heat, but this was miserable. This was what I went through every day in DC, the sense that air was sloppy with moisture, the grotesque feeling of being damp and soaked and trapped in your own skin. Back then I wore a tie and long pants, of course; everyone did. Made no sense. I would arrive home dripping, come up the steps to the air-conditioned room, and feel everything freeze; in seconds your clothes were now uncomfortable for an entirely different reason. If you're going to put a town there, for heaven's sake, adjust the dress code. I do not know how people survived in DC in the summer before air conditioning and shorts. The BO must have been stupendous.
But. We made it, and now it's cooling off. The dog is happy. Earlier today I opened the door to let him out, and he actually recoiled from the heat rushing in: like a bludgeon, it was. But still he went out, for reasons I cannot understand. I must go sit in the sun and pant and bake. Say, why don't you put a heavy quilt over me while you're at it. I look at him and ask: are you working on your tan? Because I don't think that's going to happen.

It's a column night, and I'm way late. Summer is hell on Bleats, to be frank; I spend almost no time in the evening up in the studio, because I want to be outside – but that means reading, or chatting, or idle time spent listening to the radio. You'll forgive me if I don't hole up in my room creating boocoo fresh content, won't you? Thanks. Plus, there's duty – and this summer has been busier than any since 2007. Something is either happening, needs to happen, is about to happen, or just happened. Tonight:

Went to get my daughter from a 20-girl birthday party, and she's beat. And deaf. On the way back she had conversation with her friend (this is the second time I've been schlepping the kids around today, but I don't mind; I actually love it. You get to talk to them and see what makes them laugh, hear what they're up to) about the merits of hard candy. They concluded that Jolly Ranchers were your best value, because of Flavor and Longevity. I concur. You can work on a Rancher for the better part of an afternoon. They're perhaps the only hard candy kids elevate to equal status with the soft and/or nougat-based candies. Never had a kid clamor for a Werther's, which may be why the ads centered around old folks giving them to kids. They'll remember you for this! For giving them disappointing hard old grandpa-candy! Remember how your grandpa disappointed you? Keep the tradition alive.

My grandfather was partial to pink peppermint lozenges, which were doled out for playing “Hide the Thimble.” Always had a bag around. Even as kids we suspected they were some form of chalk colored with pureed lung tissue. Grandma like Brach's caramels, which could be bought in bulk at the drug store. I was pleased to see Gnat's goodie bag contained a butterscotch candy, which proved these throwbacks can still be had in bulk form. “What's the difference between butterscotch and caramel?” I asked.

“It's more buttery.”

“Is it scotchy as well?”

“I don't know what that is.”

“Exactly. You know what butter is, what butterscotch is, but no one knows what scotch is.”

Pause.

“Some kind of caramel?”

She had me there.

**At least I'm not bored. Over at Ricochet [Rob Long](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7559) passed along an opinion**
on the effect of magical glowing rectangles to suppress Boredom, which
courages creativity. I disagree. Not just because I enjoy my iPad, but
because boredom has become this peculiar state romanticized by people who
are unnerved by the prospect of constant involvement. The prospect, mind
you. They assume we immerse ourselves in an incessant digital stew, and
never take time away to let our minds drift . . . and drift . . . and wander . . .
and become so tired of the weight of the day and the emptiness of the hour
and the great yawning ennui that drapes over your soul at the useless hour of
4:37 PM, which then leads to a novel or a new business or a song, because in
your boredom you ended up being creative. For some, perhaps. For the
classic conception of the poet, complete with ascot and pipe, looking out a
rain-spattered window in a cafe, soul heavy with inertia and weltschmerz,
this might work; if your day's work consists of crafting a couplet, long
stretches of mental indolence might clear the decks, allow new thoughts to
stride forth. But it's just as likely that someone engaged with the ideas and
words of others will find them sparks for their kindle, and regard the damp
peaty bog of boredom as something you have to cross to get to the place
where interesting things are happening.

I'm a great one for romanticizing Things that are Lost, but not moods. I have
a hard time romanticizing emotional states. I spent too much of my 20s sunk
sternum-deep in self-indulgent melancholy, and since there was no war or
famine or plague, I was able to luxuriate in the state and examine it and
chart its innumerable delicate flavors. It did me no good, and it prepared me
for nothing.

I hate boredom.

Then again: not to dis melancholy. It has its place. I have a few musical guilty
pleasures, and these guys are one of them. This is early-middle-aged upbeat
melancholy. I don't post it to prove any point. Just like the song. It would be
different with a better singer, but I don't think it would be as good. It's the
sampling, the guitar, the percussion – all of which work against, and
reinforce, the mood of regret. It's not even about regret – as far as I can tell,
it's a pampered Westerner thinking about taking a break from the terribly
demanding life of being a pop star, looking out the window during a tropical
vacation, contrasting his life with the people in the plaza, and still being
unable to get beyond himself. But it's mostly the beat and the samples.
Later today: Out of Context Ad Challenge! In the meantime – PopCrush for whipping the silly, Tumblr for retro-ephemera, and Ricochet for comments on matters of the day. See you around.

58 RESPONSES TO *hot. hot*

**GardenStater** says:
July 15, 2010 at 8:01 pm

@Mark E. Hurling: “Pig farms are the worst.”

Have to agree there. The town of Secaucus, NJ, just outside the Lincoln Tunnel, used to be the home of many pig farms. Driving into NYC could be an aromatic experience.

And then there’s Butler, NJ, former home of the American Hard Rubber Company. As a kid, driving through there always stunk of burnt rubber. P.U.!

**Robert** says:
July 15, 2010 at 8:07 pm

Brach’s caramels and butterscotch candies. Can’t remember visits to my grandparents without them.

Explains a lot . . .
http://www.robertdwatkins.com/lollipop.html

**Dianna** says:
July 15, 2010 at 9:22 pm

Pig farms are mighty malodorous, but chickens and turkeys housed in those huge, low ceilinged buildings alongside the interstates, on a
hot day...better have a barf bag handy. It's as though all the chickens were rotting. Maybe they were. Or was it the chicken “manure”? Maybe they don't have these places any more. There were some in North Dakota as I recall. Even those who were sleeping in the car were jolted awake by the stench.

**steveH** says:
July 15, 2010 at 9:30 pm

“anything beat a dairy or stock yard?”

During the late ’50s and ’60s we got some variety, depending on the wind direction, around Whittier/Santa Fe Springs in L.A. county.

One way wafted from the commercial dairies to our east, the other brought us evidence of oil refineries from the west.

Last time I was down that way, they were all gone or shut down, and I'm not so sure that it's an unalloyed Good Thing(tm), all things considered.

**Patrick** says:
July 15, 2010 at 9:53 pm

Worst thing I had ever smelled was a chicken house.

Again, dealing with the great-grandparents. Great-granddad used to get eggs not from the local Red & White (there's a store you won't find anywhere), or Foodland, but from a local chicken farm. I'd gone with him a few times, and remember how funky it smelled. I, being a wee lad of about 7 or 8, not knowing any better, once offered my opinion on the odor. Great-grandma was with us, and made me apologize.

They bought their eggs there because they were cheaper, tasted better, and sometimes, if you were lucky, you got a double-yolk in the egg. One of my fondest memories of my great-grandparents was waking up to the smell of eggs and bacon or sausage frying, bread being toasted, and coffee percolating. Yes, *percolating*. They never went for them there new-fangled coffee machines what could be programmed to make your coffee ahead of time. Great-granddad would be up to crack the dawn, along with feed all the animals and crack open some eggs for breakfast.

**Bohemienne** says:
July 16, 2010 at 8:34 am

DC is really no better with the shorts. And the BO is still stupendous. I think they designed the Metro seat covers specifically for their odor-retention qualities.

**fizzbin** says:
July 16, 2010 at 12:11 pm

@bgbear...heh-heh, you said dairy air, heh-heh.

**Fred Baumann** says:
July 19, 2010 at 5:52 am

As a former archaeologist, which requires a great deal of surface collecting — wandering with permission through farmer's fields searching for flint flakes, potsherds and the like — I have been
allowed to sample agricultural effluents at their finest. You wouldn't think so, but the stench of decomposing pea straw (the high-nitrogen vines, leaves, pods, and assorted remnants left over when peas are harvested) can make a pig farm or a chicken shed seem sweet by comparison.

Pea straw is apparently some of the finest composting material you can get. Just get it as far away from me as possible!

I must say that now that I live next to an Amish dairy farm in the Alleghenies (which has a well-tended and extremely healthy herd of 70 or so), the occasional venting of the liquid manure sump that they are required by law to maintain can be an eye-watering horror, as well. Being very good neighbors, they try to do this on days when we can have all our doors, windows, water-tight hatches, etc., securely closed. Still, opening the door early in the morning and stepping out to suck in a lungful of this stuff can just about make me swoon. I leave my car's ventilation system set to ‘OFF’ at ALL times in my driveway, as even the after-funk can take about a week to clear away.
Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Come Thursday, I’m spent. I’m done. It’s a combination of the daily imperatives and a summertime de-acceleration, perhaps. It’s the knowledge that Friday awaits, with the usual pleasures – the filing of the column, which is the official blowing of the whistle and slide down the dino tail, the piano lesson, the nap, the pizza – and then the great happy night of work. Which I didn’t do last week, which is why this week was so lax. But: updates, few as they are, await at the end of this entry.

Went to my daughter’s Art Show today. She had classes all day with two friends at a local school. They drew. They drew something other than cats, which is good. I ask my daughter if she will draw something other than cats, and she does a wolf. The teacher made them do hands, objects, faces (the Haunting Clear-Eyed Afghan Woman from the National Geographic cover was staring back at me from a few of the kids’ drawings, I believe.) My daughter’s non-cat things were good, but as usual, including a squirrel on a log in a swimming pool. (“It’s not a log! It’s a noodle.”) But my favorite was, well, a wolf.
That's a screen grab from the iPhone's movie camera, which has now completely changed everything! Everything is different! Sort of. I used to carry around the Kodak Zi8 for HD shooting, and it had some things going for it: small, long life, nice pictures. Couldn't handle motion, though – hold it out the window and shoot, and trees leaned. If you wanted to zoom, it – would – clunkily – jump – forward – one – step – at – a – time. Half the time I didn’t carry it. But I shot a lot of stuff, and learned something: the more accessible and handy the camera, the more you shoot things you normally wouldn’t shoot. At least I did. I shot snowstorms, commutes, traffic jams, walks downtown, squirrel fights – all sorts of things that would never make it into the family movies, but make up a simple record of the way things are.

We don’t need this, but they will someday. Or at least they might find it interesting. If I had the choice to discover a lost Chaplin film or 30 minutes of silent footage documenting an afternoon around Times Square, I’d go for the documentary every time. This is why I now save every second of raw footage: I edit out things from the family movies because they’re commonplace, because they’re the way things look and I’m familiar with them. But everything changes. It’s good to know what it was before it became something else.

Which leads to the question of how you – I mean, you – define your passage through time. I’m not sure I can answer the question; it’s a combination of personal plots, locations, and cultural markers. As I’ve said before, I feel bad for kids now who grow up in an era when all culture is potentially current culture, when it’s all the permanent now, with no demarcations between styles and eras. You have to be able to read the past to know what led to the next thing, and why we’re where we are. This is the vaguest paragraph I have ever written.

Anyway, the iPhone changes everything because I may no longer download the video, put it into Final Cut or iMovie and arrange the little events into greater narratives. Today after we got home I sat outside and quickly edited the footage from the art show into a movie (using iMovie) with transitions,
and created a quick little film. The difference between this and my magnum opii I usually make every few months?

*Family members will actually watch them.* No one watches my big movies. I’ve always had to accept that. They’re for the future. Hours and hours of the best years of our lives, waiting for the day they want to look back. I hope they’ll like it. Was it really that good? Yes it was.

–

Apologies for the brevity, but it’s one of those days and one of those weeks: no complaints here, but the poor Bleat gets kicked into the corner. It’s the damned imperatives of employment, I tell you! Ruins a man’s ability to sit back and type at leisure. Tonight I nailed down the first iteration of the Green Screen Project, and was delighted with the results: turns out that the people who said we’d have to paint a wall and light it with exacting professional skill were, er, wrong. Ten dollars worth of green felt and six push pins, my good camera and my home computer, and: ladies and gentlemen, we have attained chromakey effects. This opens up an entire new world for my Strib videos, as well as the short pieces I intend to do here. I have only one law: 90 seconds or less. That’s about how much time I want to give to a video, and I expect you may feel the same.

So starting Monday, it’s one more damned thing to ask you to visit.

But since this is Friday, that means “100 Mysteries,” a minor addition, here. Four additions to 1930s magazine ads, here. A column at Startribune.com – scroll down to find my smiling face. And of course PopCrush, Tumblr after ten, and perhaps something at Ricochet.

Have a grand weekend! And again I ask: how do you mark the passage of time? Birthdays, Christmas, The Fourth of July – every life has its markers. Do you choose yours, or accept the ones that appear every year?

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**Pass it along, if you wish**

66 RESPONSES TO *Friday! with a wolf*

AnnaN says:
July 16, 2010 at 1:47 pm

@ Terry Fitz

Oh my – that song. Crash Test Dummies and Smashing Pumpkins never fail to bring back memories of my first marriage falling apart in Minnesota and later on the joy/anticipation of a new life in Colorado.

Terry Fitz says:
July 16, 2010 at 2:36 pm
@Anna N –
Colorado is a great place for new beginnings. I hope the joy lasts a lifetime.

Philip Scott Thomas says:
July 16, 2010 at 2:48 pm
I suspect our Genial Host's daughter has more artistic skill in her little finger than I will have ever. I am most envious.

When I was a kid, my life was measured out on three calendars. There was the normal annual calendar that everyone knows. There was the school calendar that ran from September to June. And then there was the church calendar. Summer meant VBS. Advent meant rehearsals for the Christmas Eve children's service.

These days I live in the present. I'm lucky if I can remember the day of the week, and that's usually only because I can vaguely remember what I watched on the telly the previous night. As for the date, I haven't a clue unless I can look at the calendar in Outlook.

Erica says:
July 16, 2010 at 2:51 pm
I mark time in big ways and little ways – the biggest marker for me is Before Dad Died // After Dad Died. Everything under that is a subheading. And that was 15 years ago. The littlest subheadings are songs. I can hear a song, tell you what year it played and what I was doing (60s, 70s, 80s only). Before 60s I wasn't born, after 80s I was too busy with kids, work and marriage. Have to hear the song though, and then I can practically smell the time.

Normie says:
July 16, 2010 at 3:23 pm
The past 15 years are documented by the drawerful of old cell phones in my desk. Chargers included, of course.

swschrad says:
July 16, 2010 at 4:04 pm
@Normie: if you have any old 800 MHz analog phones you could spare, I'd like to browse them looking for POS-200 oscillator assemblies.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 16, 2010 at 4:26 pm
tee, hee POS-200.
How about about an oscillation overthruster for your interociter buckaroo?

Al Federber says:
July 16, 2010 at 5:49 pm
My passage through time is marked by lucky breaks and cheap thrills.
gemartini says:
July 16, 2010 at 6:09 pm

Check out “Time” by Ray Price at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlEnjRaN0Ys.

The Dread Pirate Neck Beard says:
July 16, 2010 at 7:39 pm

I just want to know why Louis Cheskin's books are so expensive.

swschrad says:
July 17, 2010 at 9:50 am

@bgbear: it's unfortunate. some search engines brick out at the abbreviation for Point Of Sale, a venerable term of decades, the heart of retail.

I'm assuming, based on my detailed study of TLAs required to freakin' survive in my business, that it also stands for Packaged Oscillator, Shielded. mini-circuits does a lot of business with test labs and milspec vendors like rockwell/collins. thus, milspeak is to be assumed when you look at their part numbers.

anyway, I'd still like to place three of those little hummers without whistling up a $100 minimum factory order. still hope to get started on a spectrum analyzer with locator trace this summer.

swschrad says:
July 17, 2010 at 9:52 am

@Dread: uh, he leases his words and passes the costs on to his readers?

Whoamusanyway says:
July 18, 2010 at 3:18 am

This is the vaguest paragraph I have ever written. Nothing vague about it. Scary smart, yes; vague, no. And I'm the reader and I should know.

Mike Gebert says:
July 18, 2010 at 8:10 pm

“If I had the choice to discover a lost Chaplin film or 30 minutes of silent footage documenting an afternoon around Times Square, I'd go for the documentary every time.”

So, did you know that someone DID discover a lost Chaplin film? They just showed it at Slapsticon, a comedy festival in the DC area. It's him very early, dressed as a Keystone Kop, something that was rumored but not known for sure before.

Normie says:
July 19, 2010 at 12:32 pm

@swschrad – I'll have to check but I think there's at least one analog in the bunch.
Paul in NJ says:
July 21, 2010 at 1:25 pm

If I had the choice to discover a lost Chaplin film or 30 minutes of silent footage documenting an afternoon around Times Square, I’d go for the documentary every time.

In fact, a few weeks back some old silent footage from somewhere in NYC was found. Several minutes of trolleys, old flivvers, pedestrians, and like that.

Damned if I remember where it was (the bookmark is probably on a different computer). Is that what you were alluding to?
Finally: nasty weather. I've been waiting all summer for some theatrical storms. Saturday the sirens went off, the great wail of Doom, and they mean one thing: turn on the TV. That's still the best option. If you turn on the radio you're coming in on the middle of someone talking about tree limbs down somewhere; if you turn on the web you get a red banner that says WEATHER ALERT. No kidding, Jackson. Local TV is still your best bet: guaranteed you'll find someone standing in front of a map gesturing at a throbbing chancre moving towards the city. There was a report of tornado in Anoka, and many reports of circular activity from Trainspotters. That's what they said: a trainspotter in Anoka. Took me a while to realize he meant “trained spotter,” which is apparently their brand name for folks who have taken a five-minute course on meteorological observation and promised not to report a wall of ten twisters spitting out cows and tractors and houses and men in rowboats, just to mess with folks.

So I consoled my daughter, who was of course unnerved, and got out all the emergency supplies. Finally! Lights, check. Radio, check. Candles, check. Game of Monopoly, check! Ready to head back to pre-industrial civilization! Except for the lights, radio, and Monopoly part, but you know what I mean.
We’ll eat the ice cream because otherwise it’ll melt. We’ll sing songs on the piannee and read from the Good Book and go to bed at ten.

But the power stayed on, damn the luck. In fact the entire storm skirted us – 60 MPH winds downtown, but here at Jasperwood we just got gusts and downpours, the far edge of the mayhem. I was stupid enough to put fresh batteries in one of the lights, too. Now they’ll be useless the next time I need them. They will sit in the lantern for a year and quietly drain themselves, like old men peeing in their pants while they sleep.

**Not a wasted day, though.** Went to the fabric store for more felt, because the green-screen isn’t big enough. NEED MORE FELT. Not too many times in my life I’ve ever been able to say that. So I took the entire bolt, went up to the counter, took a number 0 59 – and looked up at the counter. 51. Sigh. I was the only guy there except for one tall middle-aged fellow who was wearing a STAR WARS EPISODE 1 shirt. I wanted to say I understood the desire to wear items of pop-culture for T-shirt self-branding in public, but Episode 1? Really? Darth Mikey and Jar-Jar and roger-roger robots? There’s not even a hip-ironic value, as there would be with Speed Racer. (“It’s crap I saw as a kid, but has some hip-ironic cred because it’s old crap!”)

I passed the time by reading “Girl with the Dragon Tattoo” on my iPhone. This is why I love the modern world: I would never have taken along a book on Saturday errands, because I would never presume there would be a moment when I needed to read – but the Kindle app on the iPhone not only has the book I bought on my iPad, it checks the cloud to see which page I read last. I mean, c’mom: that’s just wonderful. It was that or stand there for 15 minutes looking at fabric. No contest. The book has gotten better, because things are happening, and the dialogue doesn’t translate as poorly as the prose. Now I am interested. But we can’t use the term “Page-turner,” can we? Page-flipper. Page-slider. Thumb-tapper.

No, page-turner will do for years to come, just as “Blockbuster” means “very popular” instead of “ordnance that destroys a dense, built-up piece of the urban fabric bounded by four streets.”

When my number was called I laid the bolt on the counter, and the clerk said “I bet I know why you’re buying this.”

“And that would be?”

“You’re using it for green-screen.”

“You’re absolutely right. Is there a lot of call for it? Because it’s the perfect color.”

“I read your tweet yesterday about making a green-screen.”

It took a few seconds to process, because you have to admit it’s a bit different to have a total stranger say something like that. And recognize you.

**Saw** “Despicable Me” with daughter. It was an unseasonably cool Sunday
afternoon, perfect for a movie. A brutally hot Sunday afternoon would be a
good reason too. Mostly we just wanted to see the movie. Before we went to
the movie theater, though, I had to exchange the old printer and get my
money back. We waited for ten minutes while someone made an incredibly
complex purchase using every coupon every issued by the store, ever, and
this required the attentions of the very manager I needed to approve the
return. But this guy – Scott at the Centennial Lakes OfficeMax – is a very
good manager – two girls were getting identical laptops, and he wrote each
one's name on the box, then pushed the cart out to the car.

Gnat asked why I was getting store credit instead of cash. “They could go
bankrupt,” she said, sensibly. Modern child. I said that when someone did
you a good turn, like this store was doing – taking back a dead printer a year
after I bought it, without the receipt – then I should repay them by spending
the money at the store, because they had things I'd need down the road. She
nodded and got it.

After I got the gift card we went to the vacuum cleaner store to get some
bags. It's an Oreck. So you have to get special hypo-allergenic bags, I guess.
They had some hot looking machines in there. Totally restyled. The clerk was
a fellow in his upper fifties, maybe lower sixties – tall, thin, bald, genial.

“These are some nice vacuum cleaners,” I said. “I'm tempted to trade up.”

“We could certainly discuss something,” he said. “How old is yours?”

“Oh, four, five years.”

“It probably just needs a tune-up,” he said.

“I'm just thinking of the style factor.”

“Oh. Well, they are nice looking. Thirty-seven sixty-five.”

Jeezum crow, for bags? Criminey.

“You should take the example of printers,” I said. “Charge nothing for the
vacuums, but really increase the price of the bags, and sell a new vacuum
every other year.”

He laughed and said that was an idea, but it wouldn't be the way they did
things.

On the way out something struck me. Hey, it's Lesson Time!

“That,” I said to my daughter, “was a vacuum-cleaner salesman.”

“Well, yeah.”

“No I mean he wasn’t a clerk. He wasn’t just a guy who had a job in a store.
He was a vacuum-cleaner salesman. He knows his work. It's what he does.”
She stared at me, quizzical. “You know how some stores just have a dude
standing there at the register? That's a clerk. Hamburgers or shirts or
something, he doesn't care. But when I was growing up stores had adults who
knew their business. Shoes, pants, shirts, vacuum cleaners, whatever, that was their job, and they knew things about the stuff they were selling. You don't see that much anymore.”

She shrugged. I suppose the idea is alien; most dads in her social circle do . . . something, but it's not clear what. They talk on the phone and they work on the computer. When I grew up every dad on the block had a profession that was clear and distinct: he made this, he sold that, he ran that. The only one who seemed a bit different was Mr. Herman across the street; he worked at the bank, which mean he was Mr. Drysdale, shaking hands and sitting at a desk and signing things and closing the vault before he went home for supper. He was middle-class. The guy who sold you the suit at Northport was middle-class.

If we buy another vacuum, I know who I want to buy it from.

Anyway: “Despicable Me.” I love going to the movies with her, because we goof on the ads and trailers without mercy. She doesn't accept all this stuff uncritically, which is good, but we had a conversation today about constant sarcasm and how it gets boring and counterproductive. A little sarcasm means you have some beliefs; constant sarcasm means you don't have any, aside from the fact that nothing means anything except as it's fodder for your own withering disapproval. Or so it seems.

I wanted to like it, and I guess I did – every scene with the main character, Grue, was enjoyable enough, thanks to Steve Carrel – a stock middle-European dialect! Lovely. The kids were exactly as you would expect: the sensible one, the “dark” one, the innocent and happy one. The design of the Lair was incomprehensible as the Enterprise's engine room in the new Trek. (Still don't forgive them for that.) Two things annoyed, and both were fairly crucial: the bad guy was horribly annoying. Just awful.

It took me a while to place him – is he supposed to be Bill Gates?
Then it hit me:

He's fargin' Mandark, the nemesis of Dexter – who also had a middle-European accent. Whatever the inspiration, he's one of the most grating characters I've ever seen, and my enjoyment of the film flatlined during every one of his scenes. But there was something else: the feeling that a much better film had been planed smooth and dumbified by studio interference, something with much more edge, to use a word I hate. There was an Addams-Family quality to the premise and the main character, that same blend of the lovably macabre and off-kilter. It wouldn't have lost the kids if it had tried, but it might have been more satisfying for the adults.

And must we start with a rap song? Must we? It was like the trailer for “Nanny McPhee Returns,” which have “Everything Little Thing She Does (is Magic)” by the Police to remind you that, you know, Nanny uses Magic. Nevermind that it seems to take place in England in the 30s. I doubt it's in the movie itself, but when they stick in the Obligatory Pop Song it not only takes you out of the world they've constructed, you feel like you're being treated
like a fool.  Don’t worry!  It may be set in the past, icky icky, but it’s hip as all hell!  Here’s a 25-year-old pop song to prove it!

After the movie we shopped here and there – the Apple Store, Eddie Bauer, the Yankee Candle store where we smelled everything – at least she did; my nose shut down 14 seconds after entering – then prowled some clothing stores and noted the profusion of shirts that had monkeys and/or 60s peacey iconography.  Don’t know how much time we spent walking around; don’t care.  Walked outside: sunshine and warmth.  The weekend was over – just as it began.

**Later today:** LA 1962, around noon or so.  Also the start of the new Strib PopCrush video with my snazzy green-screen technology.  Woot.  [Tumblr](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7575) starts around ten – sorry about Friday; I just had things to do, and forgot to load up the queue, but it’s loaded now.  Have a grand day!

Oh, the title of the post?  Tomorrow.

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**Pass it along, if you wish**

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**63 RESPONSES TO despicable wii**

**Mark E. Hurling** says:

July 19, 2010 at 7:23 pm

@shesnailx, and you know what I find interesting about that observation?  It is very close to one I stumbled across some years back.  I can remember the fascination the 20′s had for the late 50′s and early 60′s, e.g. The Untouchables and a short lived series called the Roaring 20′s.  You can actually move forward through TV history and note this nostalgic fascination of 40 years earlier repeat itself more than once.

I loved the musical anomalies in “A Knight’s Tale” especially the way they wove David Bowie into the dance scene.  I laughed myself to tears the first time I saw it.

**Marjorie J Birch** says:

July 19, 2010 at 7:53 pm

re Amazing Stories: … she has the housekeys — sounds like the caption to a Charles Addams cartoon.  Anyone?

**bgbear** says:

July 19, 2010 at 8:25 pm

The series “Happy Days” ended 26 years ago.  The era it portrayed was less than 20 years before the start of the series.

time is funny, relative you might say

**Chas C-Q** says:

July 19, 2010 at 8:32 pm
Mandark = Arnold Stang?

Pete Madsen says:
July 19, 2010 at 8:34 pm

time is funny, relative you might say

Yeah, isn't that the truth. My first car in 1956 when I was 16 was an old 1947 Chevy. My main driver now is a very modern 1999 Accord. I also have a 1984 RX7 for a playtoy, but it isn't old either.

Chas C-Q says:
July 19, 2010 at 8:37 pm

I know Stang is deceased. I was thinking “homage.”

John Powell says:
July 19, 2010 at 8:41 pm

I think the idea that the music of the 60s is uniquely timeless is a function of Boomer vanity, just like the idea that no one in history prior to 1955 could have enjoyed dancing because they lacked the back beat.

Bohemienne says:
July 19, 2010 at 8:46 pm

Mandark didn’t have an Eastern European accent–Dexter did. Mandark spoke in pocket-protected sprays of saliva, courtesy Eddie Deezen (“Trapped like beavers!” in ‘1941’).

Mark E. Hurling says:
July 19, 2010 at 9:36 pm

I hate to find a point upon which to disagree with someone whom I respect bgbear, but the TV show started in the mid 70’s and portrayed life and times in the mid 50’s.

bgbear says:
July 19, 2010 at 10:13 pm

@Mark E. Hurling: so, what did I say different(ly)?

I wasn't trying to contradict you, just pointing out how time appears to shift at a different pace depending on perspective and using one example of a silly sitcom.

Here is another.

“Star Wars” premiered 33 years ago and “Forbidden Planet” was only 20 years old when Star War started production.

I still think “Forbidden Planet” is the best Science Fiction films of all times.

Mark E. Hurling says:
July 20, 2010 at 10:20 am

OK then, sorry I misunderstood. Evenings bring out the worst in my nit pick nature.
bgbear (roger h) says:
July 20, 2010 at 10:23 am

It took me a while to place him – is he supposed to be Bill Gates?

He looks more like the son of the supersuit designer from The Incredibles:

That's PixarLand, or Toonville, or whatever, for ya.

Paul in NJ says:
July 21, 2010 at 2:03 pm

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!
Someone came up to the side staircase and threw two identical bags containing Yellow Pages on the steps. I can understand getting one. Actually, no, I can’t; in the internet age of smartphones, it’s like sending a Town Crier with big-buckle boots to stand outside my house and shout all the numbers in order in the hopes I may find one or two useful, and jot them down with a quill pen. But two? Does this look like two houses?

I have an image of the distributor skulking around the neighborhood in the middle of the night, laying the books down with subtle skill and tiptoeing away, well aware most people would chase him down and demand he take them back. I remember when the new phone book was an event, a thrill – a new picture on the cover! Finding your family’s name! Now it’s like the world’s most useless pulp-brick. The only other thing whose appearance occasions thoughts of its immediate disposal is dog poop. Speaking of which:

When I was a kid I loved Dr. Doolittle – I discovered the books shortly before the movie came out, which made for stupendous anticipation. And an equally stupendous let-down, if I recall. Rex Harrison is great, but he had too much gusto for Dr. D, who always struck me as a quiet, smallish, pudgy figure. The
very name of the place were he lived – Puddleby-on-the-Marsh – probably did as much as Winnie the Pooh to establish a childhood conception of England – green in Christopher Robin’s forest, but damp elsewhere. Puddleby-on-the-Marsh: bring your galoshes. I remember finishing a book where the Doctor came back from the Moon on the back of a grasshopper, and he was sick. The book ended there. Cliffhanger. I was worried.

The doctor was not a vital man, after all – but of course Rex Harrison would bound off the back of the grasshopper and sing-speak something. Childhood dismay: it's a musical. Oh.

I was thinking of this just a minute ago because the Doctor, of course, talked to the animals. And I just talked to an animal. Not in the form of speech; Jasper's lost most of his hearing. But I went outside to write in the gazebo, and he wanted to come outside because something might be going on. (He has not yet hit the old-dog point where he rarely cares what's going on.) He walked up to the door, looked. I looked. He hit the door with his paw. I didn't
feel like getting up right at that exact moment. He barked – a short sharp note. Okay then.

That qualifies as conversation.

**Grousy day;** the skies began with brilliant blue but turned glum at some imagined insult. The sun came out later in the day, having shunned its chores for most of the daylight hours; the forecast says more of the same tomorrow. Nothing but work as usual on all the available fronts, including a frantic patch of cluster-fargery in the morn to launch the daily videos. Didn’t happen, for technical reasons. Mostly mine. Boring to discuss, so I won’t, but I will note that when you use unfiltered 1000 watt halogen lights you look like you’re broadcasting from Mercury. They also gave me a hellish shadow which could only be solved by flattening myself against the green-screen. Yes: that is my life: standing in my basement at 10 AM with my back to the wall, talking into a camera.

A little experimentation yielded a better result; bounced all the light off the ceiling, which is painted white, and bingo: perfect. But the technical issues had to do with the picture-in-picture looking poorly integrated with the background animation (read: it was crap) so I’m going to spend another week toying with it.

**But it’s fun.** Less so: setting up the new Epson printer. It’s wifi enabled. It couldn’t find the network, or the network couldn’t find it. Neither option interests me much. I have much experience with these things, and have come to believe that if something does not work as advertised right out of the box you should stand up, point at it, shame it, curse its ancestors, vow to return it, then search the web for new drivers. This I did. The new drivers launched an entirely different set-up program from the install disk, and it had no luck finding anything, either. (It goes without saying that the Mac’s printer pane in system preferences saw it, but couldn’t do anything with it.) So I installed the USB option – God forbid you should be able to toggle between wireless and USB, or have both running; it’s either-or, because the coders couldn’t possible anticipate a situation where someone would want to scan via USB and use the printer for the house network – and that led to multiple failures. “An error has occurred connecting to the scanner.”

No, an error has occurred buying the product.

There’s a lot of money to be made setting up a website that allows people to remotely torture printers.

Why am I doing this? Why? How did this all happen? For a while there I was printing and scanning with happy abandon, and now I am not. I will solve the problem, but it puts me behind the Big Project for latter 2010, which could be something interesting like, oh, scanning my old books and applying OCR magic and putting them up for sale in ebook form. Could be that. Just sayin’. Like, an annotated re-release of “Falling Up the Stairs” with author notes and photographs and a website and stuff like that.
Could happen.

Meanwhile, the first issue of Flotsam is about half done.

So, there.

Now to finish watching “Pirate Radio,” which is an account of the madcap happy hairy group of free spirits who beamed ROCK into hidebound England, where state media forbade such wondrous manifestations of the muse. Almost a lesson against state media, no? Not so far; that element seems lost in among the other plots, which include the Transformative Power of Rock: See! girls giggling with delight as favorite songs come on the radio! Thrill! as they have slumber-parties in montage sequences that imply some sort of generational solidarity forged by three-chord tunes yawped by atavistic buskers! Hiss! as men in suits conspire to keep paradigm-challenging fat blokes from saying the F word! And so on. It’s actually based on a real tale – Radio Caroline and all – but liberties, one suspects, are taken. Amusing enough and rambling and anecdotal, but it takes place in Fantasy Sixties, where the entire Western world was engaged in the sole pursuit of hearing “In the White Room” for the forty-seventh time.

But it’s a movie about radio, and so for that, I love it.

Oh. yesterday's title, Despicable Wii: The machine has congratulated me for losing another 3.3 pounds ahead of schedule, but there is still work to be done. It wants to shave off another nine pounds. This simply cannot be done. This BMI stuff is nonsense, which is why I blanche at the notion it should be entered into some great eternal Federal database. I have gained muscle mass over the last two months while shedding fat. My stomach is as flat as the gloomiest economist's 24-month forecast. Oh, I could probably shed a pound of subcutaneous padding, but then I’m down to looking like a skiless anatomical model spray-painted pink. Behold my muscular striations, ladies! No pushing, form a line.

So the Wii wants to kill me. It plants a seed of doubt, encourages you to be better, then notes you could be thinner still, and after 70 days you’re so committed to the regimen of exercise and self-denial the very act of looking at the word NACHO makes you want to purge. Oh, I’ve been here before. This will end come the fall. The pie will beckon. The gravy and the turkey will make their case. I will have two helpings.

At least I hope so. Otherwise, I’m out of my fargin’ mind.

60 RESPONSES TO skinny time
bgbear (roger h) says:
July 20, 2010 at 4:39 pm

@John Robinson: ROFL

lanczos says:
July 20, 2010 at 5:48 pm

BMI on Wii?!?!?

No-o-o [dragged up the steps] – It's (the precursor for) a COOKBOOK! For HUMANS! (Extra-lean, and please trim away all the fat…)

browniejr says:
July 20, 2010 at 7:04 pm

@John Robinson: BRAVO!!!
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUK7CfUniBs
(at ~5:15 and ~6:50…)

cnyguy says:
July 20, 2010 at 7:24 pm

I thought Blanche was George Burns' and Gracie Allen's next-door neighbor. Sure– Blanche Morton, as played by Bea Benederet.

Michael Rittenhouse says:
July 20, 2010 at 7:32 pm

I will give up my phone books when someone produces an online directory that isn't 80 percent fax and disconnected numbers.

Jonathan says:
July 20, 2010 at 7:46 pm

I too read all the Dr Doolittle books as a child, back in the early 60s. The ones currently sold contain a censored, PC text. You can still find the originals, however, if you look around a little.

Lofting wrote so many Dr Doolittle books because he was broke and needed the money.

Moishe3rd says:
July 20, 2010 at 9:40 pm

Jip-jip; Gub-gub; everybody… were my friends. I was Tommy Stubbins. I wanted to train to be a Naturalist under Long Arrow… I was in love with Dr. Doolittle. When I was in college – college, mind you – long after my love affair with all things Doolittle, my mother had our hard cover books rebound (I had read them til they were falling apart) with the original color covers re-attached to the new hard covers… I loved it. And, I still have them. (My children, back when I tried to get them to read Dr. Doolittle, were not particularly interested… Sigh…)
Cory says:
July 20, 2010 at 9:57 pm

cnyguy:
no that was Jed Clampett's sister or was it Barney Rubble's wife, I forget.

Eric says:
July 21, 2010 at 11:26 pm

Not that you need the praise, but in a very difficult life reading you makes me smile. Thank you.

James says:
July 24, 2010 at 9:35 am

Sorry to hear about your recurring printer issues. FWIW, I have a Samsung wired laser MFC, and aside from the occasional print ghosting issue (lots of lasers get that I guess?) it works a champ. Maybe the key point is to get the one with *wired* networking, so you don't give the software developers the chance to screw up handling the wireless connection?
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
This is the week of doing everything. I mean, everything: I have a chart with dozens of little boxes, all waiting to be ticked off. And by that I mean “irritated because I didn’t do them”? No. There are boxes for the daily website additions, the various other site contributions, the tumblr, the videos for the Strib, the Matchbook book, the Falling Up the Stairs OCR conversion -

Hold on, the dog is chewing his nemesis plant. I don’t know what it is, but it’s in a pot, so it must be important. It annoys him. Some of its limbs extend into the space where he prefers to sit – the entire big backyard, and he has one spot. The plant has the gall to drape its tendrils into his space, so he gnaws at it. Dogs not being herbivorous I can only conclude this is a matter of pique. He wouldn’t be out here at all, except that I am out here, and since the family is scattered around the house, plainly awake and Doing Things at an hour he expects things should be winding down, this means he must patrol the perimeter and figure out the plot, the objective. After he was commanded to stop eating the plant, he wandered around the yard, walked back to the steps, and issued a short sharp bark: open the door, because I’m old and I’m not going up those steps if there isn’t a good expectation of admission. As the saying goes: a door is the thing on which a dog is always on the wrong side of.

He does not ask. He insists. It's either servile whining with him, or commands. Either please oh please oh please food yes food please you are...
having food give me some or it's open the damned door, if you would, because you have hands and I don't, and don't blame me, you're the one who put the handle up there. Right? I mean, what is this? A transparent sheet of glass between here and there? For what reason? Dude.

So now I've let him inside. Anyway. All these duties, and more to come. With great satisfaction I check them off. Wife asks: no computer program for this? I say no, with no shame. Oh. I have tried. I've bought all kinds of Get Things Done programs; hate them all. To Do lists. Project coordinators. Check-off this and check-off that: I ignore them. I resent them, with their calm implacable interfaces and reminders and email alerts. Odd as it seems, when it comes to the daily life I'm a Post-It note guy. A physical reminder has an imperative a box on a computer screen doesn't. When I have checked off every box on the piece of paper I'll have a sense of satisfaction I can't get from clicking on a screen. Odd, I know.

Good day, but nothing special. Did all I needed to do. Got sidetracked in the middle of this with domestic stuff, so there: sorry. Enormous day tomorrow, not including standing in my basement against a piece of green felt and talking. (Pictures tomorrow.) For the moment: Out of Context Ad Challenge, a blast from 1933 or so. What are they selling?

Besides the imperative of iron-clad racial and social stratification.

See you at the usual places.
Mumblix Grumph says:
July 21, 2010 at 12:52 am

Good Lord… I don’t even want to know what they’re selling! What ever it is, I ain’t buying.

BTW will Falling Up The Stairs be available for sale or download? Will it be available in more forms than just for an Ebook reader? I like to read Ebooks on my laptop in standard TXT format. I can make the font any size or style I want. Greatly preferred over a locked-in standard.

Jordynne Olivia Lobo says:
July 21, 2010 at 2:00 am

Since the ad’s from the 1930’s it’s probably safe to say that the seated gentleman is not saying, “Pull my finger.”

MikeH says:
July 21, 2010 at 3:01 am

Butler: “Are you feeling plugged up boss?”
Man: “Yes Charles, please fetch me my Ex-Lax pills. When I’m done, don’t spray down the bathroom with Lysol. I don’t want to do any favors for that b**ch wife of mine.”

Baby M says:
July 21, 2010 at 5:20 am

Robert C. Byrd for Ex-Lax?

suze says:
July 21, 2010 at 6:45 am

The man is seated in a chair with a book – he wants liquor.

suze says:
July 21, 2010 at 6:45 am

Oh – wait – that looks like a train car – he still wants liquor.

Maharincess of Franistan says:
July 21, 2010 at 7:20 am

Yes, he wants liquor . . . and the bad moment is when he learns that they’re out of his preferred brand — Old Overcoat or something.

browniejr says:
July 21, 2010 at 7:37 am

“Jasper- A draft of Panther Pilsner!”
For GTD, sounds like Mr. Lileks is a Hipster PDA kind of guy...

rbj says:
July 21, 2010 at 8:04 am

A scotch, neat. And make it neat or I will have your hide.
Totally agree about the dog. I'll be sitting outside with the two, in the afternoon shade, reading a book, and as it is so hot outside they will be demanding to be let inside to the nice A/C. Yeesh, you try and be nice to them and spend time outside, and they'd rather be inside in a 78 degree environment rather than outside in a 90+ degree environment.

Wagner von Drupen-Sachs says:
July 21, 2010 at 8:19 am

Looks like he just wiped some of the porter's makeup off with his finger. Or maybe he tested it and it didn't come off — an ad for Shinola?

Brisko says:
July 21, 2010 at 8:38 am

Dogs are actually omnivorous (like we are), and I've had two dogs who LOVED carrots more than any other food on earth as well as one whose favorite food was... wait for it... tomatoes. Don't know why, but the lil' girl loved 'em.

Lars Walker says:
July 21, 2010 at 8:58 am

The senator is reminding his constituent that if he votes for the wrong party, these fine, federally subsidized jobs will go away.

rbj says:
July 21, 2010 at 8:58 am

heh, Brisko. I had a dog who would eat burnt broccoli, and coal, coal, mind you, but she would not eat tomatoes. She'd eat around tomatoes if the leftovers were in her dish.

Pizza, though, was another story. Because who doesn't love pizza.

Stjohnsmythe says:
July 21, 2010 at 9:34 am

“Toby, fetch me the key to the springhouse!” Oh, wait...

I'm probably one of the few holdouts that keeps FranklinCovey in business. Like James said, there's nothing like the satisfaction of having a physical box to check off, and for me the repeated copying of procrastinated tasks from one day to the next has done more to light a fire under my seat than a reminder chime from a gadget.

James, you ever think that perhaps that plant Jasper's chewing has some pharmaceutical properties? Canine peyote?

Kim says:
July 21, 2010 at 9:58 am

My MacBookPro is attached to my hip, and yet I still prefer a DayRunner planner to working a schedule on a computer. My brain just prefers the act of writing some things, I guess.
justnacl says:
July 21, 2010 at 10:08 am

“Bad Moments...”

When you realize that the “waiter” is actually your new supervisor.

The more I look at the men’s eyes, the more I’m convinced there is a bit of menacing steel in the eye of the one standing. He knows he is the other’s superior, but he is going to play him along for a bit for dropping the boom.

No idea what they are selling.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 21, 2010 at 10:17 am

Mr. White looks like he is giving the servant the “one moment” signal like it is a bad time to interrupt him.

Since Mr. White is not on a cell phone so, I assume the magazine is really interesting/important. Or, he wants to finish a drink before going to the dinner table.

Mark E. Hurling says:
July 21, 2010 at 10:23 am

I wish I could come up with something witty as so many others have for the picture. It's just a mildly unpleasant reminder of things past. It does make me think of a rather arrogant VP I have had the misfortune to cross paths with a few times.

Like Stjohnsmythe, I use a Franklin planner. I can also get to and find any date, meeting, address or phone number in less than half the time of anyone with a PDA or other such device I have ever met. Annoys them no end when I rub their noses in it.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 21, 2010 at 10:36 am

I hope James is not planning on doing the scan/OCR himself. There are pro scanners that can do this rather quickly at little expense if you are willing to unbind a copy of the book.

I could probably do it here at work on our Canon MFDs in under an hour. Little hesitant to tear apart my copy.

swschrad says:
July 21, 2010 at 10:40 am

day planner used: stern voices commanding me to jump, then ask how high. for a degreed computer scientist, it's Old School, but it works.

mostly because I've always been in JIT fields... news, radio production, national networks first responder, etc. chase an ambulance, win a prize.

Bill Peschel says:
July 21, 2010 at 10:43 am

Thanks, James, for giving me a little insight into your working
methods. I keep a notebook with me at all times (and d— Dorothy Parker for warning me off the idea; she railed in one New Yorker column about poets who scribble thoughts in their notebook, and as an admirer of hers, that put me off; should have listened to Mark Twain, whose notebooks have been published).

Anyway, I, too, have found the power of the checkbox compelling. And in all my reading, I've never come across that technique.

While I like the Getting Things Done system, especially it's focus on “next actions” and not the entire project, I fell off the wagon after several months, because I couldn’t find the time to reassess my calender and hold meetings with myself to review my lists. I was spending too much time getting things done.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 21, 2010 at 10:43 am

*Face it, some times you do not have the time or patience for your teenager's Jolson impersonation.*

*Send him and his gal to a Hollywood feature at your local Bijou Theater. Tickets at popular prices*

Wramblin' Wreck says:
July 21, 2010 at 10:51 am

This kind of reminds me of the old Beefeater Gin ads in some of the more upscale magazines. The Atlantic Monthly comes to mind.

Or it could be a scene from the Titanic. The first class passenger is lecturing the waiter that it is socially unacceptable to go swimming sooner than 30 minutes after eating a meal, so do not disturb him with such trivia.

I have a cat who truly loves tomatoes and pineapple. Whenever I eat whole or sliced tomatoes he is continually bothering me until he gets his share.

GardenStater says:
July 21, 2010 at 10:53 am

My dog Fido has lately been eating lots of grass on our morning walk. He didn't really do it very much, if at all, before about a month ago. But he seems otherwise very healthy, so I'm not worried.

We feed him a combination of Purina One dry food, mixed with what we call “dog-wurst,” which comes in a big loaf. It seems to contain veggies as well as processed chicken, eggs, liver, etc.

And he does enjoy carrots.

Tex Lovera says:
July 21, 2010 at 11:21 am

Whiskey, or cigars.

Pencilpal says:
July 21, 2010 at 11:43 am

Wilfrid Hyde-White is indicating that the Compact Fluorescent Bulb above him, while certainly light-years ahead of its time, does not
generate enough glow for him to continue perusing his issue of Punch. Would you mind terribly, young man, replacing it with a jolly old energy-sapping 100-watt incandescent?

GardenStater says:
July 21, 2010 at 11:46 am

I'm with those who say it's some kind of liquor.

Either that, or adult diapers.

“James, smell my finger.”

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 21, 2010 at 1:05 pm

and we're back. . .

swschrad says:
July 21, 2010 at 1:06 pm

“I say, boy, would you be so kind as to overthrow that RoO000oosevelt and restore greed and veiled theft to its proper place on the planet? Off with you, then.”

those days are over.

you only hope your Congresscritter stays bought these days.

Darel Finkbeiner says:
July 21, 2010 at 1:21 pm

I have but a single suggestion in the hopes that it may be useful:

http://www.epicwinapp.com/

I will now slink back into the great, inky blackness.

Aleta says:
July 21, 2010 at 2:09 pm

Post-it notes and paper lists for me, too. As someone else observed when his Selectric was replaced by a computer: “Where's the ding?” The satisfaction of finishing a piece of paper and balling it up and throwing it away, or throwing it to the cat for a toy, is irreplaceable. I do have a schedule on my desktop, a Microsoft Publisher calendar, that I occasionally refer to from time to time regarding vendor appointments, but the main memo is still the reliable Post-it.

Dick Hassing says:
July 21, 2010 at 2:17 pm

Yes, my good man, I’ll have a bottle of your finest North Star beer.

Grebmair says:
July 21, 2010 at 2:22 pm

“One word, son. Plastics!”
D Palmer says:
July 21, 2010 at 2:26 pm

Some sort of liquor ad I imagine.

My family had a lab mix that loved crunchy veggies, carrots, celery etc. She hated lettuce. If you put a bowl of salad on the ground (with dressing of course) she would take a mouthful, and spit the lettuce (now sans dressing) out.

Charlie Young says:
July 21, 2010 at 3:17 pm

Agree on the Post-It way of organizing. I still can’t make myself do anything if I put it into an electronic device. Pen and paper seem to be better motivators.

I note that the iPhone does not have a built in organizer. Makes one wonder if Jobs is an ink-and-paper kind of guy, too.

Brisko says:
July 21, 2010 at 3:28 pm

No, Jobs just plans to add the organizer to the next version of the iPhone so he can release it next year and talk about how vastly improved it is.

After you've given him a few hundred dollars, of course.

SWBart says:
July 21, 2010 at 4:00 pm

Check out the new Lint post. Is it just me or does Dorothy Lamour's face look pasted on her body? She looks like one of my sister's Barbie dolls when the head was about to pop off. Not that my brother and I ever did that.

browniejr says:
July 21, 2010 at 4:09 pm

@Charlie Young: The good folks at The Omni Group have it covered for the Mac, and on the iPhone, and “real soon now” on the iPad - their program OmniFocus is quite good, once you learn how it implements GTD. http://www.omnigroup.com/

shesnailie says:
July 21, 2010 at 5:13 pm

_@_v – oil of ofay, even one of us won’t know you’re a passer…

Bridey says:
July 21, 2010 at 5:49 pm

@Darel. That's great — I don't know if the app's any good, but the trailer is very amusing.

(CEO of Pain — I know that guy.)
browniejr says:
July 21, 2010 at 6:22 pm

@Darel- interesting idea, but will it look like I am trying to conduct business from a “Hello Kitty” phone? If the “hunting for treasure” idea motivates you to complete tasks, then I guess it could work (my father-in-law had a similar idea when trying to loose weight- when he reached a 5 pound milestone, he would buy himself a gold coin-real gold, not pretend. He did this a number of years ago when gold wasn’t ridiculously high.)

ArganikMark says:
July 21, 2010 at 9:44 pm

My PDA (is that right?, did I get that acronym right?) is my own noggin. My simple phone (it stores numbers) and my own recollectin’ seem to keep me apprised as to client appointments, material details, (color #s and product choices, I’m a painter), as well as: finish product expectations, times of availability, entrance codes, child/pet names, as well as practice/gig dates and times and repertoire for the three bands with whom I currently play. iPad? iPhone? iDunno? I’m sure I’m missing out on something but I’m probably too dinosaur (48) to care. Never been a gearhead.

JohnFrat.us » Today's Report – July 21st says:
July 22, 2010 at 10:05 pm

[...] James Lileks: Get things DONE? But how? [...]
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?
“Antagochronistic,” Steve Jobs said. “It’s not a word by Sarah Palin. It’s a word that describes the reaction of some to our.”

I woke. I laid there, parsing the word: antagonistic. Anachronistic. Okay. Made no sense. But if I had conceived of such a word, that meant one thing: I had been sleeping. This was good.

Because I had not been sleeping. I woke at five, and for whatever reason my head turned on, and something in my brain opened every file cabinet marked FEAR and NEUROSES and CATASTROPHIC EXTRAPOLATION and dumped them all out on the floor and set them on fire. I am a sound sleeper, except for the early morning hours when the cardinal starts yelling outside the window, but generally I put my head down on the pillow, pass from this world into the arms of Morpheus, and spend seven solid hours rocked in the gentle currents of Lethe until the alarm issues the words of a middle aged woman from “The Andromeda Strain.” I described this a few years ago: the alarm clock is hooked up to an ancient iPad, which has one song. The wake-up sequence from the aforementioned movie. Time to get up, sir. Time to get up, sir. Time to get up, sir. It’s followed by the cheery 30s tune “Wake Up and Sing,” which always
puts me in the proper mood. Not that I need it: most days I wake, think of all the things I will do, and I feel like a kid on Christmas.

But this. This was awful. I stewed. I tossed. I sought happy places; they scampered away, replaced by something mocking and taunting and pointless – hey, here’s a happy memory from six years ago which cannot possibly be duplicated, due to the passage of time! Let’s pick it apart and find its flaws while simultaneously lamenting its unobtainability! Mwahaha!

At 5:30 I got up, went to my office, turned on the lights, and turned on the computer. Might as well get something done. God help me, I signed some legal documents that had been sitting on the table. Read them all. Was not tired. Am doomed. I looked at the sheet of paper with all the check-off boxes, and wondered if I should get a start on scanning, or perhaps resize some graphics. Maybe coffee. Yes, that’s it! Coffee. Throw this in the face of Mr. Insomnia. See your bet and raise it. But that would mean two hours, two long endless hours, before the house stirred – and then there’d be a brief flurry of morning activity, and I’d be alone again, exhausted, with the entire day yawning ahead like an endless ration of bothersome mortality to be crossed like a character in a New Yorker cartoon set in the desert.

No. Back to bed. So I went back to bed. Happy thoughts happy thoughts -
tweet tweet


Rumble: the first plane. The cargo planes. It passed like an angry god suffering from Irritable Bowel Syndrome; how did I sleep through those? I rolled over, which was a mistake: now I saw the light. When it’s dark, there is still hope. If you fall asleep in the dark you will wake in the light, and that is enough. I shut my eyes. Happy thoughts happy thoughts. Oh: tomorrow – I was still thinking of the day in which I was already fully involved as “tomorrow” – the computer reconstruction project would be complete, and I could reconnect my iPad and upload photos . . . which got me thinking about the iPad case I had, and how it collected lint; Steve must not like that.

But many people had complaints about Apple, and they were Antagochronistic. I woke. Savored the word, a message from dreamland. So I had not been cast out, then. Admission was possible. I closed my eyes; the cardinal sang; a pilot at the airport shoved the levers forward; the sun inched up and the day began. Thank God, I knew none of that.

Insomnia is horrible. My brief experience was sufficient to drive me slightly insane. Compound over nights and weeks, well, I cannot imagine.

The day was a bit muted and shaky, given the difficult night, but everything got done. Everything. I wrote a ton. I made a video. I did WiiFit, which reminds me: in the comments I was asked how I managed to square the Great Weight-Loss with Friday pizza. It’s simple: I throw it up. C’mon; duh. Actually, I just eat less of it. Get the crispy crust, have half portions, savor what you eat, and that’s that. If you eat less you eventually need less. Oh, you want the
boring deets?

A bowl of fiberrific cereal with soy milk and a sausage well-squeezed and adorned with a ribbon of Rooster sauce: breakfast. Lunch: a small tortilla with some cheese, a generous portion of salsa. Snack: banana. Snack: peanuts. Supper: whatever, but just a bit. Snack: 100-calorie bag of popcorn, a few Snaps for a bright licorice finish. Comes in at about 1400 calories a day. Add exercise, and you have weight loss. I deny myself nothing and I miss nothing. Except ice cream and big, big juicy burgers with a basket of fries and a shake with caramel because at the bottom of the glass there's like PURE CARAMEL.

Sorry.

Of all the peculiar things that came to me in the middle of the insomniac interlude was a song by Carlos Alomar called, of course, “Insomniac.” It was from one of those “New Age” records I bought in the 80s, an album called “Dream Generator.” I could hear the voice at the start of the song: Insomniac ACK ACK. That'll keep you up.

The rest of the album I remember fondly, and it's tied to a specific time and place: living in Uptown, writing late at night on my Leading Edge PC with its amber-on-black text (green on black was so over), deep in the 80s with all its pleasures and worries and insecurities and victories. If I'd been sensible I would have put the “Dream Generator” on an iPod and listened to it, and reconstructed the remarkable summers of ’86 and ’87 at that apartment building. Mr. Wiry Old Boomerstoner across the hall, sunbathing every day, perv vibe; the Completely Sensible Hot Blonde down the hall who worked in a bank and had a great fiancee and invited us all to dinner one night, like it was practice for the dinner with important people she would have in a year or two when she was married; Debbie Cakes, a lithe exhibitionist who lived across from Completely Sensible, and would drop over after a day at the beach to complain bitterly about EVERYTHING her boyfriend did, because she so valued people who could listen. (I ended up calling the cops when he started throwing furniture around, and she never spoke to me again.) And then there was Sean Connery's illegitimate son in the basement apartment. Yeah, sure, right. Then one day the limo pulled up.

It was a marvelous time, mostly because it culminated with the woman who would be my wife. It was as if every possible variation on male-female relations was played out at that place, in case I'd missed the point. If I had put the album on the headphones during the insomniac period I might have retrieved details I'd forgotten. Memory files things away in peculiar places if it thinks you're not interested.

Of course the recollections would have been faulty and flawed, as they often are. Turns out the album came out after all that was over.
Hey, it's the usual today – PopCrush, tumblr, and some updates later today. If you miss 'em, who cares? There will be links galore tomorrow.

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**40 RESPONSES TO insomniac**

**Dave (in MA) says:**
July 22, 2010 at 1:20 am

For noise-interrupted sleep problems, I'd suggest getting a white noise machine. For regular brain-won't-shut-off insomnia I put on C-SPAN just loud enough so that you can't tell what's being said. Almost always does the trick. Another thing that usually works: this CD. Alternatively, his WTC album.

**Michael Rittenhouse says:**
July 22, 2010 at 2:08 am

I sympathize, having spent the last four days in Europe waking at 1 a.m. local time ready to go to work. Then the iPhone alarm clock goes off at 6 and I'm in a stupor with swollen feet that won't fit into my shoes.

The sole benefit: I rise in time to be among the first few commenters here.

**Kerry Potenza says:**
July 22, 2010 at 5:40 am

My weight loss came quite effortlessly courtesy a highly stressful nursing position (I'm a newly minted nurse). I lost 14 lbs. in less than four months! Nursing school makes everybody fat. Most of my former classmates have lost weight since. The trick is to maintain my weight (104, size 3). This sounds impossibly small and anorexic, but I'm only 5'1". I'm certain that WiiFit would deem my BMI overweight.
After a lifetime of eating whatever I wanted with impunity, I now have to accept the fact that it's flatbreads, lower carbs, and steady exercise to stay slender. So far so good due to the novelty of my fabulous new wardrobe, but come winter...

**kc says:**
July 22, 2010 at 6:35 am

Kerry – 4’11” & anywhere between 105 & 113. Much skinnier when I was young. Now have some ‘meat on my bones,’ as the Old Ones used to say. But just after 50 things began to…gravitate. Downward. Plus, the pain of old injuries and traumas, along with arthritis… I am Grandma Daycare to one 33month old Pixie, so haven’t become a sofa slug just yet. Will have to rethink things when she goes to school.

Insomnia is an ongoing irritation in my life. I can’t imagine any other way.

**Nancy says:**
July 22, 2010 at 6:46 am

Wow, feeling pretty tall at the moment–5’2 1/2″ and not fat but not sharing my weight. I know the WiiFit would dis’ my BMI. It has been proven an inaccurate way to judge fitness. For instance most athletes are “fat”.

James, there is an ap for the iPod touch (hubby calls it his iPad nano) called mind waves or something. Puts him out like a light when he has trouble with insomnia. For long bouts, a course of melatonin works.

**Rick says:**
July 22, 2010 at 7:00 am

I just finished watching the original Andromeda Strain on my iPod a few days ago, one of my favorite movies. I love how the movie doesn’t apologize for being “smart” and doesn’t talk down to the audience, or dumb down the scientific portions, yet it’s easy to follow.

**juanito - John Davey says:**
July 22, 2010 at 8:33 am

I hit 6 feet tall before I was a high school freshman. Played football, ran track. Track, with all the stretching made me incredibly limber. Football increased strength and stamina. Broke a toe which curtailed my high jumping. Tore some ankle tendons playing basketball which precluded me from any more football – which was okay, because being out of football set up the circumstances that lead to me meeting my Child Bride.

Ended High School at 6 feet 2 inches, 200 pounds. Run in the spring/summer to shed the winter sloth. Bad ankles led to bad knees (Mr. Slate’s quarry on The Flintstones has less gravel in it than my knees) which led to a problematic back. But even with all the running, I had a Lance Armstrong-esque body type change. Went from long limber runner to more of a (young) John Wayne bulk type. I can’t run like I used to, but I seem to have more strength. Weird. I need to hit a bike because I cannot run anymore, but biking takes waaaaaaay more time to generate similar results to a good run.

I typically hit the iPod for an old album when confronted with the
Insomnia threat.

Lars Walker says:
July 22, 2010 at 8:40 am

I'm a lifelong insomniac. Just something I've had to come to terms with. When it's bad, a melatonin tablet sometimes helps, but I have to give it a little time to work, by which time, it's usually too late to get a minimum decent night's sleep.

I blame it on a pesky brother I had to share my bed with when I was a kid. I came to associate lying in bed with being on guard.

mln84 says:
July 22, 2010 at 8:58 am

Antaochronistic: when time is _not_ on your side.

AnnaN says:
July 22, 2010 at 9:00 am

“"It was a marvelous time, mostly because it culminated with the woman who would be my wife.”

Curious – have you ever written about how you met your wife, the whole gooey falling in love thing? I've read your stuff for decades but not religiously and so am not sure if it exists and merely bypassed me.

I just remember seeing years ago (on one of the very early iterations of this site) a photo of her and it was amazing. I remember thinking, “oh, there's gotta be a good story there.”

Soooooo, wondering if you haven't written about her as it's not meant for public consumption – for understandable reasons.

RebeccaH says:
July 22, 2010 at 9:36 am

I've had many a night and many a wee-hour bout of insomnia. They are terrible, but I find it helps if you give yourself a facial massage. You'd be amazed at how many facial muscles unknot and relax you enough to sleep.

Your story of Sean Connery's illegitimate son reminded me of a kid we knew in college who, one night at a drunken basketball party, claimed to be the son of a Mafia don. Our reaction was the same as yours. And then, when it came time for him to go home to Jersey for the summer, big burly men in dark shades and gumbah suits came in a big black Cadillac to collect him.

Hal says:
July 22, 2010 at 9:38 am

Insomnia, Bah. I lean more toward the narcoleptic. I can, and do, fall asleep anywhere, anytime. My wife complains because I take micro naps while, for example, sitting in the Dr. waiting room. But I do sympathize with the morning angst so wonderfully described by our host.

“something in my brain opened every file cabinet marked FEAR and NEUROSES and CATASTROPHIC EXTRAPOLATION and dumped them
all out on the floor and set them on fire."

**rick mcginnis** says:
July 22, 2010 at 9:41 am

The story of the Alomar album is great – I owned any number of these sorts of records back then, which I recognized even then were meant as “soundtracks” to the “movie” I was supposed to be living, which for some reason I always sort of hoped would turn into Blade Runner. What was it with Blade Runner, anyway – it was supposed to be a dystopia, so why did everyone end up wanting to live there?

**Jennifer** says:
July 22, 2010 at 9:49 am

Every Saturday and Sunday I always try to sleep late, but my brain never lets me. 'There's not enough time to do anything! The house is a mess! The boy isn't going to get into college! We don't have enough money for retirement!'

Every weekend morning. So it's up at seven. Wow, a whole half hour of sleeping in.

Stupid brain.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
July 22, 2010 at 10:08 am

When I was working graves and lived in a trailer near the Illinois Central railyards I remember being awoken by the engines shuttling boxcars through the yard. There'd be a revving locomotive, then an incredible BOOOOM when one or more empty boxcars would slam into more empty boxcars and reverberate so loudly the windows would rattle. Didn't do much for my sleep. I thought at one point, maybe this was what it was like when dinosaurs ruled the earth.

**ken lay** says:
July 22, 2010 at 10:15 am

Carlos Alomar... The name sounded so familiar, yet I couldn't place it. Google. Oh yeah, he worked with David Bowie... a lot. I'd read his name in all those liner notes.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
July 22, 2010 at 10:19 am

weight: I think I eat just a little more than I should so will never lose weight. Extra activity just makes me more hungry. So, I do not worry about it any more. As long as I can cut weeds and grass for 6 hours without collapsing, I feel I am OK.

height: A few weeks back I had lunch with a group who all work with the same client. I am 5'6" and I was the tallest person. It was odd. I haven't felt that way since going to China Town in SF in the 80s.

**Kim** says:
July 22, 2010 at 10:35 am

Your ancient iPAD with only one song? What, is it all of two months
old? : D

The Amazing Colossal Man totally freaked me out as a kid (and as an adult despite the MST version). Never saw the sequel and I’m glad I didn’t!

**swschrad** says:
July 22, 2010 at 10:37 am

when I get insomnia, it’s the anger type. out of nowhere, some stupid little idiotic thing bubbles up and quickly turns into consecutive nights of “24” with a different story every night.

which is massively curious, because I gave up type A for lent a good 15 years ago. gave up so-called “talk radio” at the same time, and that alone did wonders for my disposition and attitude to my fellow man.

anyway, I banish the devils and hand them all over to The Big Guy, and the drone of the room air cleaner and the hiss of the cpap mask eventually send me back off to sleep.

a major, big-time assist for me was closing down Da Wacky and parking the discs by 10 pm, 10:30 at the latest.

**Spud** says:
July 22, 2010 at 11:14 am

While I’m down to under 6 hrs/nite, I also enjoy an occasional doze in the lazy-boy in the evening. I missed seeing who won on “Wipeout” two nights ago, but didn't mind too much. I look forward to the day when I can get rid of my current throne and get something a little more comfortable, though it may mean missing more stuff that goes on in the evening.

Home is where the lazy-boy sits.

**Uncle Joe** says:
July 22, 2010 at 11:46 am

BMI calculators say that I am obese. I guess that is why the kid who is thirty years younger than me went flying backwards when he tried to toe-drag the puck around me at the blue line last night. Force=mass x acceleration. Got plenty o’ mass. Acceleration isn’t what it used to be, but apparently enough.

**RLR** says:
July 22, 2010 at 11:53 am

Insomnia blows. Many's the morning I go to work at 0300 because there ain't no hope of sweet dreams.

**swschrad** says:
July 22, 2010 at 12:22 pm

high-energy physicists build ever-larger and more dangerous experimental machines to try and find where all the “dark matter” in the universe went.

40 percent of all estimated weight is missing, you know. It has to be somewhere.
they should be investigating the BMI. I'll bet it's hidden in the tables of the body mass index, because I'm not that fat.

browniejr says:
July 22, 2010 at 12:57 pm

hmmm... for some reason, my reply where I linked to pzizz (a modern kind of “dream generator”) didn't make it past a filter. Is pzizz a dirty word?

mssnickies says:
July 22, 2010 at 1:51 pm

Too weird... I started reading Stephen King's “Insomnia” last night and as an on and off again sufferer of insomnia I was afraid I would have another bout... well all this discussion just cements it... I am doomed.

Aleta says:
July 22, 2010 at 2:37 pm

“something in my brain opened every file cabinet marked FEAR and NEUROSES and CATASTROPHIC EXTRAPOLATION and dumped them all out on the floor and set them on fire.”

Oh, man, yes. Perfect. Perfection. Absolute truth. About 3-4 ayem, about once every six-seven months, ditto. And I've never been able to put it in words. THANK YOU.

Brisko says:
July 22, 2010 at 3:10 pm

I see Isaac Asimov, L. Sprague de Camp and Fritz Leiber on that cover with the space dame. That's gotta be a great issue of that magazine.

browniejr says:
July 22, 2010 at 3:26 pm

@Brisko- You Are Correct, Sir!! I had to google it- but here is a rundown of the articles:

The most significant story (at least from today's perspective) was actually written by Damon Knight- “To Serve Man” (!!!)

tterrace says:
July 22, 2010 at 3:48 pm

Re: PopCrush, I had the pleasure of meeting Gloria Stuart back in 1999 when she attended a memorial for my late uncle in San Francisco. They were both rare book collectors, and apparently had frequent long phone conversations which she peppered with lots of then-current Hollywood gossip; this was two years after her comeback role in “Titanic.” She was tiny, a live wire, and flattering. So glad to know she's still going strong.
Baby M says:
July 22, 2010 at 4:20 pm

Thanks to a law school classmate of mine who got himself elected, there's a "childhood obesity" bill pending in the Ohio General Assembly which will require all of the schools to keep BMI measurements for every kid in the state. The records will be maintained for "statistical purposes only," I am assured.

swschrad says:
July 22, 2010 at 4:26 pm

@Baby M: these records are only for statistical purposes only if the identities are random and mixed randomly. Making keeping any identities useless.

this, then, is a Big Brother law. Since weight is a medical indicator, this bill is probably illegal under HIPAA; in any event, the school systems will have to conduct their computer records in accordance with HIPAA laws.

This will probably hike the cost of the guy's little pretend databases to several millions of dollars with monitored access required, etc.

Somebody should tell your buddy that this bill needs to bring its own funding. Number of schools in Ohio, it's a billion-dollar boondoggle.

That'll kill it.

swschrad says:
July 22, 2010 at 4:28 pm

If Ohio wants to track fat kids for purely statistical purposes, they can pass a bill that the medical providers sift their records and send an anonymized set of averages every year.

But the bill should STILL carry its own funding.

In fact, ALL bills should carry their own funding. Byron Dorgan was spot-on. Pity the idea hasn't caught on.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 22, 2010 at 4:41 pm

Kind of hard to take something "world threatening" like global warming seriously when politicians approach it with the same gusto as an "obesity epidemic".

Also, did "obese" get defined down to what we use to simply call "fat"?

hpoulter says:
July 22, 2010 at 4:46 pm

@browniejr:

I don't know but when I read your comment I pzizzed.

Dave in California says:
July 22, 2010 at 4:57 pm
Your description of sudden-onset insomnia is spot-on. As a fellow practitioner of your wife's profession, I get hit with extended bouts of 3 a.m. wakeups a few times a year. I usually turn on SportsCenter, which by then is deep into its fifth repeat of the night and thus terminally irrelevant and boring, even to a sports fan. Another technique I sort of enjoy, though, is to count backwards from 100. As I go through each number, my brain conjures up a random image of each year represented by the number (everything in the 70s comes through in a hazy wash of browns and mustard yellows). It seems to require just enough brain activity to redirect my thoughts away from the crisis to allow me to go back to sleep before I get to the Normandy landing.

browniejr says:
July 22, 2010 at 5:05 pm

@Baby M: Are you sure your old classmate isn't actually an alien, collecting data “for a cookbook?”

@hpoulter: made me laugh- thanks. My original comment on pzizz was that the concept (randomly generated sounds/ bells/ a ‘soothing’ voice to make you relax and go to sleep) seemed pretty hokey.

hpoulter says:
July 22, 2010 at 5:27 pm

Seems ridiculous to me. Random sounds are what keep me awake.

ScottG says:
July 22, 2010 at 5:52 pm

I'm surprised that no one has offered the classic solution to insomnia. Take a rubber mallet....

Ben says:
July 23, 2010 at 11:14 am

My key to sleeping through noise: a slightly noisy fan (has to be a steady, consistent noise, no wobbles or ticks...), and a heavy pillow on my head. The pillow does most of the work. It took a while to get used to it, but now I can't sleep without it. The pillow blocks out both sound and light, making the early morning easy to sleep through.

As for memories attached to music, I get that a lot when I buy a new album right before embarking on a road-trip. I got a particular Incubus CD right before heading to Las Vegas, and now whenever I hear that CD I'm instantly driving down Sahara Ave, heading into the sunset after a day on the strip, noticing how it's 95 degrees at 9pm, and the wind blowing through the window feels hot. I don't remember much about that trip, but thanks to a some re-wired synapse in my brain, I'll never forget that late-evening drive.

Pam-EL says:
July 23, 2010 at 4:23 pm

I think I have all the weight everyone is missing, but it is distributed on a magnificent 5'8" frame.

Side note: CD cover depicts the Worship of the Giant Blueberry Donut — my very own religion! Hence the missing weight....
Nuther side note: insomnia is at its most horrible when the birds start. 4 am should never be approached from the night side unless its one hell of a party.
And so we find ourselves at the end of the week, looking at the boxes, judging the time by the boxes ticked off. I did most of them. So there's that.

I slept last night, so apparently insomnia is not an issue: good.

Friday is shaping up as a clusterfarg: sigh. But that's by the definitions of my easy life; it's not as though I'm slated for midnight patrol in a warzone, or have to get up at 4 AM and pump diesel into trains.

Just cleared some comments. Some items that seemed to be spam:

haha I totally am in love with Justin Bieber!

And good for you. I'm sure that was completely on point for a discussion two weeks ago, but I am loathe to approve the comment, as your email goes to a .info site about women's clothing. Next:

Wow! Thanks! I always needed to write down in my web site one thing
like that. Can I take a part of your post to my weblog?

Since you, sir, have an email and trackback website whose name obviously sells a particular kind of office machine, you may have your duodenum gnawed by zombie beavers in hell. Have a nice day.

dispenses utilize a fantastic webpage decent Gives thank you for the hard work to help out me

You, if I read your information correctly, are selling industrial machinery. I understand the difficulties the modern economy presents the makers of heavy goods, but if you want to use my website to “help out me” you might want to first stick your head in this box, which is full of bees. Thanks you fantastic utilize.

Finally:

I've helped people in the past make chicken coops, just take a look at my site and you will see.

You may not believe me, but this was posted in a thread that did not involve, discuss, or admit the existence of chicken coops. In a way I feel bad about not approving this one; someone might be desperate to learn how to built a chicken coop, and spend endless hours reading message boards on unrelated threads in the hope someone broached the topic. Nevertheless, sir, I would prefer you eat expired eggs and aspirate your own vomit.

Or is that just too vulgar? Orson Scott Card has read my books, and regrets sending them to mom:

The reason I have to apologize to my mother is Lilek's smart-mouth, often obscene, and always vulgar commentary. Don't get me wrong — it's funny. Extravagantly, ornately savage. But he draws from a vocabulary my mother would not love.

And yet half the value of the book comes from Lilek's nasty wit. So ... Mom, it was a mistake to send you that book! No, I don't think you'll like it, but I didn't know at the time — I bought it sight unseen, online! (I'm not sure that's actually an excuse, but it's all I've got.)

Meanwhile, all my old friends from the college drama department, you'll like these books! (That is, unless you've grown up and become staid.)

I think there's one big hard cuss word in the first one, which I regret. Believe me, I appreciate the pub and the qualified thumbs up, but “always vulgar” just pains me. I will email the fellow and ask him to give me a list of specifics
that justifies the assertion. It will be interesting to see the response.

Links? LORD AMIGHTY yes. (Links open in new windows.) There’s a 100 Mysteries you can probably skip, because it’s one of those crackly talky 30s duds. HERE, if you must. The revival of the Gallery of Regrettable Food sails on, with the reworked Sad Vegetables site, HERE, and a brand-new site devoted exclusively to covers, HERE. NOTE: click on the image to advance to the next page. That site will roll on for a while, with fifty more pages to come. Bleatplus is HERE – part one of a Gene Autry 1943 rodeo program guide. 1930s ads examines the return of beer, HERE. Tumblr is loaded and ready to roll with four posts, HERE, starting at ten AM. PopCrush resumes Lindsay Lohan BS at 9 AM, HERE. The StarTribune column, of local interest, is HERE. (Scroll down, no live link at the moment.) I will probably post something at the civil & friendly center-right site Ricochet, HERE.

In other words: boxes, checked. Hey! Thanks for dropping by this week. Next week: more of the same, link-wise, a new banner – I’m sick of Happy 50s Couple – and the usual stew of gripes and glee. As ever, I appreciate your patience and patronage. Have a grand weekend.

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80 RESPONSES TO vulgar me

**swschrad** says:
July 23, 2010 at 1:52 pm

// insert obligatory demand for apology to poop and vomit for comparison to awful recipes here //

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
July 23, 2010 at 2:00 pm

I too am curious about what exactly offended the lady. For instance the “weenies in beans” invites phallic humor. My experience is that women, cruel little critters they are, always find penises and testicles funny.

**Bonnie_** says:
July 23, 2010 at 2:12 pm

When you see a picture of six inch hot dogs embedded upright in aspic with chunks of celery and other vegetables floating among the, er, cylindrical shapes, you need a writer with some sharpness to his prose to give the picture the caption it so richly deserves.

Our genial host is anything but vulgar. I would call him incisive and witty. His words are perfectly composed to enhance and illuminate the displayed pictures.

If asked to caption photos of quilts, Lileks would undoubtedly bring me to tears with his heartbreaking, luminous prose. He's done it to me before, discussing family and life.
For wieners embedded in aspic, he brings another of his gifts to bear. Mr. Card, you done the man wrong.

**Kim** says:
July 23, 2010 at 2:12 pm

The idea of those Baby Ruth cookies sounded pretty good, especially the fact that they provided DEXTROSE for energy.

Lord knows even though our body converts everything we eat into dextrose, we can never get enough!

**Brisko** says:
July 23, 2010 at 2:57 pm

People who want Orson Scott Card to apologize or have said he was out of line: stop. He never said HE dislikes the humor, he specifically says he enjoys it.

His mother didn't care for it.

Reading comprehension, people.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
July 23, 2010 at 3:00 pm

*always vulgar commentary*

I think this is what people are focusing on Brisko, unless I read it wrong.

**madCanada** says:
July 23, 2010 at 3:15 pm

What's with Orson's “mother” fixation anyway? Dude sounds like Norman Bates.

**Cameron Wood** says:
July 23, 2010 at 3:47 pm

Full disclosure: I, too, am a Mormon.

I wouldn't say I feel like a Jew at a Mel Gibson fan site; maybe I feel more like a conservative at a Journalist party. No – still too dramatic. Let's say I feel like a Mormon who walked in on his friends as they were telling rounds of “Mormons are [insert pejorative here]” jokes, which is always an awkward moment.

And now it's happened here, with people I thought were more or less above this kind of silliness.

Ah, well.

That being said, let me state: love James’ books, and I've been enjoying the site since 2002.

Rest assured, if I had any way to offer you all some nice baked casserole and some punch, I'd do it, partly because it would be ironic, but also because it would be a nice gesture anyway.
bgbear (roger h) says:
July 23, 2010 at 4:04 pm

should I repeat that I usually defend Mormons and my mother, a late convert, was treated kindly by the church (temple) and they helped with a memorial service after her death. Sorry for any offense.

Here is an agnostic joke for balance: Here about the dyslectic, agnostic insomniac? He laid awake at night contemplating the existence of dog.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 23, 2010 at 4:06 pm

“hear about” grumble, grumble.

madCanada says:
July 23, 2010 at 4:11 pm

As an agnostic, bgbear, I laugh at your joke and take not even the slightest offense.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 23, 2010 at 4:14 pm

Hear (tee, hee) is another:

An agnostic is rowing his boat on Loch Ness when he spots the infamous huge monster moving straight at him. As Nessie towers and lunges at him, the agnostic shouts, “Please God, help me!” Time freezes. A voice from heaven asks, “Why should I help you now? You didn't even believe in me five seconds ago.” The agnostic replies, “Hey, give me a break. Five seconds ago, I didn't believe in the Loch Ness Monster, either!”

swschrad says:
July 23, 2010 at 4:47 pm

hear, hear. (random grumblings, mutterings, an occasional desk top slams as the House of Commons continues to make it impossible to hear, hear the speaker.)

speaking of Mel Gibson targets: Isaac Felsenstein watches the lottery for 40 years. prays to God about it. “Oh, Lord, the things I can do for your people if I win. It's big this week. I can endow a new ark. I can build a water system. Let me win this week.”

week after week… no win.

Isaac dies, standing at the desk, when God walks by. “Lord, how come I never won the lotto?”

“Isaac, did you ever buy a ticket?”

madCanada says:
July 23, 2010 at 5:03 pm

Have a good weekend, everyone! … Genial Host, I look forward to more “often obscene, always vulgar, ornately savage” blogging next week. (Lenny Bruce, eat your heart out!)
browniejr says:
July 23, 2010 at 5:04 pm

@Brisko: “His mother didn’t care for it."

Not exactly. Mr. Card goes out of his way to apologize to his mother for sending her a book, saying Mr. Lileks uses a vocabulary “my mother would not love.” We are left to assume that ‘his mother didn’t care for it.’ – this may very well be the case, but other mothers (such as Cameron Wood’s, my mother, etc.) found it humorous.

Essentially, Mr. Card found it humorous, too (or so it would seem), but felt a need to warn others that may be sensitive that they may not like the language, by publicly apologizing to his mother. Rather a roundabout way to review a book, but I'm not an author, so I may not be as able to construct a review.

lanczos says:
July 23, 2010 at 5:16 pm

The BleatPlus “Baby Ruth” cookie recipe, updated to our Brilliant More Enlightened “Healthy” Times:

1/2 cup butter, or other shortening [YIKES! - Omit]
3/4 cup white sugar [YIKES! - Omit]
1 egg [YIKES! - Omit]
1 1/2 cups flour [YIKES! - Omit]
1/2 tsp. soda
1/2 tsp salt [YIKES! - Omit]
1/2 tsp. vanilla
2 Curtiss 5cent Baby Ruth bars (in small pieces) [YIKES! - Omit]

Sooo, Mix vanilla and soda, then bake in a 375 oven for 10-12 minutes. Eat. Healthy AND Delicious! (And you'll Live Forever, because your “cookies” had no Unhealthy Stuff!)

hpoulter says:
July 23, 2010 at 6:42 pm

I think it all comes down to what “vulgar” means. Literally it means “common” or “popular”, but that is obviously not the usage here.

For a writer (one I love) Card may have been imprecise. Since I’m not a writer, I’m not sure what the correct word is, but I have sometimes had the feeling, reading Lileks' books, that I would be careful to whom I would recommend them. I wondered how he might explain a word like “bukake” to certain people. Like “MILF”, it is a term that I hate to see mainstreamed.

I'm not a prude. I love Lileks' books and own them all. I love Dave Barry and his booger jokes. But I will defend to the death OSC's mom's right to be offended by them.

cnyguy says:
July 23, 2010 at 7:27 pm

I have read and enjoyed all of Our Host's books, and am a dedicated Bleatnik. It's absurd to say that his writing is ALWAYS vulgar. Occasionally or infrequently vulgar, maybe, but certainly not always.

It might be pointed out to Mr. Card that, since Our Host's name is
not James Lilek, but James Lileks, “Lilek’s” is not the correct possessive, “Lileks”’ is. Things like that always irritate me.

browniejr says:
July 23, 2010 at 7:55 pm

@hpoulter: what have you got against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front? (I know the vulgar acronym- let's not belabor it…)

Earlier this week in another Bleat comment stream, others took offense to certain words and attitudes expressed in “Huck Finn.” Perhaps in a later age, someone will take offense to “The Gallery of Regrettable Food” or “Ender's Game” and work to get them banned, like some people do now for “Huck Finn.” Time will tell if they become as iconic as “Huck Finn,” but the dismissal of either work for vulgarity or themes, as far as I can see, is not warranted. Each book is also not for everyone.

swschrad says:
July 23, 2010 at 9:34 pm

@yanczos: soda? sodium!!! yikes, OMIT!

vanilla? alcohol!!! yikes, OMIT!

new dessert idea: lick the tofu wrapper. eat tofu wrapper. bite dining partner. run into backyard and gobble down squirrels, raw. run screaming into the full moon on the horizon… .

or cut the grass, have a couple scoops of black cherry ice cream. it's DIE with a T, is what it is!

bgbear says:
July 24, 2010 at 8:34 am

You know “bukkake” just means “to splash”, you could leave it at that and then move on to why people snicker when someone says “come”.

😊

madCanada says:
July 24, 2010 at 9:22 am

@ bgbear.

No, no, no. I will NOT launch into an elaborate Dean Martin song parody. No, no, no.

madCanada says:
July 24, 2010 at 9:35 am

THAT would be vulgar, Mr Card.

Eric in Seattle-ish says:
July 24, 2010 at 10:58 am

Mr. Card, eminent writer though he may be, can go pound sand. I consider his contorted, unencumbered-by-logic rants on homosexuality just as vulgar as any four-letter word committed to paper by our gracious host. Tit for tat, as it were; but I'd rather read
Lileks’ riffs on aspic recipes than Mr. Card’s lunatic ramblings on my “sinful” lifestyle.

If his mother is so frightfully scandalized by these books, I hereby offer to relieve her of them for a very modest fee.

**fantabulous** says:
July 24, 2010 at 12:29 pm

I think I had relatives like Orson’s mom when I was growing up. There were certain things one just didn’t talk about in front of them. They were always being scandalized by the conversations of others. Whole realms of topic were taboo.

In retrospect, they were just boring.

**NerveBag** says:
July 24, 2010 at 1:42 pm

So, is that right that there are just two beer ads? The links at the bottom of the second one don’t work, so you can go no further. Anyone else notice that? Seemed a little abrupt.

**swschrad** says:
July 24, 2010 at 6:43 pm

it had been noticed. where there is a 6/html, put a 7/html. beers up!

**Mag** says:
July 26, 2010 at 12:32 am

I love Lileks and bought two of his books, but I remember finding Interior Desecrations (I think it was) coarser than I was comfortable with giving to my teenager. Hey, some of us are modest. But lovable nonetheless.

**Hervey Willets** says:
July 27, 2010 at 3:18 pm

You have to taken into consideration Utah culture when reading Mr. Card’s criticism. Uptight Mormons of a certain generation might have a problem with “potty-mouts”, But perhaps OSC feels his mom might be offended by the ridicule of what would be considered Haute Cuisine in Happy Valley Utah. “Funeral Potatoes”, green bean casseroles and green Jello with shredded carrots (aka “salad”) are to be found at every potluck.

**Fred** says:
August 2, 2010 at 11:33 am

I have Mail and neither Obama or Palin came up with any spelling correction. Now palin did while obama did not but then so does this website...
Still not finding what you're looking for?
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

Please install and activate the "Twitter for WordPress" plugin to use this section.
Friday I dropped my laptop on my foot, and broke it. I can probably break down the audience here into two types: those who wonder if I am limping, and those who are sad about the laptop. I tried rebooting it, and it declined to advance beyond the logo and the loading indicator. Ran a diagnostic, and after nine hours it reported more bad blocks than the Bronx in 1972. SMART disk status: FUBAR. Tried to reinstall the OS; fatal errors.
In the middle of this procedure my wife notes that her phone is acting up; some of the numbers don’t work.

“Did you drop it on your foot?” She did not. “Did you drop it on my foot? Because that seems to be a pattern here.” She had not dropped it. Some googling revealed that others had this problem as well, but if you google “my ear turned black after I listened to opera after eating prawns” you will find people who had this problem as well. But there was enough trouble to indicate that the phone was FUBAR.

Off to the Apple Store, then. I explained that I could put in a new hard drive, but it’s really tricky with this model. Right? I’m still a man. TELL ME I’M STILL A MAN. Then he called up some internal secret documents on the phone, and said they’d give me a new one. Free.

It’s the golden age of returning phones to Apple, I tell you!

Friday night I didn’t do much, because I had to get up at an ungodly hour Saturday to watch wife and child run. Wife has gotten back into running; want daughter to experience the joys. Daughter, like me as a child, regards running as something to be done only if fleeing tigers. But she’s game, and I’m encouraging, and so up and off we went. The run was around one of the lakes:

What a beautiful city. I was hitherto unfamiliar with running culture, and got a load: everyone is to be encouraged and urged on, which lead to the initially
Surprising sight of a woman walking along the path shouting WOOO RUNNERS! to absolute strangers. Or “finish strong!” to the last people trickling in 10 minutes after the first runner completed the 10K. Then it was the kid’s run, and since parents were invited I got in the huge wad of humans and waited for the starting gun. Well, not a gun; that would send a wrong message. I think they release a dove now and shout “DOVE.” The entire mass lurched forward, and after 3 seconds I almost bowled over a tiny little girl who was facing the wrong way, crying. So I stopped and formed an Immoveable Shield, and crab-walked her out of the torrent to the sidelines. So ended my running for the day.

Home for scones, then off to a postcard show in Eagan. Fifty-one dealers. Good Lord. I ended up with a batch of motel postcards – since it’s still summer, I’ll be posting them later – and four enormous McCall’s magazines from the 20s and 30s, things of absolute beauty. And more, including an inexplicable cigar band I’ll put up later this week.

Because my wife has this strange idea we should get out of the house and do things, we got out of the house and did a thing – attended the fireworks down by the river. First, we went to the Mill City Museum, a flour-centric exhibit installed in the ruins of an old mill.
Love that place. Even more so for the items they had in a cabinet of recipe books, as the image at the top of the page shows. I am less happy about the new Guthrie, which decided it wanted to have nothing to do with the historical district in which it resides, and sticks out a black metal tongue to the river:
Then we walked across the Stone Arch Bridge, which was already filled with people who'd staked out positions earlier in the evening. Walked over to the other side of the river, and yes, this is the city:
Walked across the Hennepin Avenue bridge at dusk. The Grain Belt sign:
On the way back from the Hennepin bridge we entered the Commercial Zone, where food in its carnival form was proffered for the multitudes: a walleye truck had a sign that said WINNER WINNER WALLEYE DINNER, which made me smile and grimace: nice twist, but the original phrase always annoyed. There are possibly two people in the world who can carry off the phrase “Winner, winner, chicken dinner.” One is Bill Murray. I have never met the second one. There were brats, cheese curds, pizza trucks – and that last one reminded me of the earlier contrusion with Domino's. Twice we had ordered a pizza with extra-large pepperoni. Twice it had arrived without the extra large. See, the order is calibrated to hit everyone's preferences, and my daughter will only have pepperoni, so: her half has pepperoni and extra-large pepperoni. But twice the pizza has arrived without.

“I'm going to call them,” I said.

“No, Dad, don’t! It's okay! Don’t make a fuss about it.”

“Honey, a manager would want to know these things.”

So I called, and explained, and the manager asked if I ordered online. I said that I did, modern-type person that I was. That's the problem. Extra-large has
been discontinued, but it's still on the online menu. Can you tell me what the printout on the bottom of the box said? I noted that it had elided the extra-large issue altogether. So the problem wasn't on their end. He offered to comp me a pizza, but I said I didn't want to have a bad effect on his customer-complaint stats. It wasn't their fault. I don't feel right about getting a free pizza when it's not their fault. Crazy, I know, but it's how I'm wired.

There was also a booth giving away free samples of Craisens and juice. We had some. The guy next to me in line stuffed fistfuls of free samples in his pockets. Then filled up the pockets in his cargo pants. My daughter must have caught my look of raised-Spock-eyebrow, because when she was thirsty and I said we could return to the Craisen juice stand, she said we'd already been there; wouldn't be right to take more. I said she could take the cup I hadn't taken. That worked.

Odd how these ethical examples manifest themselves.

Then we went to the Amex booth to have a seat. They wanted to know if I wanted to apply for a card. “Member since 1992,” I said, and the guy with the clipboard said “Awesome” and backed away, like he was in the presence of an ancient master or something. Then we returned to where we'd left Mommy, passing a bandshell with singers dressed in Target Red – they were the sponsors of the fireworks – and my daughter said “Eleanor Rigby, that's the – oh!” What? She explained that the words sung by the singers had synced perfectly with the timing of the Gold – Bond – Flour blinking up in the sky, and it was just neat, that's all, nevermind, I can't explain.

Oh, but I knew what she meant. She's ten. The world is a big strange wonderful place that's completely understandable one moment, then throws some small lovely random synchronicity at you the next, and you start to realize that your understanding of things comes from the ability to assemble perception, recombine it, revel in your ability to adjudicate all this stuff. But you can't say that. Not yet; you nod, and say “Cool.”

Because it is. So we walked on past the clowns – don't look! Don't make eye contact! they'll steal your soul! – past the light-stick vendors, the camera nerds with tripods, the youths sprawled on blankets and old silent folk in folding chairs from 1967, the super-sized families eating nachos, the moms and harried dads with strollers, the goons, the dorks, the tat-slathered hipsters, the motorheads, the heavy-metal enthusiasts, all the people with whom you rarely share anything except the Fair and Target, and then we ended up back where we'd left Mom – who was sitting next to a woman from my office.

Big world. Small world. Dark world: they killed the streetlights when the fireworks began. It was a fine show, and the end – the usual everything-must-go extravaganza – made everyone on either side of the great broad Mississippi roar with primal delight; we leaned back in awe, showered with ash, eyes wide, mouths agape, howling the broad song of YEAAAAHHHH as the detonations kicked us in the gut and the lights in the sky burned holes in
your eyes. The end. From both sides of the river, Twain’s highway, a great yawp of gratitude poured up, and I grabbed my family and said GO.

I’d parked in the StarTribune lot, so beat the crowd, got on the highway, and were heading home in minutes. Stupid 70s disco on the radio; roll down the windows, turn up the radio, and drive. Man, it’s summer.

**A very short video of the scenes can be found here.** It’s 1:17, and is notable for one thing: it was entirely shot and mostly edited on a phone. Yes, this is the Modern World: you can capture life, trim it during the down time, and have a small movie in your hand before the event is almost over.

That was a *grand* day out.

**Today:** the LA Dining 1962 site is beginning to show signs of unexpected depth. I though I would just slap up the pages and leave it at that, but each little ad contains its own tiny secrets, some of which can be teased out of the vast deep of the Internet. Suddenly this project seems like more than scan-and-post; the 1962 Dining Guide is like a Rosetta Stone for explaining a place and time. It's [HERE](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7628); enjoy, and I'll see you at [Tumblr](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7628) and [PopCrush](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7628).

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**50 RESPONSES TO *a day in heaven***

**shesnailie** says:
July 26, 2010 at 2:26 am

_@_v – nice new condo block in second picture from the bottom! from that angle the massing looks a lot like the old canadian bank of commerce in toronto…

[http://citynoise.org/article/10176](http://citynoise.org/article/10176)

**LalaWojo** says:
July 26, 2010 at 5:49 am

So I Googled “my ear turned black after I listened to opera after eating prawns” and all I got was a link back to this page…

And the second person to successfully carry off “winner, winner, chicken dinner” is Guy Fieri from Food Network. He's used it on his show while visiting places known for their-yep, you guessed it-chicken dinners!

**Grebmar** says:
July 26, 2010 at 6:29 am

I read the first sentence and wondered whether it was the laptop or our Host's foot that was broken. I guess it was the laptop.

51 dealers in postcards? The economy of hobbies is always fascinating to me. The division of labor not only allows us to find time to collect postcards, but allows some of us to collect and sell
postcards to others.

**Penciplal** says:
July 26, 2010 at 6:42 am

Such a beautiful photo of the city, with river, bridge & foliage in late afternoon light!

Isn’t it nice that when you drop a book on your foot, the book still works?

**Kerry Potenza** says:
July 26, 2010 at 6:56 am

That must have hurt! You must’ve been dancing around when the computer landed on your foot. Guess you can tell which camp I’m in...

Minneapolis is a lovely city. I went there as a child, but the memories are vague.

Joys of running? I can’t imagine it, though I’ve done my share of it. But I do enjoy long walks. We have many great places to walk here in the Ocean State, especially in Newport, RI, the scenic Cliff walk: [http://www.google.com/images?hl=en&q=cliff+walk+newport+ri&um=1&ie=UTF-8&source=univ&ei=WHZNTOnJOZSesQPGlORI&sa=X&oi=image_result_group&ct=title&resnum=5&ved=0CEsQsAQwBA](http://www.google.com/images?hl=en&q=cliff+walk+newport+ri&um=1&ie=UTF-8&source=univ&ei=WHZNTOnJOZSesQPGlORI&sa=X&oi=image_result_group&ct=title&resnum=5&ved=0CEsQsAQwBA)

My husband's knees are hobbled from too much running. Now, he walks too.

**John** says:
July 26, 2010 at 7:40 am

Broke his foot, and then he ran? Did I get that right? I once broke my wrist coming off my bicycle, and then spent the next three months running, and I thought I might take to the sport. But my wrist healed and I was back on the bicycle and never looked back. Running is simply hard to like.

This morning, but not for the first time, I remembered the one thing I ever read in the one cycling magazine I ever cracked open: “Runners long ago surpassed dogs as the chief road hazard to bicyclists.” Amen, I said, and restored it to the library shelf.

**rbj** says:
July 26, 2010 at 7:51 am

So how is the poor laptop?

Oh, and I just have to say how disappointed I am with Mad Men last night — come on AMC, go Hi Def. Otherwise, glad to have you back.

**Bob Lipton** says:
July 26, 2010 at 8:12 am

You run to get away from tigers? Any tiger?

Bob
juanito - John Davey says:
July 26, 2010 at 8:27 am

Can you get a solid state drive in the laptop? If you can, why then you could practically throw the laptop around without bumping platters into heads.

Guy Fieri has a new place in Roseville, and one a few miles from my office in Sacramento that I am tempted to go get a chicken dinner from. Just so I could be a winner. In fact, I'll be in Santa Rosa in a few weeks to replace a server and router… I think I've gotten lunch sorted out for that trip.

*She explained that the words sung by the singers had synced perfectly with the timing of the Gold – Bond – Flour blinking up in the sky, and it was just neat, that's all, nevermind, I can't explain.*

That is neat when it happens. My nine year old noted that a particular song's lyric: *But your laying down some funky syncopation* was out of phase, yet was still in fact syncopated with the original time signature of the melody. “That's a cool trick, Dad”. Yes Daughter, yes it is. So proud. Sumpthin’ in my eye...

Jennifer says:
July 26, 2010 at 8:45 am

I admire your wife for managing to get you all out of the house to “do things.” I often lament we need to do things, but we rarely do them. They seem to want to know “what” things we should do—and I never really know.

“lovely random synchronicity” Thanks for this. It's hard to explain such things and have people appreciate them. You either do, or you don't. And trying to explain them just makes them a little less lovely.

Brisko says:
July 26, 2010 at 9:05 am

Well, I googled the prawn/opera connection and the only result was this Bleat.

So, I guess it's not as widespread as I was lead to believe.

Terry Fitz says:
July 26, 2010 at 9:11 am

One of the best things about The Bleat (and I've been a member since 2001) is the interaction between Dad and Daughter. I have two of my own. So, a quick note on the random synchronicity...

Kids are constantly making connections, with about 90% accuracy. (All my stats are made up, by the way.) Very quickly they progress beyond the “hot stove=burned finger” type and move on to things that will astonish you if you listen. But it's the inaccurate 10% that are really interesting, because when kids are wrong they are spectacularly wrong. Wrong about correlation, wrong about causation, wrong about category… you name it. That's why kids need to do things with parents who will never jeer at them for being wrong. It may take a trip to a fair for something to come out in conversation on the way home.
There's one thing kids are never wrong about. If they say something is cool, it's cool. If they say something is beautiful, it's beautiful. Simple appreciation in a child can be a step toward good taste, deeper knowledge and more and better connections.

RPD says:
July 26, 2010 at 9:31 am

I can't help but find it interesting that Natalie appears to be familiar with Eleanor Rigby, released in 1966. A 44 year old song. When I was 10 (1974) I very much doubt I could have identified any song from 1930. I'm not entirely certain I could do it now. I wonder what it is about pop music from the late 50's on that has made it fairly enduring?

Baby M says:
July 26, 2010 at 9:43 am

Synchronicity: I was out one night sitting around a campfire with some astronomy/planetarium geeks. The sky had a full moon and fast-moving clouds. Someone had brought a boom-box which was playing something by Vangelis, from heaven and Hell, I think--I told you, these guys were astronomy geeks!--and it was synchronizing perfectly with the clouds crossing the moon.

Spooky.

Mark E. Hurling says:
July 26, 2010 at 10:10 am

Minneapolis is a beautiful city. We've been through it several times enroute from the airport to vacation with friends near Bloomer, WI. Those photos of the old stacks and limestone walls look like the end scenes of Richard III with Ian McKellan as the aforementioned, in my favorite production of that play. Nice photos today, thank you for starting off the week for me so well.

swschrad says:
July 26, 2010 at 10:27 am

44 year old song, got out of the fitness center today (have you had YOUR fit today?) and there was a very nice yellow 1961 Ford Galaxie in the parking lot, depending on manufacture date, that could be a 50-year-old car.

seven parking lot rows down, there was a late 90s Buick in the lot. rustout under the driver's door, near-rustout at the rear fender, several tell-tale signs of holes to come elsewhere.

but the paint job was still nice otherwise.

MikeH says:
July 26, 2010 at 10:44 am

Is the walkway at the mill something recent? The only time I was in the twin cities was 97. I remember the mill, but not the walkway. Love the idea, looks awesome. I loved Minneapolis even though it was early April.
Bill Peschel says:
July 26, 2010 at 10:50 am

A long time ago, I had the opportunity to move to Minneapolis/St. Paul, and even went so far as to do some research on the place. This was pre-Google, so I must have visited the scrolls down at the emporium. Didn't go, but every once in awhile, I see a post like this and grow very thoughtful.

Brisko says:
July 26, 2010 at 10:55 am

@ swschrad

When I was a kid (little kid), I wanted a Galaxie more than anything else. I don't know why. When I turned 16, my dad bought me a Mercury Monterey Marquis and said “it came out of the same factory.”

Well, probably…but just not the same thing!

Spud says:
July 26, 2010 at 11:24 am

Ahh, Juanito beat me to the SSD quip. In a couple of years (maybe sooner?) you'll see a majority of laptops offered with SSD hard drives. If someone does not need a ton of storage, then you can get by with a 100 GB or so hard drive on a laptop.

The entire mass lurched forward, and after 3 seconds I almost bowled over a tiny little girl who was facing the wrong way, crying. So I stopped and formed an Immoveable Shield, and crab-walked her out of the torrent to the sidelines. Something like that deserves at least an honorary SuperHero cape, just worn for ceremonial purposes, of course, as we all know how dangerous capes can be 😄.

Will says:
July 26, 2010 at 11:57 am

I'd like to watch the video, but there's no way I'm putting QuickTime on this machine. It's kind of like Flash for the iPhone/Pod/Pad.

In other news, if you can put the laptop HD on a windows-based machine, there's an outside chance that SpinRite would recover enough sectors to allow you to salvage the data from the drive. And I completely agree with the other folks touting the solid state drives, that's going to be a requirement for my next laptop.

swschrad says:
July 26, 2010 at 12:00 pm

@Brisko: ah, the Monterey. my sister had one. gawdawful carburetor, there are 4-barrel racing carbs smaller than that one, and the top was prone to a bunch of spider cracking in the aluminum. which lost the suction in the unit, and the car was a hog to start and quick to flood. I finally scored the top and epoxied it. that only worked for a year.

sold it to the junkyard, they turned around and sold it to a ne'er-do-well, and the cops were calling my sister for two months because the punk didn't change the license data.
@Spud: capes aren't dangerous, you should have one. beware of superpowers, though. with my eye surgery almost a year ago, I got a cane-metal shield to tape on at night for a couple weeks, so I didn't accidentally paw it all open again.

good news is, it came with superpowers... became Super Fly Eye.
bad news is, the superpower was finding steaming piles. can't avoid politics now. bzzz.

Uncle Joe says:
July 26, 2010 at 12:13 pm
James, did you really roll down the windows, or did you push a button that caused them to lower?

HunkybobTX says:
July 26, 2010 at 12:43 pm
“I wonder what it is about pop music from the late 50’s on that has made it fairly enduring?”
Perhaps it's due to the Baby-Boomers.

Writeaway says:
July 26, 2010 at 1:27 pm
The Bleat and most Bleatniks = a refreshing, literary breeze that flows through the cube farm in which I reside and makes the morning tolerable.

Some days more than others and today is a fine example.

Mrs.ME says:
July 26, 2010 at 1:47 pm
Love the movie! Love the story-telling! I have a friend flying in tonight from southern California. We met when we were 12. Our 35th HS reunion is this Saturday. I will show her your movie and ask her what part of this beautiful state she wants to see. Tomorrow is wide open. Thanks for continuing to inspire, James!

Dave says:
July 26, 2010 at 2:06 pm
Just don't mix up Gold Bond Flour with Gold Bond powder. Just... don’t.

Mad Dog Tannen says:
July 26, 2010 at 2:07 pm
“And the second person to successfully carry off “winner, winner, chicken dinner” is Guy Fieri from Food Network.”

Ya thought wrong, dude.

swschrad says:
July 26, 2010 at 2:16 pm
@Dave: and be sure it's baking powder, not blasting powder. you can see what it did in the mill's test kitchens.
shesnailie says:
July 26, 2010 at 2:51 pm

_@_v – remember... the baby boomers were the first generation to experience *everything* so their perspective is the only valid one in the universe

GardenStater says:
July 26, 2010 at 3:15 pm

Finally watched the video. A little shaky in spots, but I loved it.

Now why can’t my old brain remember the name of the song that James used to accompany his visuals?

DryOwlTacos says:
July 26, 2010 at 5:26 pm

Re Pop Crush Lunchbreak: James, you look too thin. Put the Wii down. Now.

browniejr says:
July 26, 2010 at 5:39 pm

@DryOwlTacos: I gotta agree- Mr. Lileks, get rid of the Wii and EAT a sandwich! (How are you going to review Mad Men every Monday if you have to wait for the HD, anyway?)

browniejr says:
July 26, 2010 at 5:42 pm

If not a sandwich, perhaps some sweet potatoes with marshmellow (but swallow it!)- you’ll understand once you see Mad Men in HD...

Pete Madsen says:
July 26, 2010 at 7:38 pm

When I was a kid, there were no “oldies” stations like there are now. It took a pop-music fanatic named Sam Dunn to implant a love of pop hits from the twenties on up on me in junior-high music class in the mid-50’s. I still thank him every time I play the piano.

Grebmars says:
July 26, 2010 at 7:41 pm

I often chuckle when I see high-schoolers with a Led Zeppelin or Dark Side of the Moon t-shirt. It’s like wearing a Paul Whiteman or Al Jolson t-shirt during the 70s.

Reasons—as others have said here, all history now seems to start with JFK and the Beatles. Because nothing of any consequence happened before that. Except perhaps the Nazis.

And marketing. Paul Whiteman didn’t have a very good agent.

shesnailie says:
July 26, 2010 at 7:47 pm

_@_v – oddly enough the historic preservation movement started
getting big enough in the 1970s to replace the urban renewal articles in encyclopedia ‘yearbooks’...

Robert says:
July 26, 2010 at 8:03 pm

Am I the only one wondering where the photo at the top of the post came from (and why it’s there)?

Orson Scott Card removing the “Gallery Of Regrettable Food” from his mother’s shelf?

shesnailie says:
July 26, 2010 at 10:06 pm

_@_.v – from the post...

“Because my wife has this strange idea we should get out of the house and do things, we got out of the house and did a thing – attended the fireworks down by the river. First, we went to the Mill City Museum, a flour-centric exhibit installed in the ruins of an old mill.

Love that place. Even more so for the items they had in a cabinet of recipe books, as the image at the top of the page shows.”

GSC says:
July 26, 2010 at 10:23 pm

When I was 10 in the 60s I would have recognized plenty of old songs from 30 or 40 years before. What is surprising about that? The sources of that knowledge would have been the same then as now – current movies set in the past, old movies set in their present, TV shows, oldies radio stations. The TV variety shows did plenty of old songs in their skits for example. Lawrence Welk did little else.

Back in those ancient times most families had one set and the kids watched what the parents wanted to see. Believe it or not.

There might not have been a lot of young boomers wearing Al Jolson images on their T shirts but there were plenty of fans of old movie stars like Bogart, Cagney, Mae West, Bette Davis, etc.

There were even fans of Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach among the musically inclined.

Mag says:
July 26, 2010 at 11:58 pm

The song is “Once in a While” by Edwards and Green.

Lindal. says:
July 27, 2010 at 12:26 pm

Way back when I was young and adventurous, I explored the then-abandoned Gold Medal Flour building. It had several semi-permanent residents whose personal items were lying around. At least one person was developing pictures in the sub-basement. Another was writing a novel with the recurring them of “I’m not nuts, take me back”.

I still have a fire-alarm sign for the third floor. White metal sign with red lettering, “fire alarm signal three short one long”. Which
was one of those weird synchronicity things, since the building was largely gutted by fire, and our party oncluded three short people and one person over 6'6". Just to bring things full circle.

**QA Hates You » Blog Archive » That's Not An Update In Real Time**
says:
July 27, 2010 at 1:38 pm

[...] This does not represent a good practice of synchronizing your application data with the real world: Twice we had ordered a pizza with extra-large pepperoni. Twice it had arrived without the extra large. See, the order is calibrated to hit everyone's preferences, and my daughter will only have pepperoni, so: her half has pepperoni and extra-large pepperoni. But twice the pizza has arrived without. [...]  

**GardenStater** says:
July 27, 2010 at 2:07 pm

Thank you, Mag!!!

**Jennifridge** says:
July 27, 2010 at 2:12 pm

That version of “Once in a While” reminded me so much of the lush sound achieved by the Jackie Gleason Orchestra, but I can't seem to find any evidence to indicate that the JGO ever recorded it.

**JohnW** says:
July 27, 2010 at 3:57 pm

Spud:

Something like that deserves at least an honorary SuperHero cape, just worn for ceremonial purposes, of course, as we all know how dangerous capes can be

“No capes, dahlink!”

**tbrosz** says:
July 27, 2010 at 5:13 pm

I've repaired two MacBooks myself, thanks to a step-by-step instruction website called Ifixit.com. Hard drives are usually a cinch to replace. Other components are a nightmare due to being installed under about a dozen other components.

Another hassle is that some items, like the new super batteries, require a special tool that apparently can only be sold to repair outfits. You have to adapt other tools to work on this.

I'm impressed by solid state drives, but they're still too expensive. A solid state 250 GB 2 1/2 inch hard drive for my PC laptop cost me $90. A solid state drive with this size and capacity runs about $800. That won't be true a few years from now, but it is today.

**Kev** says:
July 28, 2010 at 10:28 am

*She explained that the words sung by the singers had synced perfectly with the timing of the Gold – Bond – Flour blinking up in the sky, and*
it was just neat, that's all, nevermind, I can't explain.

I assume after watching the video that you meant Gold Medal Flour. I don’t think I’d want any baked goods made with body or foot powder, although the latter might come in handy for your not-broken foot from the laptop incident.

Beldar says:
July 29, 2010 at 3:02 am

A few years ago, I dropped my laptop from about waist height, and tried to slow its fall or catch it with my foot. The laptop's corner struck my left big toe and it broke.

My toe.

I now need a size 10-1/2 left shoe, but only a size 9 for my right, the difference representing the still-swollen joint that had been shattered.

But the laptop was unharmed, at least. (It's been replaced probably six times over since then.)

Fred says:
August 4, 2010 at 10:06 am

It looks like Minneapolis is a beautiful city. I'll put it on my “visit one day” list. Of course that list is long and may never actually be checked off but I'll keep it in mind…
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?

© 2011 The Bleat.
One of those days where I did not follow the News of the World very much, and hence was happier. Stupid, but happy. The lack of a laptop – in the shop, as noted – changes the way I follow things; when I’m seeing the world through an iPad, it’s different. Moving from this pursuit to that one involves disconnecting from the thing you were doing. You’re not flitting between writing and surfing. You can, if you wish; the instantaneousness of the switch means you might as well be “multitasking,” to use the word that applies to self-inflicted ADHD, but the difference between laptop internet and iPad is the difference between skim and dwell. Not saying it’s good or bad, only different.

At the conclusion of the day’s labors I sat out back and finished “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo.” What began as a book that was either banal in execution or banal in translation, or both, ended up as a book where these deficiencies
didn't matter at all, thanks to the headlong rush of the story. I also enjoyed
the sheer Swedishness of it all, whatever that means. Brought to mind a
series of books I read in the 80s in college, the Martin Beck books, spoiled
only in the end by the fatuous and explicit endorsement of Marxism in the
very last line of the book. It was like Marlowe ending the last novel by raising
a tumbler of bourbon to Lenin or Hitler.

Which he would never do, the detective story being antithetical to
collectivism, he said, not quite thinking that through. Is it true? Well. There
were a few mysteries set in Soviet Russia – Gorky Park was a remarkable
book for the time, and seemed fascinating and exotic. (Yes, I've read all the
sequels; Arkady is one my favorite characters.) But detective stories that arise
out of the culture itself? I remember a book from college, “The Case of
Comrade Tulayev,” I think – a murder mystery set in Stalinist Roosia, but so
much more than that. The author was a total Red, if I recall, and I have
diminished sympathy for anti-Stalinists who animus was based in the fact
that they followed Trotsky. As I wrote a very long time ago, some say the glass
is half-full, some say it's half-empty, some say it should be full but capitalist
wreckers were to blame, and purge 10,000 cows.

You know, I actually remember where I wrote that: in Fargo, by the ugly
fountain in the mall built in the hollowed-out remains of the downtown Sears
store. I have no idea why I recall that.

Anyway: the detective story requires an individual, but it also require a State.
The Gordianus novels of the Roman detective have both; Marlowe and Spade
have the same wary relationship to authority, because authority is interested
in its own perpetuation above all, and this does not fit with the idea of the
state representing the pure will of the people. The genre also requires that
the individual have skills and attributes not common in the organs of the
state, and that's counter-revolutionary as well. You can pick up the political
undertones of “Girl with the Dragon Tattoo” if you like, but they're not
essential, and don’t detract from the tale. The prose, at least in the English
version, is utterly ordinary. The bones of the story are solid and the pace of
the revelations in the second half quite good. But I've read much better.

And I hope I am writing much better. Worked some more on the novel
tonight, after an absence. Wish this was the only thing I had to do.

Worked in the back yard today: had a visit from the Weed-Killing Man, who
was sweating horribly and walked around the yard spritzing death-juice here
and there. Had a visit from the Crazy Uke, who has crafted together a
refinancing of the mortgage to take advantage of today’s parlous economic
circumstances and low, low rates. Hello, let’s manufacture another
theoretical construct based on the symbolic valuations of fiat currency! Okay
let’s. The objective is to own my house in 15 years, because I loath, loath,
loath debt. Of any kind. My parents' generation have memories of burning
the mortgage in the fire. More common today for kids will be the memory of
walking away from a mortgage entirely, or just having one in perpetuity, rent
dressed up in the costume of ownership. I want to say THIS IS MINE! Until I
fall behind on taxes and they take it away for that.

Sigh. The debt to the state can never be paid in full, can it.

Anyway, a good Monday. Now that I have my Mad Men on iTunes, I will watch it, and enjoy the sad ominous opening music, savoring again, as we do every summer, the sarcastic little off-key drone that ends the theme. It’s a soap opera, but they’re all soap operas. Still wondering why no one’s invented a soap opera set in the 60s – either the genre is dead, and they’re just letting the old ones play out, or they think mass audiences can’t “relate” to an era that doesn’t exactly mirror their own. The pleasures of “Mad Men” are, in part, the distance between now and then, and the lessons you infer. Freedoms lost and freedoms gained. It’s like watching people stand on a stage of sugar, and seeing someone behind them hosing it down with hot water. (Update: watched it. Loved it. It’s either a different show that’s also the same, or a show that’s the same as before but different. Hard to describe – but as I noted on the Twitter, it’s brighter. It’s 1965 – I think – and it’s brighter.)

Later today: comic sins, #200! If you missed yesterday’s LA 1962 update, it’s here – I posted Monday’s Bleat without finishing it, and didn’t add the link until later in the AM. Tumblr will have three updates, and PopCrush at least five, with a noontime video. See you around.

50 RESPONSES TO “and this is the cbp, or crushing balloon payment.”

John says:
July 27, 2010 at 2:31 am

Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner were killed in June 1964, so I’m guessing the ep was set in November of that year.

GardenStater says:
July 27, 2010 at 5:18 am

Amen to paying off that mortgage. I’m in about the same place (house should be paid off in 15 years, or less). I will be utterly delighted to watch that mortgage paper burn to a crisp. (If I didn’t have two boys that still have to get through college, I’d have it paid off sooner.)

Dr. Spyn says:
July 27, 2010 at 5:31 am

The best series of detective novels — police procedurals, really — were the Inspector Rostnikov by the recently-deceased Stuart M. Kaminsky. They covered the eras of full-on Soviet collectivism, through glasnost, to the Russia we have today.

As far as PIs go, there’s a difference towards authority depending on
which coast. The West Coast PIs were always in conflict with authority, while the East Coast gumshoes cooperated with the cops. Personally I like the stiff-necked independents of Chandler and Hammett compared to the running-dog lackeys of the east.

hpoulter says:
July 27, 2010 at 6:35 am

Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe may not have been political, but Dashiell Hammett (creator of Sam Spade) was a committed Marxist-Leninist. It has to show up in his work, but I really only know the movies.

Examples of “running dog lackey” detectives? I can't think of any. The only east coast detective I can think of offhand is Spenser, and he's no lackey.

Hasty generalization, perhaps?
My favorite PI is west coaster Kinsey Milhone, but she is hardly typical of anything.

Mxymaster says:
July 27, 2010 at 6:56 am

Hammett's detective fiction never really showed his Reditude, unless I completely missed something. Yeah, there's an antagonism against rich folks, but that's common to the genre, and besides, there's plenty of antagonism toward poor folks and in-between folks, too.

I note the Beefeater restaurant in L.A. I was born in '64, and have a vague impression of a beefeater-obsessed society, with those fake Camelot weapons nailed to the paneled walls of rec rooms nationwide, Beefeater gin in every home, and a restaurant with a smiling mustached beefeater mascot in every city. Was it a “Camelot” thing? An “England Swings” thing? A British Invasion thing? A postwar thing? It seems like the only time in our history we treated the English as a fascinating foreign culture.

Pilgrim says:
July 27, 2010 at 7:23 am

Although not relevant to today's Bleat, I thought James would like to view the documentary “Helvetica”, which is about the typeface.

Maybe you've seen it; if not, you should.

Lots of typeface involved people get interviewed about their thoughts concerning the Helvetica font itself, and typeface design in general.

A “Must See” for our Mr. Lileks.

http://www.amazon.com/Helvetica-David-Carson/dp/B000VWEPF8/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=dvd&qid=1280160131&sr=8-1

Rubo says:
July 27, 2010 at 7:35 am

Told you, that when you got past some of the character development in “The Girl with the Dragon Tatoo”, you would enjoy it.
Paid off my mortgage in 1995, something else just comes along and
takes the money. Though it's still nice to have the house paid for.

Ruth says:
July 27, 2010 at 7:41 am

The fountain wasn't ugly.

Ed says:
July 27, 2010 at 7:42 am

The novels by Tom Rob Smith, Child 44 and The Secret Speech,
weave the attitudes and events of the Stalinist era into their plots,
and they're pretty good reads. Arkady Renko is one of my favorites
also. But the hard-boiled detective is, by definition, opposed to
authority. A Western attitude which makes him a tough sell in a
collectivist context. “Comrade, I have traced the conspiracy to the
highest levels of the Politburo!”, “Very good, comrade inspector.
Now, you will immediately forget all you have learned in order to
further the glory of the Revolution, and you will board this train to
Siberia.” “Da, comrade. At once!” M. C. Smith's Renko describes
himself as Russian, not red. And T. R. Smith's Demidov starts out as
a believer, but goes through an awakening of conscience.

Bob Lipton says:
July 27, 2010 at 7:43 am

It's All the good roast beef of England, and all the good English roast
beef.

Bob

Lars Walker says:
July 27, 2010 at 8:34 am

I'm a big fan of Stuart Kaminsky, but I've only read one of his
Russian mysteries so far. I remember it as very claustrophobic,
which was probably the intention. Especially recommended are
Kaminsky's Lew Fonesca stories, offbeat mysteries about a sad sack
process server in Sarasota who gets around by bicycle.

I always watched Hammett for Communist themes, but he played
his cards close to his vest. The man knew his market. I do recall a
Continental Op story where the villain was an exiled Russian czarist,
but that's about as overtly political as it gets.

Glad you liked the Dragon Tattoo. If I can forgive Larsson for being a
commie, I'd think anyone can. I suspect anybody who's ever been
bullied seriously will be won over by Lizbeth.

Jennifer says:
July 27, 2010 at 8:52 am

Best financial decision we ever made (and were able to make, thank
goodness) was to switch to a 15 yr. mortgage from our 30 yr. I hope
you are able to shorten yours.

I liked Mad Men, too. Costuming is always so fantastic. I noticed
some top stitching on Don's lapels (whoa! shades of leisure suit), and
his sack suits are looking even more sack-like. Peggy's wearing
higher heels--but also trying to “stick it to the man” by thinking
outside the box. Looking forward to the rest of the season.
What I don't follow is why reviewers described Betty's mother-in-law is a nightmare, when the truth is that Betty's the horror.

browniejr says:
July 27, 2010 at 8:55 am

My favorite detective is my avatar, and Joe Friday was the ultimate civil servant, but his job was always just to enforce the laws that The People decided to pass. (Although he would probably put a bullet in his head if the measure to legalize Mary Jane passes here in California)

If you pay off your house, but you still need to pay property taxes to live there, do you really own it?

Alan Taylor says:
July 27, 2010 at 8:56 am

I've just reserved some Stuart Kaminsky books from our library. With this audience of mystery fans, can someone point me to two authors' names? One wrote mysteries set in apartheid South Africa (the detective was a cop, I think). The other wrote mysteries set in India – again the detective was a cop I think. I think the authors were from South Africa, and from India.

Speaking of Africa, a different take on the detective story, but still each with a mystery to be solved, are The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency stories by Alexander McCall Smith. The opposite of hard boiled, Precious Ramotswe is still a keen observer of human nature but one who loves people, not sneers at them and their faults and failures.

GardenStater says:
July 27, 2010 at 9:13 am

@hpoulter: “…Dashiell Hammett (creator of Sam Spade) was a committed Marxist-Leninist. It has to show up in his work…”

I've read all of Hammett's novels, and didn't see anything hinting of Red-ness. Of course, I didn't know that about Hammett until you said it. But I think I would have picked up on it if such a thing were there.

I strongly recommend Hammett's novels, BTW. Loved “Maltese Falcon,” as well as “The Thin Man.” Great, great stuff, and much more sophisticated (“adult”) than the movies!

GardenStater says:
July 27, 2010 at 9:14 am

Sorry, that should have been “Red-ness.”

Darn the lack of an edit function!

Ryan says:
July 27, 2010 at 9:22 am

The reason there's no soap operas set in the 60's is because that would require a teeny tiny bit of effort. Soap operas today survive because they are hella cheap, and super simplistic. Having to pay a stylist to build up 60's wardrobe? And build up 60's authentic sets?
That's WAY too much hassle.

browniejr says:
July 27, 2010 at 9:31 am

-60's soap opera: last time they tried this type of thing was “Dark Shadows”- lots of gothic references, although I think it was set in contemporary times (the 60's, naturally…)

The theme freaked me out as a kid, and I had to go outside and play whenever it started.

Al Federber says:
July 27, 2010 at 9:40 am

James Lileks sez: “The debt to the state can never be paid in full, can it.”

Spoken like a true libertarian, James. There may be hope after all!

rhj says:
July 27, 2010 at 10:26 am

“What I don't follow is why reviewers described Betty's mother-in-law is a nightmare, when the truth is that Betty's the horror.”

I think, Jennifer, is that MiL's nightmareishness is out in the open, while Betty's is much more subtle.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 27, 2010 at 10:33 am

I agree not hint of Marxism in Hammett stories. How committed to the cause was he, I got the impression (without true research) that it was just from hanging out with Lillian Hellman and her friends too much.

When Hammett re-enlisted in WWII, they sent him to Alaska. Maybe they did not trust him. At least he could see USSR from his barracks.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 27, 2010 at 10:45 am

I don't read mystery other than Hammett and Chandler. My wife reads all the new stuff and I always try to talk her into reading the old stuff.

There was an HBO movie based on the real life “Citizen X” serial murders in USSR. It was a good telling of how Soviet bureaucracy and resource shortages interfered with the criminal investigation. Takes place between 1978-1990.

Belinda Gomez says:
July 27, 2010 at 10:57 am

I vote for the pre-Revolution mystery novels of Boris Akunin.

http://www.boris-akunin.com/
Bonnie_ says:
July 27, 2010 at 11:16 am

I read Hammett and Spillane for weeks while I was preparing to write a 1940's part of a mystery that I was working on. I wanted to get the feel and the style of the 40's so my character would seem like he was really from that era.

There was a kind of weary cynicism that was a hallmark of the age, not just the noir mystery. Weary of war, infected with the new rot of Marxism, watching the left creep into politics and sweep across Europe crushing freedom under fascist boots, there was a sense that America was finished, exhausted. Our boys were fighting and dying in Europe and the Pacific and we had no idea if we were going to win this war at all.

If I were to pick a moment when this changed, I would pick when the bomb fell on Hiroshima. The nuclear age, for a while, sent the communists scurrying like cockroaches for the darkness. America had bright horizons, new industries, rocket ships into space, computers. For a while, noir was just a fun thing to watch in the theatre. For a while.

Mark E. Hurling says:
July 27, 2010 at 11:42 am

Whenever I see Lillian Hellman's name I think of Mary McCarthy's great quote, “Everything she says is a lie, including “and” and “the.”

Gerry says:
July 27, 2010 at 11:46 am

Slightly confused. Were you referring to the last line of a Martin Beck mystery as “Marxist”?

The last line of “…Dragon Tattoo” has nothing to do with Marxism, unless you consider Salander discarding an Elvis CD as Marxist.

Patrick says:
July 27, 2010 at 12:06 pm

Not mortgage, but almost as bad: Back in March/April of this year I finally paid off my car, after four long years of constantly being beyond broke. The second I received that car title in the mail I did one heck of a dance. I gathered up all the loan documents and we had us a nice bonfire in the backyard. Sacrifices were made to appease certain gods. Charred flesh of said sacrifices was consumed.

bgbear (roger h) says:
July 27, 2010 at 12:07 pm

Discarding an Elvis CD in Lennonism.

swschrad says:
July 27, 2010 at 12:10 pm

@bgbear: could be Monkeeism, too. hey-hey!
@Alan Taylor “Speaking of Africa, a different take on the detective story, but still each with a mystery to be solved, are The No.1 Ladies’ Detective Agency stories by Alexander McCall Smith. The opposite of hard boiled, Precious Ramotswe is still a keen observer of human nature but one who loves people, not sneers at them and their faults and failures.”

Someone gave me a couple of these and I was surprised at how much I liked them. Precious was someone I would love to sit and have tea with and listen to her talk about people.

For an interesting movie depiction of Soviet life, circa 1981, check out the new French espionage thriller movie, “Farewell.” (here's a Flixter link: http://www.flixster.com/movie/farewell). This is an old-fashioned, character-driven movie, not a jump cut to be seen, that ratchet's up the tension as it plays out.

The HBO films version of “The No.1 Ladies’ Detective Agency” are top notch, filmed on location in Botswana and uses local talent.

Sorry for the bad “Farewell” link to “Flixter” but this one to the “official site” should work: http://www.neoclassicsfilms.com/filmsLF.html

@swschrad, yes monkees are mixed on Elvis but, like the fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches.

@bgbear. What would being assigned to Alaska have to do with not being trusted? My dad spent over three years in the Aleutian Islands during WWII, army corps of engineers. They saw plenty of action with the Japanese and dad took shrapnel in the back. It wasn't some quiet outpost. (Unlike a friend of mine who spent the Vietnam war stationed in Panama. Sweet.)

Paid of my 30 year mortgage in 18 yrs 2 mos. Like James I loathe debt and interest payments. Started rounding up most house payments to the next hundred (or an extra hundred if feeling flush. It's pure principal and really adds up. btw, I'm a self-employed painter, musician (i.e. not wealthy) with two college kids. Just live a frugal comfortable lifestyle.
bgbear (roger h) says:
July 27, 2010 at 1:53 pm

@ArganikMark:

You're right, he was probably safer in his WWI stateside assignment.

Ignorance and brevity on my part and trying to set up a joke. Hammett arrived after most of the action and was primarily given “moral boosting” work to the now mostly bored soldiers. He was in his 40s.

hpoulter says:
July 27, 2010 at 1:53 pm

IIRC, the Aleutians saw the only land battle on North American soil in WWII.

Mark E. Hurling says:
July 27, 2010 at 2:02 pm

I'm guessing that Hammett's assignment was a function of distrust of him. No offense to your father's service AgranikMark. There was very little he would be able to do to compromise any sensitive information to Uncle Joe. Whatever he might have been able to get out would probably have had some negative effects on the Japanese, since they had one eye over their shoulder in case the Soviets wanted some payback for the humiliation heaped on La Rodina 40 some years earlier.

Chas C-Q says:
July 27, 2010 at 2:36 pm

@Alan Taylor

Best guesses:

South Africa: James H. McClure's “Kramer and Zondi” series;


Eric J says:
July 27, 2010 at 3:19 pm

Since you mentioned Gordianus, I'm contractually obligated to recommend Lindsey Davis' Marcus Didius Falco novels.

Falco does work for the Emperor (Vespasian) fairly often, but he's by no means “The Emperor's Man.”

I've found that the Gordianus books get sort of turgid and dark the further you get into the series, particularly once his son get involved with Caesar. Falco stays lively and light, and his cynicism never curdles into misanthropy.

Rex V. says:
July 27, 2010 at 3:28 pm

Yes, the Swedishness of it is one of the charms of “The Girl” stories. Wait until the second book… cops traveling on mass transit to reach a crime scene!
swschrad says:
July 27, 2010 at 4:53 pm

@Rex V: we have had in the Twin Cities a bus ad that seems to come back to life every few years.

in which a bus with a sad-a5$ layout of seats facing each other all along the walls of the bus from the late 90s is filled with firemen in crash coats, a full-length ladder in the aisle.

the hype is that because busses can run on the shoulders, they are a faster commute.

the dozen or so busses with that layout can carry about as many folks as a stretch minivan. I cringe when one of those “experiments” shows up on my route and the door hisses open.

GardenStater says:
July 27, 2010 at 5:41 pm

@ArganikMark: “…Started rounding up most house payments to the next hundred (or an extra hundred if feeling flush.”

I pay an extra $150 a month on the mortgage. Doesn't sound like much, but every little bit you throw at that principal gets you out of debt earlier and earlier.

Al says:
July 27, 2010 at 5:47 pm

“There were a few mysteries set in Soviet Russia [...] But detective stories that arise out of the culture itself?”

How about detective stories created by the actual Russians?

There is a 1979 made-for-TV movie, which is still very popular in Russia after all this years, and for a good reason. It is based on a book by the Vayner Brothers and stars Vladimir Vysotsky shortly before his death. The setting of the movie? Post-WWII Stalinist USSR.

The movie was released in the West under the name “Age of Mercy.” It's probably hard to find on DVD but there is a subtitled version divided into 10-minute pieces and uploaded to Youtube so you can watch a little every day.

Here is the first part. (You have to wait a couple of minutes for the subtitles).

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-3hWESnqq4&feature=related

I am curious what you'd make of this.

lanczos says:
July 27, 2010 at 6:07 pm

@Ryan: Wardrobe? Sets? Ha ha ha hahaha! You have completely forgotten about the Hairstylists! My 60s girlfriends spent Endless Hours teasing their hair – To The Perfect Stack, The Perfect Tease, And The Perfect Flip!

A 2010s hairstylist would have to be under contract 24/7 to recreate The 60s Hair (and could doubtless retire after a 4-5 years.)
karen says:
July 27, 2010 at 6:32 pm

humphrey bogart is DA MAN. Him and Gregory Peck…I would be starstruck if I had ever met them…

swayne says:
July 27, 2010 at 10:46 pm

Instead of soap operas set in the 60’s, how about reshowing the soap operas MADE in the 60s’ – Days of our Lives has been on since 1965 – I would love a cable channel that just started running all the soaps from their initial episode (40 + years ago)

Lileks says:
July 27, 2010 at 11:45 pm

Ruth, you’re in denial. IT WAS UGLY. It sounded nice, and it was . . . bounteously waterful, but -

Well. I’ll just have to go back to Fargo, photograph it, and prove it!

W. T. Door says:
July 28, 2010 at 10:58 am

I've no idea why I feel particularly compelled to state this here as opposed to somewhere else (such as the Amazon review section), but “TGWTDT” must have been one of the most over-hyped books in recent history. After listening to the near-pleas of co-workers I picked up the novel, read it, and was utterly disappointed. Perhaps some of the quality was lost in the translation to English, but I couldn't help but feel I was in a some sort of video game where computer-controlled players went around saying “Will you be my friend?” and “I just want to be your friend.” I believe that each one of Larsson's characters must have used a variation of those two statements at least ten times. I won't give away the ending here, but the general result was obvious at least a quarter of the way through the book. I felt no sympathy or empathy with any of the characters in the novel at all. If you're giving any consideration to reading this mystery just skip it and head straight to “The Yiddish Policeman's Union” instead …

Crabbit says:
July 29, 2010 at 3:19 pm

Ahem: Crime and Punishment, anyone?
"And this is the CBP, or Crushing Balloon Payment."
The Mysterious Cigar Band | The Bleat.

So it's a night without the daughter. Put her on the bus this morning for another camp, this being a real camp with cookouts and s'mores and ghost stories told with flashlights under your chin. She loves it, and was keen to go – but spent the minutes before the bus pulled away drawing imaginary tear-streaks down her cheeks with her fingers, a parody of actual emotion. When we showed up at 1 PM I chatted with the counselors, and introduced her:

“This is Natalie. She has severe anger issues.”

“DAD!”

She punched me, but it was a friendly punch. Later I was informed that she had not given me permission to videotape the departure of the bus.

“What are you, the police?”

“Huh? No.”

“Anyway, it's not videotape. There's no tape in this machine.”

“Stop being so LITERAL you know what I mean.”

Then she ran for the bus, stopped, came back, and gave me a hug. I watched the bus go with none of the emotions I’d felt the first time she went off for a few days at camp. The bonds never loosen, but they don’t seem as tight. If
that makes sense.

Since there was no family dinner, I nuked a box of butter-chicken, left a note for my wife about the status of the dog (Fed, no Frosty Paws) and headed off to do an errand. There's a sprayer in the laundry room sink that leaks a little. About which I could not care less. But it must be fixed, I guess. Last week I bought a new nozzle; last night I discovered the old nozzle is wedded forever to the supply line, so I have to replace the entire thing. Picked up the relevant part at Home Depot, and was idly strolling around wondering if I should get Hooks, or Lightbulbs -

“Excuse me, sir,” said a young man. “Are you thinking about kitchen remodeling?”

“Not at the moment, but – well, yes. Yes I am.” As it happens we are planning a kitchen refit, mostly paint but perhaps more, because my wife has come to feel an inexpressible animus towards the general scheme of things, specifically, the hue of the countertops.

“Were you thinking about new cupboards?”

“You’re a mind-reader,” I said. “I want to replace the top of the cupboard doors with opaque glass and install some lights.”

So I'm pretty much this guy's target market. Can’t imagine there were a lot of men walking around Home Depot at 6 PM thinking about cupboard door replacement.

“We’re offering a free in-home consultation,” he said. “Would you be interested?”

I said that I was.

“Are you married?” I said that I was. “Would your wife like to be involved in this?”

“Are you married?” I asked. He nodded. “Then you know the answer to that question.”

He said he heard that, all right, even though he was out of the country half the year, but yes, marriage. I asked him what took him out of the country – Air Force. National Guard, I suspect. He said he’d been deployed half the year “since the war started.” Postal division. Just came back from Iraq, but mostly Pacific and a stint in Rammstein. Smart guy, personable, high-and-tight haircut, tats, pipes, easy genial confidence. He laid out what the company could do, then said he’d set up an appointment, and I would have to talk to an operator to confirm that I was doing this of my own free will.

Seriously. So I told the operator, Shaniqua in Somewheresville USA, that he had given me a fast line of sales talk and I just wanted to buy a sprayer hose and go home. She laughed and said yeah, he's slick. So they're coming by next week.
When the phone conversation was over I told Dario – that was his name – that we’d been talking about the kitchen overhaul, and if I came back with a brochure and an appointment I would be looking at some serious husband points for taking the initiative.

“I like your attitude,” he said. We shook hands and I thanked him for his service, paid for my hose, and left.

It had been a punishingly hot day, too hot to rain; now the storm was coming in, and the sky was full of popcorn clouds, bruised, heavy. Soupy air. Summer and then some: I love this. I didn’t want to go home just yet, so I stopped at Best Buy to pick up some headphones for a new series of video podcasts – but we’ll get to that later in the week. Had a nice chat with a camcorder salesman about things, possibly because I just wanted to talk video with someone, and he seemed to enjoy talking to someone who didn’t say “is there a button that just puts it on YouTube?” Went to the register; was behind a woman buying a copy of the Percy Jackson movie. Was she a RewardZone member?

“No. And I’m not interested,” she said.

I understand that. However, I am a Reward Zone member, and get five-buck coupons now and then. For that matter I have a card for Fry’s, which is a grocery store in Arizona, and I use it once a year. Anyway: bought my headphones, walked back out into the soup, and drove home. Chatted with my wife about the Mortgage Refi, and confirmed our plans to buy down the mortgage. It’s a tremendous act of faith, the housing market being what it is, but Jasperwood is unique. The house is good, and the quantity of land for a city property is un-fargin’-real. Then I worked out and showered and put in a few hours on this, and / or that. Mostly scanned and OCR’d the “Falling Up the Stairs” book. Aiming for that sweet, sweet Christmas Kindle market.

I said I bought some odd things at the postcard / ephemera show. I did. Would someone please, please explain this cigar band.

Please. (Larger version [here.]) I cannot decipher this, except to wonder whether the statue is some sort of Guernica reference, and “Washington” refers to an anti-fascist brigade. Ideas?
This was something I had to have. I paid seven dollars for it. A luggage sticker from 1939, the year of the World’s Fairs.

Was the world was more interesting when it was bigger?

Later today: well, tumblr’s loaded up with five posts, if the automatic queue feature works. We’ve gotcher Out of Context Ad challenge around noon, and PopCrush all day – including the noontime video. Watch it! The more hits, the happier my overlords are. Black and White World: Summer SciFi will post around seven PM or so. Hell YEAH I’ll have done my part for the internet this Wednesday. 😃

Have a grand day; see you soon.

---

Pass it along, if you wish

68 RESPONSES TO the mysterious cigar band

hpoulter says:
July 28, 2010 at 3:46 pm

Great find on the sculpture.

So we have the destruction of Rotterdam by the Nazis in 1940, a CSA battle flag with what looks like too many stars, a USA Flag with a too-short star field and what looks like too few stars, the Great Seal of the United States (the olive branch looks funny), and the word “Washington”.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7654
I think this is the key to the whole Bilderburg-Illuminati-CFR-Trilateral-Xenu conspiracy!

**GardenStater** says:
July 28, 2010 at 3:59 pm

The solution is simple:

The cigars are custom-made for members of the Bohemian Grove.

**Pieter** says:
July 28, 2010 at 4:19 pm

You're all getting close. The Washington Sigaren company is in Baarn, Holland. They issued a series of historic cigar bands over the years. This series ended in the sixties. One was “Generals of the Civil War” and is the first example I could find of the U.S. and Confederate flags being used. They later had a number of series called the “History of the 20th Century”. Series 15 number 29 (of 90) was the bombing of Rotterdam. The same series, #43, was of Rommel, go figure. The Eagle appears on all of the History series but not the Confederate flag, which is sometimes replaced with the Statue of Liberty. God, I love the internet. So much info, so little time.

**John Robinson** says:
July 28, 2010 at 4:39 pm

“Maybe the cigar band celebrates a mashup of the Civil War and “War of the Worlds”. The evil tripod stands over the ruins of Washington, D.C., about to get his comeuppance from Johnny Reb and the Yankee Doodle. Grant and Lee join forces at Appomattox and march North when they get word of the Martian invasion. “No army of three-legged freaks is gonna violate the Monroe Doctrine!”

You just gave away the plot of the latest Harry Turtledove novel. *G*

**swschrad** says:
July 28, 2010 at 4:39 pm

if the Germans had won, we'd know this answer.

**Baby M** says:
July 28, 2010 at 4:47 pm

Come to think of it, “Mysterious Cigar Band” would be a great name for an indie alt-rock recording act.

**Wagner von Drupen- Sachs** says:
July 28, 2010 at 4:56 pm

I have two theories. My best guess is simply that the printer pulled the wrong clip-art.

The other guess is, that there is a painting in Washington of ‘The Destroyed City,’ and that the band shows an excerpt therefrom, as some sort of commemorative series. Like “Great Cities and Their Art: Here's Washington's Sample.”

GardenStater, that's an even better guess, but when you say “the solution is simple,” are you being ironic?
Wagner von Drupen-Sachs says:
July 28, 2010 at 5:03 pm

Hmmm, looks like Pieter got it. I once had a collection of 50 cigars bearing identical portraits of King Edward VII of England. But it burned, one at a time. I shoulda made an insurance claim.

swschrad says:
July 28, 2010 at 5:30 pm

@Wagner von: let me guess, the bands were mounted on combustible backing. contributory negligence, no check forrrrr YOU.

but a free matchbook from Yaw'l Snakes along with a complimentary booklet on insurance discounts if you put your oil, gas, kerosene, paint thinner, and propane under an umbrella policy.

GardenStater says:
July 28, 2010 at 5:30 pm

@Wagner von Drupen-Sachs: "GardenStater, that's an even better guess, but when you say “the solution is simple,” are you being ironic?"

That's privileged information....

juanito - John Davey says:
July 28, 2010 at 5:50 pm

Patty D. says:
July 28, 2010 at 1:30 pm

Yard Crashers was at a Menards in the Chicago area in this Saturday's episode.

Sorry – but the shows are filmed about a year in advance...

The production company for DIY is based in Sacramento (http://www.ideafactory.tv). Hassan does two shows for them, Yard Crashers & a Landscaping “competition” show. They have two other shows on DIY with different hosts “House Crashers” and another coming out soon. All of them filmed in Sacramento. They added Chicago last year for a small run. Last I heard from my friend, they are back filming in Sacramento.

So I shall continue my stakeout of the Folsom CA OSH store.....

shesnailie says:
July 28, 2010 at 6:38 pm

_@_.v – one guy actually got a court to rule in favor of making his insurance company pay on his claim of individually smoked out cigars. they turned around and had him arrested for arson.

swschrad says:
July 28, 2010 at 7:42 pm

LOL shesnailie.
@Pieter: I stand in awe of your Googlemeistership (Googlebekwaamheid?). I hope Lileks reads the answer.

Patty D. says:
July 29, 2010 at 9:14 am

Juanito, I figured they had long left the region. Still – so close. Oh so close to a backyard paradise. And minions doing at least part of the work we generally have to do all on our own in a fraction of the time it would take us to do so. It breaks the heart.

MJBirch says:
July 29, 2010 at 10:38 am

Pieter:
Thank you, thank you, thank you!

rivlax says:
July 29, 2010 at 6:55 pm

Funny how things happen in life. I stumbled on Lileks.com 10 years ago and have been reading it ever since, and I just heard my daughter on the radio with James from 3,000 miles away. Ah, life, and technology.

Harriet says:
August 2, 2010 at 7:31 am

If you have time (ha)you might want to check out Five 1951, on archive.org. Fascinating, some glaring flaws but all in all quite well done I thought.

← Older Comments

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Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
Screeblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

Archives
All entries, chronologically...

July 2013
June 2013
May 2013
April 2013
March 2013
February 2013
January 2013
December 2012
November 2012
October 2012
September 2012
August 2012
And I am SPENT.

After I finished a vidcast I hung up the Skype, took off the headphones, picked up the phone, did a radio interview – then bolted out the door to get some things for my daughter’s birthday party. She doesn’t want much. No long list this year, no Webkinz or any other pointless collectibles. Mostly, money. Better yet: Amazon money. I figured I’d pick up a gift card at Walgreen’s. They have cards for everything! Except Amazon. Well, I will print one out using a custom background, so all will be fine. Went to Target to get a DS Pokemon game that’s totally different from all the other Pokemon games, with the exception of being identical in every possible way.

Daughter came home from camp today, excited about seeing the results of an online animation competition. I went into her room to see how she was doing; her head was down. She didn’t win. “I’m okay,” she said, but I could tell she wasn’t. Tears were the first clue. Parents pick up on these things. We had a talk, and of course I doled out the useless bromides, a mixture of consolation and inspiration – but what’s the alternative? Art will always be subjectively evaluated, and everyone’s a critic. The critics even more so. I suggested she email the person who ran the contest and thank her for the chance to enter – and she did, which gave me a warm glow. Soon she got emails from the other contest winners, encouraging her and giving kudos for her entry. Given the general level of sociopathy on the web, that’s nice – and
it turned a dark afternoon into what it should be: the last day of being Nine on a sunny summer day in the best place ever, her home, her room.

Although tonight her room is occupied by Grandma. This was a surprise – we thought she was staying at another daughter’s tonight, but I came outside between interviews and hey presto, there she was in the gazebo with suitcases. I did an actual double-take. You don’t know if that’s hard-coded in the human brain, or you’re just channeling sitcoms. Did people in Rome do spit-takes? Did cavemen say “wahh-wahh-wahh-wahhh” when something ended up wacky yet awry, even though horns had not been invented? Even primitive man must have had comedy – but I suppose that means someone had to be the first. Someone grunted the equivalent of “Hunter, Moon-Talker, and Fire-maker walk into a cave.” The first joke. I’d bet the first act of comedy was someone pretending to be a fearsome beast to amuse the kids, making them squeal with delight and delicious fake fear. I’ll go out on a limb and say that the person who invented comedy was a dad.

Since she was exiled from her room tonight, she spent the night on the floor of my studio drawing and doing collaborative sketches on the internet while I worked on the various things. Tomorrow’s her birthday, and she's a bit blase about it: fun, yes, of course, ice cream and pizza, but the days of ENORMOUS PRODUCTIONS are over. No Princess-themed bouncy in the backyard. She's going to the humane society for her birthday, and the kids have been asked to bring gifts for the animals, which makes me inordinately proud. All I have to do tomorrow is remember to get the cake. I’d called the grocery store to see if they could do anime characters, and they said they had a limited number of licensed characters they could do. Because you have to pay fees if you have a copyrighted character. But the bakery lady made it sound like they had a generic anime character, and while that could be good, you never know – so I went to check. It was Ben 10. Oh my no.

We went with balloons. And now I have to wrap presents. A wonderful day ahead tomorrow.

So! Links.

100 Mysteries.

Gallery of Regrettable Food: covers – remember, clicking on the image takes you to the next one.

Gallery of Regrettable Food: Outdoor cooking (redesigned site.)

Ammnd tumbler and Popcrush – with a noontime video – and Ricochet (warning! Craaaaazy insane center-right political discussions) and a column. Oy. Gevalt. Thanks for stopping by – see you Monday!

Oh, one more thing. A postcard I picked up last week. I defy anyone to tell me who these guys are. Or why they mattered. Or what they did. Even knowing the answers, I couldn’t tell you. Good luck!
Pass it along, if you wish

74 RESPONSES TO ten years on.

Justin Smallbridge says:
July 30, 2010 at 1:41 pm

Many happy returns of the day to Natalie. On the occasion of such a significant milestone, we are reminded of the observation of Bartholomew J. Simpson: “Everything changes when you hit the big one-oh. Your legs start to go, candy doesn't taste as good any more… Sorry, this old-timer does ramble on sometimes, don’t he?”

shesnailie says:
July 30, 2010 at 1:49 pm

_@_v – posts seem to be going down the memory hole… so if three of the same thing show up years later…

Kevin says:
July 30, 2010 at 2:21 pm

I join with other readers in wishing Natalie a very HAPPY BIRTHDAY!! I have a niece who’s 13 and a nephew who turns 13 next month, and it has been a wonder and a joy to watch them grow up into terrific people. And, at a great distance, all of us are having that pleasure watching Natalie grow as well.
I also loved the paragraph reflecting on the origin of comedy– then again, considering the history of comedy in this country, you wonder whether it started way back when with the pre-exilic
Hebrews.

Gary Imhoff says:
July 30, 2010 at 3:31 pm

Your postcard fellers are, of course, Lum and Abner, radio and film luminaries for over twenty years, and they're in front of the Jot-'Em Down Store in Pine Ridge, Arkansas, which they ran.

If you really don't know them (I don't believe you; you know everything, as the birthday girl will tell you — until in two or three years she begins to tell you that you know nothing), you should download a few of their shows. It's a long-gone era of gentle comedy, with rarely a guffaw but often a chuckle.

John English says:
July 30, 2010 at 3:34 pm

Happy birthday to Natalie!

My young one is 5, and I often lament the loss of time with regards to her! James, you continue to amuse me with tales of what I might expect in years to come. I hope I can do half the job you've clearly done as a dad.

LalaWojo says:
July 30, 2010 at 3:35 pm

Boy, the years have not been kind to Bartles and Jaymes!

browniejr says:
July 30, 2010 at 3:55 pm

@Pencilpal: Caesar doing a spit take- how about Caesar cracking jokes? Obligatory SCTV link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfI_ZThBrw&feature=PlayList&p=3DBAE5D7A0CF31A9&playnext=1&index=17

Stewart says:
July 30, 2010 at 4:06 pm

Let me add my wishes for a Fantastic Birthday to Natalie! She has a lot of fans out here in Internet-Land. Great to hear of all her interests and talents. I hope she knows she has a daddy that is one of a kind, and who has folks all around the world thinking good thoughts of her and sending positive waves in her direction!

D Palmer says:
July 30, 2010 at 4:37 pm

Regarding pancakes with 'outdoor goodness'. My family had a 25' camper permanently parked at a campground on the Tippecanoe River in Indiana. With the very cramped kitchen we cooked almost all of our food outdoor over a campfire.

Perhaps it was my imagination, but just about anything mom made seemed to taste better when cooked over the campfire. This is not to say her food wasn't good otherwise, mom (and dad) were great cooks. But something about bacon and pancakes cooked in the cast iron skillet over the campfire just tasted better.
D Palmer says:
July 30, 2010 at 4:43 pm

I neglected to wish Natalie happy birthday, so: happy birthday
Natalie! You sound like a great kid.

MLN84: You think that a child of James Lilieks doesn't know who
Ensign Wesley Crusher is?

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
July 30, 2010 at 5:30 pm

“…the days of ENORMOUS PRODUCTIONS are over.”
Yeah, right. Check back with us in six years.

shesnailie says:
July 30, 2010 at 6:34 pm

_@_.v – toasted luckys ad looks like zeppelin passengers looking
down on kansas

grs says:
July 30, 2010 at 7:00 pm

StroNheim?

Looks like Max von Mayerling was moonlighting in vaudeville for
some extra cash. Wonder if Norma Desmond knew what was going
on.

shesnailie says:
July 30, 2010 at 9:19 pm

(__( )
(="*=" " i"i"i"i"i"i"i"i"i"i"i"i – mew! happy birthday natalie!
(")_("?)[??????????????]

Greifer says:
July 30, 2010 at 9:36 pm

I know you went with balloons, but there's still time.

If you take in any picture, most cake places will scan it for you into
their scanner-frosting-printer, and “print it out” onto the cake.

So you could take in one of HER pictures, and they'd do it for that.

Target and Byerly's should both be able to do this, even on short
notice (like 20 minutes.)

terrace says:
July 31, 2010 at 1:18 am

“Older Comments” link is visible but un-clickable; the top comment
box is lying on top of it – both with Safari and Firefox.

Terry aka TeeOC says:
July 31, 2010 at 10:21 am

Lum and Abner is my vote also! Happy Birthday to Natalie! Future
Pixar animator!

**Penciplal** says:
July 31, 2010 at 11:10 am

browniejr: Hilarious! I think Eugene Levy was channeling Sid Caesar, not Julius.

**Kev** says:
July 31, 2010 at 11:21 am

*Did cavemen say “wahh-wahh-wahh-wahhhhh” when something ended up wacky yet awry, even though horns had not been invented?*

Oh, I'm pretty sure that horns had been *invented*, but it was rather difficult to detach them from the ram who owned them. 😜

@terrace: I actually get two “older comments” boxes—one at the top that doesn't work, and another at the bottom that does. (BTW, I love your contributions to Shorpy!)

Happy birthday, Natalie!

**LindaY** says:
July 31, 2010 at 1:06 pm

Happy birthday to Natalie! Ten was the best; I can’t think of anything better than going back and being ten again. Like Lucinda Wyman of “Roller Skates,” I would have loved to stay ten forever.

OTR-wise I prefer “The Shadow” and “Fibber McGee and Molly.”

**terrace** says:
August 1, 2010 at 12:19 am

@Kev: Oh... ah... hem... there it is, just a couple inches up from here. Well. Thanks. And thanks for the Shorpy compliment.

**NEokie** says:
August 1, 2010 at 11:43 am

I accept your challenge!

From the top row, left to right: Engelbert Humperdinck, Lorretta Lynn, Merle Haggard; Anne Murray; Conway Twitty; Diane Warwick; Glen Campbell, Carole King, Tom Jones; Burt Bacharach; Victor Borge, Neil Diamond, Elton John

(and Happy Birthday, Natalie!)

**terrace** says:
August 1, 2010 at 7:58 pm

@NEokie: That's Mantovani, not Victor Borge.

**JL Fan** says:
August 1, 2010 at 11:43 pm

James, I thought you might be interested in these color photos from '39 - '43