Best weekend ever! Again. Friday was Gnat's 10th birthday, and it was not as screechy as previous versions. Less elaborate, fewer plans. The kids came over, ate pizza, and then we took them to the Humane Society, where the pets got the gift instead of the birthday girl. (Her choice; very proud.) We made bandanas for dogs intended to show their willingness to be your best friend (I wanted mine to say I CAN SMELL YOU SO MUCH) and then toured the shelter where the animals wait for homes. Just a few dogs. (Reason: owner lost home. Reason: owner transferred. Reason: owner had to move. So many stories behind each of those wide wanting eyes.) There were lots of cats, and lots of cat-adoption action. Very cute; nothing in the world looks as perpetually surprised as a kitten. Everything in the world is . . . just whoa. Whoa. What the hell.

A kitten was brought in for the girls to play with, and then they were hosed down with sanitizer and fed cake with the most delicious frosting in the world. Done by 8:30, minimal fuss, a good deed done: perfect.

But nothing is perfect. Sunday night as she laid in bed, ready for the kiss and
hug, I detected Sadness. Probed a little. turns out she was saddened by how fast ten years had gone. Not an observation noted with detachment, or irrational fear, but noted with genuine regret. So we had a long talk about time, and memory, and how they’re always playing tricks on each other. Every day is the same length. Every year is as long as its predecessor. The next ten years will be the best yet, and the ten after that even better. You climb the tallest mountain and then you see the taller one beyond, and that’s the one you want to scale. What counts is doing something. Ending every day knowing you made something, or did something, added something.

This seemed to help, but not entirely. She was tired and wanted to go to bed, so hug & kiss.

“Just don’t get too old,” she said.

Ah. So it’s that.

“Do I seem old? No. Grandpa’s 83 and he rides a motorcycle.”

She smiled and rolled over and fell asleep.

But. It’s that.

–

Saturday I took daughter and a friend down to the public library for an anime showcase.
I do like the view, but I would; I love this town.
I'm supposed to love this building, since it's the new downtown library and all new downtown libraries are regarded as AWESOME things that revitalize and so on, but this one leaves me cold. And it's by one of my favorite architects, too. Cesar Pelli. It just is. The atrium is better than no atrium, but every time I go there, I am filled with Meh.

The showcase was supposedly for teens, which made her a wee bit apprehensive: what if everyone's older than us? Then they will be, I suppose. As it happens we were the entire audience. That's it. Three. Outnumbered by the people putting on the show. Or attempting to put it on. The first projector in the big room was broken, so we moved to a side room. They couldn't get the laptop on which the DVD was located to connect to the speakers. Many
muttered oaths. Another cord was procured, and now we had sound but no picture. After five minutes of bootless troubleshooting it was all moved to another room, where the laptop successfully made contact with the various interfaces, and the show began! Then ended when the laptop died after five minutes.

Another laptop was found. It did not have the Windows DVD program. The person operating the machine tried to open the file with a program that converted DVDs to DivX, I think – but then I spotted the orange traffic cone on the application list and told them to use that, it would open anything. It did. 40 minutes into the show, we sat back to watch . . . anime!

Samurais were involved, and lots of leaping and dodging and occasionally a single inordinately large drop of sweat would roll down the hero's forehead. Yes, it was that anime! You've seen it too? Awesome! (Actually, I overcame my standard reaction to anime, and enjoyed. Still don't know why there were enormous robots who oppressed the people in order to steal their . . . rice.)

So what sort of library would I want? Something that says LIBRARY. Modern libraries are considered such because they say OBVIOUSLY NOT AN OFFICE BUILDING. I like 'em Roman, frankly, although I grew up with a 1967 ultra-modern structure that seemed like it an embassy from the future. Stark, white, with two-story reading rooms. Over the years its spare modernism was cluttered up until it became a warehouse of unrelated visuals, like gaudy ornaments hung on an aluminum tree. That was Fargo, and few tears were shed when it went down . . . except by some. Before that the library was a tiny Carnegie across from the Graver:

![Carnegie Library](image)

It had pillars, and clanking radiators, and smelled like old books. It had the visual vocabulary of Civic Architecture, which is what I miss. There's no such thing anymore. The last gasp was WPA Moderne, I suppose, aka Nazi Classicism. Well, yes, I'll say it. Not Nazi in intention, but part of the same statist wave that planed down traditional forms into stark machines intended to communicate the heft of the state, not the traditions behind it.
I like it, for all that – perhaps because the true fascist examples were so much plainer and simpler and cruder and uglier.

**Hey! Monday.** Usual drill. PopCrush starts at 9 AM, Tumblr starts at 10 AM, PopCrush videos go front-page at noon. In the afternoon, if I remember, the next four pages of LA Dining 1962.

**Oh: yep.** Last Friday? Lum and Abner.

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**50 RESPONSES TO perfect 10**

**Roadgeek** says:
August 2, 2010 at 2:11 am

Oh, you would've liked my hometown library. Built in 1923 as a US Post Office, it was a red brick structure with concrete trim. I grew up wondering who Andrew Mellon was, for his name was engraved in the cornerstone. When the PO moved to their new building in 1957 (it still has its Civil Defense Shelter placard, long faded by now) the library moved into the red building. It had beautiful steps in the front, and I thought it was one of the best places in the Universe. All those books. It was tight, and compact, and I know now that the librarians hated it. But it looked and felt like an impressively permanent repository of knowledge, and I treasured every visit. The library moved in 1977 to a new marble monstrosity with atriums and unobstructed sight lines and plenty of parking and I hated it and would hardly ever go back. It wasn't the same, somehow.
hpoulter says:
August 2, 2010 at 5:59 am

Is that a frame from Samurai 7? I've never seen it. Does it really have robots in it? Seem wrong, but I'll check it anyway, on Lileks' recommendation. He should try Natalie on the real thing – Seven Samurai. A little long, maybe (especially the Criteria restored version) but one of the finest movies ever made.

I guess if Pixar can do Seven Samurai with grasshoppers, the anime folks can do it with robots.

Mxymaster says:
August 2, 2010 at 7:24 am

“…WPA Moderne, I suppose, aka Nazi Classicism…. Not Nazi in intention, but part of the same statist wave that planed down traditional forms into stark machines intended to communicate the heft of the state, not the traditions behind it.”

Perfect description. Seems like the impulse for the last 90 years has been to cut the legs out so the table will float. Ain't floated yet.

Pilgrim says:
August 2, 2010 at 7:28 am

Your first photo of the inside of the library looks like Cell Block D, plus an escalator.

My first library was our Carnegie Library in a very old mansion. Smell like old books, floors creaked, was a very great place.

Now, they're almost sterile.

Ed says:
August 2, 2010 at 7:28 am

Or the Magnificent Seven, I always thought that was a great version of the Seven Samurai! My girl ( 6 months ahead of Nat ) has sat through all the above. She liked the Pixar version the best though 😃

I can't believe I didn't get Lum and Abner and am kicking myself.

There. that's done!

BTW: a Happy Birthday to Nat from our Family!

John says:
August 2, 2010 at 7:43 am

I don't think there's anything negative you can say about library architecture that fails to apply to all architecture. The kooky apprehensions are all on the inside. Austin's is all “bilingual” – yep, nothing says loss of civilizational confidence like saying it again in Spanish. Physically, though, they're all OK, sorta. Funny how in memory the little libraries in Ketchikan AK, Minot ND, and Aspermont TX all seem to be the same congenial thimble. The one in Anderson SC has moved around a lot, and if there's any architectural imperative at work, it's only toward making the thing too big to move any further. “OK, but this is the last time!” it seems to be saying.

Now that I think of it, I have seen just one non-American municipal
library in this hemisphere, and not a single one in the Eastern. (I except university libraries, which are numerous, and consistently bare. Unless you have hard-science departments, the libraries will be that way; as if, in true liberal-arts fashion, they don't want anybody getting any ideas.) The Turkish words for library and bookstore both translate as “book house;” I can never keep 'em straight; but it doesn't matter because the country doesn't have either.

**Drew** says:
August 2, 2010 at 7:43 am

You're a better man than I. I'm doing all I can to keep my girls free of the influence anime. When the kid next door gave them Pokemon cards, I got the shakes. Might as well have given them meth as far as I'm concerned.

**juanito - John Davey** says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:02 am

Curious: Is Pokeman the gateway drug to anime? IF so, uh oh.

Only two incorporated cities here in El Dorado County, (Placerville & South Lake Tahoe) so all of our libraries are county run. We didn't have a public library here in our town until just a few years ago (just a small library shared with the high school), so we used the public library about 4 miles east in Cameron Park. Tragically, that building suffered a massive roof leak, and you can guess the results on printed publications stored therein. Rebuilt over the course of a year, books replaced – all better. So now we have essentially two brand new libraries.

The kids love going to the library, and surprisingly they have really good hours. I am waiting for the 'reduced budget funding' shoe to drop. So far, not yet. The 9 year old has a reading problem: she cannot stop. Typically she has about 6 books going at the same time. When we need to discipline her, the trustiest tool in the box is book removal.

**gp** says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:23 am

I'm beginning to wonder if we even need libraries anymore. Pretty much every book ever written is available on the internet, either legal or pirated. Our local library now serves three purposes: homeless hangout, DVD rentals, internet cafe. Hardly any books left.

**Pilgrim** says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:23 am

Color me “confused". Which Pixar movie has “Seven Samurai" overtones? “A Bug's Life”?

I've seen SS and Magnificent Seven, and have apparently not made the connection with Pixar.

Please enlighten me, with plot similarities.

**Brisko** says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:24 am
While I love cartoons, I am not really a fan of anime. The only one I really liked was “Kaze no Yojimbo”, loosely based on Kurasawa's “Yojimbo.” It had a great noir feel in places, and it was much more adult than most examples of what I've seen.

Bill Peschel says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:31 am

Coincidentally, the library in the next town opened a new building. The architect decided to use the brick form of the building they knocked down for the front (a hotel), and attach to the back, where lies a parking lot and entrance this … something. I guess it looks like a packing crate if it had been painted a light blue.

I'm grateful for the room, but there seems something off about the place, like the architect threw in a little non-Euclidean geometry in the corners.

Meanwhile, over in the wealthier area (Camp Hill), the new library was done up in the Arts and Craft style and it looks gorgeous. You don’t know if you want to check out a book or move in.

Kerry Potenza says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:33 am

Your bedtime conversation with Natalie made me cry. I wish I had a dad like you to impart such wisdom. Natalie is so very lucky to have you....

kc says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:34 am

Perfect! I didn’t realize I could be filled with ‘meh’! Thank you!

hpoulter says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:35 am

Washington DC Roosevelt-era architecture is full of fasces. They put them everywhere. Not exactly subtle.

Two of the biggest ones form the columns of the chair Lincoln is sitting in in his memorial. At least they left the axes out of those, but the bundle-and-axe motif is visible in many other places, including several Smithsonian buildings. The most notable fasces are the huge bronze ones flanking the flag on the wall behind the House speaker's rostrum in the US Capitol, but those may pre-date the Fascist movement. After all, swastikas used to be benign sun-signs.

GardenStater says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:39 am

Here’s the library in the town where I grew up. It’s the same today, but without the vines growing up the walls. Nice that some things never change.

http://www.pomptonlakeshistory.com/places/library1.htm

hpoulter says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:40 am

@Pilgrim
It's not remotely a remake (it owes more to “the Ant and the grasshopper”), but it was definitely influenced by Seven Samurai. Google it. I'll bet John Lasseter talks about it somewhere.

**Jennifer** says:
August 2, 2010 at 8:54 am

The library I used growing up has grown in size over the years. The Emma S. Clark library in Setauket, NY began as a beautiful old building which was largely retained as the building needed to enlarge (the original library is now a reading room). The 1950's add-on's were horrid and were mostly eliminated by later renovations (which at least try to match the look of the original facade). This link has nice photos of the library in it's latest state.
http://www.emmaclark.org/libraryphotos.cfm
Anyway—it's a great library, and they still have lot's of books. I just wish I could make use of it-in NYC you have to try a lot harder to use the library. But the inter-library sharing is pretty great.

I remember those thoughts when I was young. I never expressed them to my parents because it hurt so much to even think of them not being around. (Thankfully, they still are).

**rbj** says:
August 2, 2010 at 9:32 am

I love the old Carnegie style libraries. My favorite place to go as a kid — even into the adult section (and boy, does “adult” have two very distinct meanings.)

Good for Natalie, on her choice of birthday venues. Both my dogs came from the rescue shelter. #1 was taken in as a puppy, not many folks want a three legged dog. #2, this past January 1 was there because her previous owner had died. And they are bestest of friendeses.

**Mikeski** says:
August 2, 2010 at 9:32 am

@ Brisko:

There's plenty of not-aimed-at-kids stuff out there, you just don't hear about it because all the Marketing is for Dragonball Z and Pokemon and Naruto.

If you feel like taking another shot at it, I suggest Mushi-shi, Haibane Renmei (might be hard to find now, but it's being reissued in 2011 sometime), and Noir. Not a giant robot, magical playing card, or energy-beam-throwing martial artist to be seen.

**old unkajoe** says:
August 2, 2010 at 9:38 am

@gp

You can add one more function for most of today's libraries, and that is as glorified daycare center. Our library has dozens of story hours weekly, filled with young moms and their adorable tykes who scream and giggle and dash around like little demons once the program is over (the tykes, that is – the moms just sip their lattes).
Mark E. Hurling says:
August 2, 2010 at 9:58 am

Pokemon was definitely our daughter's gateway to first; anime, then all things Japanese.

I had a similar discussion with offspring at age 5 when I was driving her home from pre-school. She was moping in the back seat about her recently deceased tropical fish and musing about why things have to die. So she asked and I had the uh-oh moment deciding how much to explain. I told her everything and everyone dies someday. She didn't burst into tears, but said aghast, “You mean you and Mom, and me too?”

“Yes love, but not for a long time yet.”

I still wonder if I jumped that fence too soon.

browniejr says:
August 2, 2010 at 10:10 am

re: the trip to the Library- I think Mr. Lileks' story is a perfect allegory for what goes wrong when public funding is used to provide a service that might be better provided by private sources. There were more workers than the public that was served, the resources were broken and not properly kept in repair or allocated… If such a presentation were done for fun or profit (say at an Apple store or as a website by someone dedicated to the subject), it probably would have been delivered more effectively.

That said, I think it is vital for Democracy to have such a place as a library where such presentations and discussions can take place. Perhaps if the tax dollars were spent on the facility, and the materials for the presentation were contracted out (or if the library charged a small fee for the use of the hall), it would work much better.

efurman says:
August 2, 2010 at 10:11 am

This is a Library;

And libraries are ‘supposed’ to smell like old books. Wouldn't have it any other way.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 2, 2010 at 10:18 am

Once you catch on that Anime is a medium not a genre, it is not that difficult to find something you like.

Sound like the hip teen Anime fans may have had previous experience with these librarians and their lack of AV skills.

Brisko says:
August 2, 2010 at 10:43 am

@ bgbear

The same is true of comics (not just books, anything sequential art). As a fan, and a creator I am constantly trying to explain the
difference to the uninitiated.

If someone doesn't have the desire to explore, as I don't with anime, so be it but don't scoff when you (a general "you") ask what I do and I tell you I write comic books.

RLR says:
August 2, 2010 at 10:44 am

Others have already identified Samurai 7 and encouraged exposure to Kurosawa's original. Let me add my voice to that chorus.

I liked S7 well enough, and it was a reasonable, entertaining interpretation. However, I do NOT forgive the producers for rendering Kikuchiyo as a frickin' robot. FAIL.

Pilgrim says:
August 2, 2010 at 10:45 am

@hpoulter:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bugs_life and other sites mention the similarity. Maybe it had been too long since seeing the Seven Samurai and Magnificent 7. Now that I know there is a tenuous connection, I can see some of it. A re-watching of all of the movies would help, eh?

swschrad says:
August 2, 2010 at 10:57 am

boy, did I love that Fargo Carnegie library. a place for wonderful discoveries for a kid that taught himself to read off the face of the TV.

nowadays, persistent "keepers" would shoo me away from many of them, back to the low tables and idiot-books of the kiddie pen.

but I think I turned out OK in spite of myself.

ssssSSSSSSSSS

you gonna talk or you gonna fish?

MichaelsDaddy says:
August 2, 2010 at 11:07 am

July 30th is the best day for birthdays. Hope hers was wonderful.

Baby M says:
August 2, 2010 at 11:18 am

First of all, Happy Birthday Natalie!

I work in downtown Akron in the building that was the city's original Carnegie Library. It was replaced in the 1970s by one of those windowless, poured-concrete atrocities then in fashion. That building was rebuilt a few years ago, and as part of the renovation they actually cut windows into it. It's gone from Jimmy Carter Brutalist to a sort of lighter, more airy Postmodernist Inoffensive.
**GardenStater** says:
August 2, 2010 at 11:20 am

@efurman: Yes, the Main Branch of the NYPL is a grand and glorious building. A must-see for a first-time visitor.

I spent much time there working on my Master's thesis, in the pre-Internet days.

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**Patrick** says:
August 2, 2010 at 11:41 am

If you want some awesome anime, check out anything by Hayao Miyazaki. His movies can run, nay, drive laps around other anime ventures. Quite possibly the best anime director of all time. My favorites would have to be Howl's Moving Castle and Spirited Away. The latter stars a girl about Natalie's age who's a whiny brat, gets herself in trouble and wrapped up in a world of spirits and gods, makes some friends, learns some lessons, and comes out a better person.

John Lasseter gives a lot of props to Miyazaki, citing him as one of his biggest influences in animation.

The next best thing would have to be Cowboy Bebop, but that would be a bit too mature for Natalie. Maybe in 7 to 10 years she'd be able to handle it.

As for the anime they watched, it's either Samurai 7, or Samurai Champloo.

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**Jay** says:
August 2, 2010 at 11:56 am

hpoulter-- Here's a whole list of fasces in American in the US from wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasces). Turns out the National Guard, Knights of Columbus, Buffalo and Brooklyn, NY, the State of Colorado, and Harvard are all “not so subtly” fascist, as you put it. Also, Roosevelt was apparently exerting quite a lot of influence despite holding no public office in 1922, since that's the year the Lincoln Memorial was completed.

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**JamesS** says:
August 2, 2010 at 11:57 am

Yep, anime is definitely a story-telling medium and not a genre. I made that same mistake for years, mostly because of the giant robot/fighting series that make up most of what we get here in the US. Then my oldest son (then in college) showed me the *Fullmetal Alchemist* series, which, while it does have fighting in it, is based around a nation's civil war and existential threat from outside forces. Much of the series is based around the concept of “what makes a human a human” and the eponymous protagonist's respect for life.

*Mushi-shi* is also an excellent series, and has no overriding story arc, so the episodes can be watched out of order with nothing missed.

*Neon Genesis Evangelion* at first glance is a typical giant robot series, but it quickly gets very dark and dives into issues of abandonment, loneliness and the psychological breakdown of the ego. Very VERY dark, with apocalyptic overtones. Not for children, uh-uh.
bgbear (roger h) says:
August 2, 2010 at 12:20 pm

A good example of non-science fiction or fantasy Anime is “Tokyo Godfathers”.

If you have the time for a long series, Maison Ikkoku is funny, charming, soap opera, chick flick, love story with no giant robots or mythical talking beasts.

( ^=^ )

Drew says:
August 2, 2010 at 12:33 pm

No, no, no . . . when I say I hate anime, that's not a cue for everyone to recommend anime that they're convinced will change my mind.

I can't stand the stuff. I find it absolutely repulsive on a deep, almost religious level. I think it's the worst illustration trend of the last 20 years.

I also hate furries.

hpoulter says:
August 2, 2010 at 12:43 pm

@Jay – I knew I'd step in it if I didn't look it up. OK, I'll blame it on the notorious fascism of Warren G. Harding.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 2, 2010 at 12:46 pm

it aint always about you Drew.

JamesS says:
August 2, 2010 at 1:42 pm

That's OK, Drew — I feel the same way about Apple products.

[ducks and runs]

shesnailie says:
August 2, 2010 at 2:05 pm

_@_v – used to special order my books from a depository in texas

swschrad says:
August 2, 2010 at 2:26 pm

@shesnailie: what a coincidence, I get rifles from there.

indy jones says:
August 2, 2010 at 2:41 pm

The Carnegie libraries had the look of substance...the defenders of knowledge. All the new libraries pretty much look rather wussy and contain mostly computers and “the media arts”...the perveyors of the temporary, the mediocre with maybe a side of porno thrown in. Don't go to them much anymore. Just too cold.
Gina says:
August 2, 2010 at 2:44 pm

Sounds like you and your wife are raising a lovely young lady. You should be proud. Happy belated birthday to Natalie!

Oh, and I'm glad I wasn't the only kid who got a little freaked at turning ten.

(Also — how on earth did you get all those little girls out of the Humane Society without being cajoled into taking home several pets?? I mean, I realize you had to do it or face the wrath of various parents . . . but it must have been an uphill battle.

Brisko says:
August 2, 2010 at 3:15 pm

@ Drew

It stems from the Japanese's early obsession with Betty Boop and with Disney films imported by the US troops stationed in Japan after WWII.

It's hardly a recent trend. Just sayin'.

Patrick says:
August 2, 2010 at 4:12 pm

I don't remember much about my 10th Birthday, but I remember a card my grandmother gave me. It was a kangaroo that looked a little confused or embarrassed, holding a small cupcake with one candle. On the inside it said “You're HOW OLD?!?” which was followed by her handwriting stating “Congratulations! You've had the single-digit years and are now in the double-digit years!” Then the card read “Oh, well. Happy Birthday.”

Jay says:
August 2, 2010 at 4:24 pm

@hpoulter No problem. Sorry if I came off too harshly; I thought you were dog whistling a whole Jonah Goldberg “Liberal Fascism”-type argument (I don't necessarily thing Goldberg's totally crazy on that point, I just dislike glib assertions of complex ideas).

hpoulter says:
August 2, 2010 at 6:19 pm

@jay – I grew up in the DC area – the amount of “progressive” public art and decoration in those old buildings makes a cumulative impression on you, and quite a lot of it was built during the 30s and 40s. I don't think builders were thinking of Mussolini when they put fasces all over everything – they were thinking of Rome, just like him. There are also around town a large number of big blocky sculptures of square-shouldered nude humans with a distinctly Soviet Realist air.

hpoulter says:
August 2, 2010 at 6:21 pm

And in retrospect, I see what you mean, but that was meant to be a
joke. I should have tagged it.

Mikey NTH says:
August 3, 2010 at 8:49 am

The problem with the modern library is that it still seems so 1970's, and the 70's sucked. Depressing, oppressive, the future will not be fun, and that's it.
Sticky, grindingly hot day. Work ground along and things were grindingly difficult. There were times I was not happy! There were things about today I wish had been different!

Sorry, but I'm just trying to keep a reader happy. Someone sent me a letter saying he was tired of my “Grindingly negative” columns in the paper. Among the recent subjects I have chose to inflict my bilious world view: a large concrete housing project is, in fact, ugly, and we should not build things like this again; it is pointless to spend a great deal of money on limited-run fixed-rail streetcars out of a sake of nostalgic obligation when buses serve more people; four light-hearted schemes for funding a new football stadium; a survey of road-construction; the joys of fireworks; what makes for good public art. And other brutal, controversial pieces. Me, Bringer of Gloom. I replied with regret, saying he was taking the pieces in a spirit different than they were intended, and thank you for writing, and here's an animated gif of a rolling doughnut.

Well, no, but it was tempting.
Busy evening as well: the Crazy Uke came by to get the hastily-signed, unintelligible documents for the loan application, half of which stated that he had explained everything to me, and half of which were like “signing this document confirms that you have agreed to the laws concerning the signing of this document.” At the end of this we will have a better interest rate, but I can’t shake the feeling it’s all jiggery-pokery. I am proud of myself for not liking debt, but the flip side is an irrational need to have suitcases of cash under the bed. I don’t trust these complex incorporeal financial instruments! No, give me cold, hard, essentially symbolic pieces of paper whose worth depends on a consensual delusion! Money just makes me shift in my seat and want to change the subject some times.

Then came a nice young fellow to give us a free consultation on refinishing our kitchen cabinets. They told us to set aside 2 hours. I said one hour would be enough, thank you. Made me wonder if the salesperson would talk very slowly. These cabinet doors can be done for a small amount of money, or at least less than you would expect. Just eyeball it and give me a number, Jack!

As if turned out, the clerk I talked to last week, the fine young fellow who waylaid me in Home Depot? The Air Force guy? Sold me a line of crap. I had specifically said I wanted the doors to be retrofitted, or, if that wasn’t possible, replaced to match the cabinets. He said they could do that exactly, no problem, they could match anything. So imagine the surprise of the nice young fellow when I said what they wanted, because he was there to sell us veneers that went over the existing cupboards. Upon learning what I’d been told, he slumped. They’d had a lot of that. But we had a conversation about countertops, and he brought out a sample case that might as well have been labeled NOTHING YOU WANT IS IN HERE. At the end of it all I sat down with my wife and we felt the entire project grind to a screeching halt, which is fine, because I don’t mind the way things are.

Daughter doesn’t want it done, but she doesn’t want anything changed. I trumped her on that one: what color was the kitchen before the last change? Er uh er uh. Right. As for replacing the granite, it’s part of a long-term plan to brighten up Jasperwood. This is a perfect example of everything that is wrong with humanity: what was cozy and warm and sedate and august when we moved in is now oppressive and dark. This emotion probably drives 37% of the American economy, or did, when we had one.

Sorry! Grinding away there again.

I like Grumpy, by the way, but I don’t like Grumpy worship. At the Disney stores you can find all manner of Grumpy-branched merch, intended to tell the world you’re pretty much contemptuous of everything that impinges on your definition of how the world ought to work, and we should not hold you accountable for your moody, difficult, anti-social behavior because you have identified with a cartoon character intended to express a narrowly defined emotional condition. Got it! You never find the shirt on young men, only men of a certain age and gut size, and perhaps you find the shirts on women who
believe it is delightful to inform the world that they’re unpleasant.

But I like Grumpy. Don’t identify with him, though – I’d go with Doc, maybe.

What? You don’t see many people wearing mildly abrasive Grumpy shirts? You need to spend more time in Disneyworld, where such things are encouraged as an expression of the outer limits of Disney-sanctioned negative personality characteristics. They’re aimed, probably, at the middle-aged men who accompany their families and need something that seems aimed at their particular demographic, and they accommodate Disney agnostics and Disney adherents. Doc speaks to them both.

Aside from that, though, what do adult males have for Disney character identification? Squat and diddly, it seems. We’re not in the mood to wear a Prince on our shirt: teh ghey. Sully: too hairy and fat for some. There’s Donald, but in his T-shirt form he’s Grumpy + anxiety disorder.

There’s no Disney version of Bugs Bunny. No character with the self-possession, the amused expression – he’s laughing at you, not with you, but he’s doing you the favor of not laughing out loud – the cynical tilt of the eyebrow, the carrot-cheroot, the eyes calculating the odds and the way this caper will play out. There’s a scene in “Roger Rabbit” where they finally meet, and I remember at the time it was a moment of great pop-culture significance. Which, I suppose, it was. It was fleeting, as it should be – together they would never work, like swing played on top of ragtime, but for that one moment there was a certain pleasure in seeing them together, like Bogart shaking hands with Harold Lloyd.

Which is a roundabout way of saying the only Disney shirt I’ll wear around the Kingdoms is a Classic Mickey.

It’s been a while since I’ve been there. We’re planning our next trip. Daughter wants: Epcot. Hollywood. Magic Kingdom. Probably in that order. There will come a time in the next few months when we’re back, and doing something we did a year or so ago, again, and it will be the best day ever.

This year is shaping up to be the best year ever, too. Just for the range of experiences and overall amount of nifty things. Grumpy? I think of my blessings, and I get a big grin, and practically trip over my enormous ears. LATER: Tumblr, dammed tumblr – it sat on four queued posts yesterday. I may have to fire them off manually. Comic Sins later; PopCrush starting at nine, including the quick-hit daily videos. I’d be gratified if you dropped by and watched them, if only to judge what a fellow can do in his basement. See you around!
MJBirch says:
August 3, 2010 at 4:41 pm

Always loved Goofy. When playing comedy, Gary Cooper had sort of a Goofy-ish way about him. (Or Goofy reminded me of Gary Cooper.)

I always thought Grumpy was sort of softhearted underneath — just embarrassed about emotional display (I vividly remember him growling “awww, MUSH!” while Snow White sang “Some day, my prince will come.” And he made sure to tell her not to let strangers into the house (just like she listened, the dimwit). And he was the one who led all the other dwarves to the rescue.

Comment on Dopey: anyone besides me think that the Disney animators ripped off “The Yellow Kid” from the original Hogan’s Alley comic strip (from the Hearst papers)? I recall a quick moment of Dopey mugging it up like a Chinaman in the dance sequence.

swschrad says:
August 3, 2010 at 4:56 pm

tumbler; blended PBR: 33 beers in one?

sounds like they’re pouring the dregs into a new glass back at the bar, son. whatever did you do to the waitresses to get that treatment?

and why did you stop in that neighborhood when the bikers rode through in high gear?

Andre says:
August 4, 2010 at 12:56 am

I think that one goes through seven stages of life and identifies with a different dwarf at each stage.

Bugs and Mickey together? Awful.

Donald and Daffy together? Brilliant.

old unkajoe says:
August 4, 2010 at 11:54 am

@hpoulter and GardenStater – I think that’s Bob McGrath, who went on to be one of the original hosts on Sesame Street. As far as I know, he still appears on the show.

Edward says:
August 4, 2010 at 12:17 pm

> Aside from that, though, what do adult males have for Disney character identification? Squat and diddly, it seems.

> Mr. Incredible?

> There’s no Disney version of Bugs Bunny. No character with the self-possession, the amused expression

> Ahem. Br’er Rabbit?

HelloBall says:
August 4, 2010 at 2:10 pm
Late to the party, but I had to relate something I read ages ago in an internal newsletter for a resort hotel where my parents used to work. It was “ages ago” because it was during the time that Mitch Miller was still on TV...

One of the concierges was named Singh, or at least that’s what they called him. The newsletter had a blurb about an upcoming company BBQ or something that Singh was organizing. Among other things, the event was going to feature a talent show... so the staff was encouraged to turn out and “Mitch Along With Singh.”

“I kid you not.” [/Jack Paar]

Please hold your applause.

Fred says:
August 10, 2010 at 2:03 pm

Eeyore, when he’s done right. The later cartoons seem to feel the need to brighten him up. Eeyore is just a gloomy cus who knows everything is going to go wrong but who will get up and go out and get to work regardless. His cynicism is real but it doesn’t conquer his innate good character...

There’s something to be said for some parts of Scrooge McDuck too but his greed and selfishness are too much a part of his character.

Gene Dillenburg says:
August 21, 2010 at 9:33 am

The one and only time I went to Disney World (and honestly, there isn’t money enough in the world to make me go through that stale hell again), I bought the Grumpy shirt for precisely the reasons James outlines. Plus, I felt grumpy. Plus, I usually feel grumpy.

Chas C-Q says:
August 22, 2010 at 6:09 am

>> There’s no Disney version of Bugs Bunny.
>> No character with the self-possession,
>> the amused expression
>
> Ahem. Br’er Rabbit?

Except, “Song of the South” is politically incorrect, and is down the Memory Hole.

← Older Comments

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A few highly recommended friends...

0: Main Menu
1: Matchbook Museum
2: Comic Covers
3: Black & White World
4: Sears 1934
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries

ARCHIVES
All entries, chronologically...

July 2013
June 2013
May 2013
April 2013
March 2013
February 2013
January 2013
Not to go all double-rainbow on you, but I saw the most extraordinary cloud today. Straight out of a 1917 children’s book illustration about knights and days of yore – one of those towering piles of white whose magnitude only reinforces the limitless vault of blue above it. I tried to take a picture, but clouds lose their magic in most photographs. The emotional reaction that makes you reach for a camera just doesn’t translate. No matter: it was a joy to see, for whatever reason – perhaps because it seemed to be situated perfectly at the end of the street, as though it was a promised destination I could reach if I liked – and it made me turn up the radio and roll down the windows and have one of those WELL HELL YES summer moments that hit you when the elements of the season assemble with easy skill. The song was “Everybody Wants to Rule the World,” which I have always loved, even though it’s lyrically incoherent. It’s a touchstone tune for summer. Reminds me of the 80s, of course. The great unloved, misunderstood 80s.

Really: it’s the first decade of the polymedia era, and so it’s regarded like
early silent films. The 90s fare worse – no one seems to remember the 90s, because they’re too close and too indistinct, and the general post-modern tone had already set in, so it’s kinda like today with weird hair and slower internet? But the 80s are due some respect, and I hope there will be an affectionate reappraisal down the road.

Because right now we’re about as far from the 80s as “Fast Times at Ridgemont High” was from the 50s. Fonzie would be wearing an Izod shirt.

**Wii fit update:** it is still trying to kill me. Its carefully calibrated sensors said I have lost 7.8 pounds in the last two weeks, which is great, but looks like an optimal weight for your BMI, or Bulemic Measurement Index, is 72 pounds. Let’s set a new goal!

I think I can start eating again. Of course, once you learn to eat less, you need less, and get fuller quicker, because of the uncomfortable sensation of sixteen atoms of food lodged between your abdominal wall and your spine, but I think I can gradually begin to reintroduce the forbidden things I’ve cut out – keeping in mind, of course, how I felt earlier this year. I felt thick. Shatner-thick. A man hits that point, he either buys new clothes that understand him, or you try to make the ones you have feel better. But this has meant denying myself the greatest gustatory pleasure I know: a big fat cheeseburger with a basket of fries and a malt. The holy grail of American cuisine. The fact that it can be served to you while you sit in a car is even better.

I’m talking about a good drive-in, that is. Car-hops and burgers served in red plastic baskets. I suppose Sonic counts, but they don’t give you a tray that hangs on your window. That is key. There should also be the vague possibility of a rumble breaking out later in the evening, especially if the gangs have a beef over turf. My sole childhood memory of such places was an A&W, which was probably not as good as recalled – something always off about the fries – but the burgers came wrapped in foil with nomenclature specific to the composition of the nuclear family, and the root beer was ambrosia.

Don’t know if we went there once or twenty times, but it stuck in my mind as the perfect drive-in experience. (Odd, since we had a drive-in closer to home, the Crown.) Wonder if there was ever a man who ordered a Momma burger. Never, I’m guessing. Never.

**Well, I’m all caught up on Mad Men,** the show .6 percent of America watches and the rest regard with slight exasperation: okay it’s SPECIAL we GET IT. Hoorah for you for watching it. But it is remarkably good. It’s like “The Wire” for pop-culture enthusiasts, even though the details that make it so enjoyable for pop-cult archeologists aren’t the main attraction. It’s a show of sudden, small, telling moments – almost more about reactions than actions. It will hold up better than the Sopranos, I think – partly because it’s just better, but partly because of the main characters. Tony was a whiner, for one thing. But he was a malevolently charismatic presence, and guys would like to think that if he sat down at the bar he’d say “how you doin’.” Don Draper would give you a nod, if that, and would be unlikely to engage in
conversation. But you would want his respect. You might even want to be
him for a while. No one wanted to be Tony.

An ordinary day; worked, shot a video, blogged, ran downtown, worked out,
took my daughter to cello – then ran to the drug store to get some taco
powder. Because I had none. And because I needed some. It was a different
drugstore in a different neighborhood, and had an interesting demographic –
a young woman came in talking on a cellphone, loudly, and told the clerk,
loudly, that he had given her Mabligh when she wanned Mablack. She was
talking on the phone as she said this, so it was more like you gammee HOL
ON Mabligh I wanned Ma HOL ON SHUTUP Mablack.

“Y’said Marlboro Light,” said the clerk.

“No I dint So what she sane bout that? She gonna have to HOL ON no I said
Light.”

“Yer talkin’ on the phone then too,” the clerk said, laughing at her, but she
was yelling on the phone by now and not inclined to care as long as she got
her MABLACK. Which I took to mean Marlboro Black.

Back to sit outside the cello-teacher’s house a few blocks away; read some
more of “The Girl Who Appeared in the Follow-up to The Girl With the
Dragon Tattoo.” Once again: it’s dreadfully written. The first one eventually
got around to a thick mystery, but this one combines Bret-Easton-Ellis-style
brand-name recitations with a peculiar decision to remake the titular
character beyond recognition. And it’s always funny when middle-aged
journalists write stories about sexually irresistible middle-aged journalists.

Speaking of which, it’s time to get back to my own novel. Later. Here’s today:
Black and White World has a peculiar addition: Red Planet Mars! The
Institute’s blog, Lint, is ready to roll. My PopCrush contributions start at nine,
with the basement video at noon. I will probably chime in at Ricochet today,
for all your center-right cogitation needs. See you around!

Pass it along, if you wish

62 RESPONSES TO mablight

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 4, 2010 at 2:10 pm

@swschrad,

Tsk, tsk; now you’ve evoked some unpleasant memories of (he
attempted to say delicately) methane releases while squatting. Very
effective in clearing out others in the vicinity of the squat rack.

HelloBall says:
August 4, 2010 at 2:28 pm
A&W was a must-stop on those gruesome road trips of my childhood. Best memory: A&W in some little town near Sacramento… the waitress ambled up to our car with a very full tray, and face-planted just as she reached my window. It was a horrible sensation for an 11-year old boy to undergo: hunger-based grief for all the precious edibles plastered all over the side of our car, and a barely-suppressed urge to scream with laughter (she was OK).

Philip Scott Thomas says:
August 4, 2010 at 2:56 pm

*It's a show of sudden, small, telling moments – almost more about reactions than actions.*

That is so on the mark. I didn’t come to Mad Men until the third season, and that was largely on Our Genial Host’s recommendation. It took a little while to get into the story, but once I did I was hooked. Unfortunately, I have no idea when the fourth season will air here in Britain. It probably won’t be until the autumn.

Petronius says:
August 4, 2010 at 2:57 pm

Red Planet Mars has some interesting details, like the fact that Peter Graves super-radio uses liquid hydrogen superconductivity to get that extra oomph through the Van Allen Belt. Supercon was merely a lab curiosity in ’52, so this was pretty prescient. Also, the screenplay was based on a stage play, which sounds fascinating. The author, John Balderston was a journalist who covered the opening of King Tut’s tomb. He wrote the screenplay for “The Mummy” with Boris Karloff, and a stage adaptation of “Frankenstein” which he sold to Universal pictures for 10 grand plus 1% of the gross. That was pretty prescient, too, since he ended up (after a lawsuit) with a piece of all 7 sequels.

Mike Tee says:
August 4, 2010 at 4:52 pm

The older comments button doesn’t work.

John Robinson says:
August 4, 2010 at 4:52 pm

*Red Planet Mars* was an odd film, as was *The Next Voice You Hear*. Good acting from both sets of principals though, even if you didn’t buy the concepts.

chrisbcritter says:
August 4, 2010 at 8:23 pm

We didn’t have an A&W in Glenview, IL that I recall but we split the difference – we went to the McDonald’s on one end of town or the Dairy Queen on the other end. Coincidentally both were next to the Illinois Central tracks, so we got to do our share of trainspotting. At McD’s we’d back the car (’53 then ’56 Chevies, then ’61 Dodge) up to the tracks and we would kneel on the back seat watching the trains. We’d BYOB – Kool-aid in Tupperware tall sipper cups to avoid spillage. It was also across the street from the housing complex where Linda Darnell died in a fire back in ’65.
JP Gibb says:
August 5, 2010 at 10:30 am

I've got the same problem as Mike: the older comments button disappears if I try to click on it, and the comment box only appears if I hover the mouse over it.

WinXP, Firefox 3.6.6, FWIW

Kurt says:
August 5, 2010 at 1:18 pm

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 4, 2010 at 12:22 pm

@kurt: wow same memory.

I was born and raised in Santa Maria. Am I a jerk to point out A&W was at Broadway and Jones? (RR tracks run down Jones).

You are correct, of course; it was Broadway!

Chris says:
August 5, 2010 at 5:43 pm

Mad Men: in the last episode, I'd like to see a flash-forward to, say, 1995. Peggy is running the advertising firm. Pete Campbell is in his 3rd U.S. Senate term. Betty is living in Florida, married to her 5th husband. Bert and Roger are long dead. Joan is a famous stage actress. Last scene: Don keels over dead on a golf course. Etc, etc. (I could go on all day with this stuff.)

Ryan says:
August 6, 2010 at 3:11 pm

Something interesting I saw on the Twitters a couple days ago, that I was reminded of when you mentioned now vs 80′s vs Ridgemont High vs 50′s – Dazed and Confused, which came out in 1993, was set in 1976. If that movie came out today, it would be set in 1993. Weird, because 1993 doesn't feel, to me, to be NEARLY as far in the past as 1976 did in 1993.

Headless Unicorn Guy says:
August 8, 2010 at 1:30 pm

Because right now we’re about as far from the 80s as “Fast Times at Ridgemont High” was from the 50s. Fonzie would be wearing an Izod shirt.

And we’re also about as far from VIETNAAAAM(TM) as Vietnam was from World War One. And as far from WOODSTOCK!(TM) as Woodstock was from the Crash of 1929. I was a kid in The Sixties(TM) and I don't remember any all-consuming obsession on WW1!(TM) or The Crash of '29!(TM).

P.S. A LOT of 21st Century teens & young adults like Eighties pop music once they're introduced to it. I recommend the Grand Theft Auto: Vice City soundtrack CDs as representative samplers.

← Older Comments
The sprinkler is muttering chicka-chicka, going back and forth like an obsessive-compulsive who has to count the spoons every five minutes; the sun is high after dinner time, the dog is sitting in the grass with his nose raised, enjoying the symphony of aromas we can neither detect or imagine. The air conditioner labors away on the side of the house; water ploshes in the fountain; kids up the block are squealing with delight over some simple game. Another day of Summer Eternal; there's no way something this solid, this established, this certain of itself could ever pass from the earth. Unless the earth does something stupid.

Which I suppose it will, but fall is always a good counter-argument against Eternal Summer – rich, fascinating complexity vs. idiot simplicity, muted colors of infinite variety vs. the uniform blare of green, and of course the deep nostalgic appeal to childhood, when the long free gambol was replaced with the mechanisms of structure and routine, and we found that we liked it, deep down. (New pencils! New lunchbox!) I'm not saying I buy it, but I
understand the arguments. Of all the seasons, fall is the best rhetorician.

An ordinary day, again; blogged, did the video in the garage – I have the workflow down pat so I can do them start-to-upload in 45 minutes now. Picked up the kids at the usual place at the usual time, tried to entertain them as I drove them home. Yesterday there was a bunny outside the school, and it hid behind a box; today there was no bunny. As far as the kids were concerned, that was pretty much the difference between yesterday and today. Bunny presence.

In the evening my daughter went off to run around one of the lakes, part of a mother-daughter fitness thing. I took the opportunity to log on to her computer, go through her logs, check the cookies, and take a look at the story she's been writing. It was amusing: last night after dinner I told her she could have some computer time before piano practice, and had she written anything lately? No, she said, I'll go write.

“Or you could read a book!” my wife said. I see her point – it's good to step outside your own imagination's parameters, but still. The kid wants to write, write, for heaven's sake.

I spent some more time on the gawdawful “Girl Who Played with Fire,” which is now a matter of clinical interest: I'm keen to know how someone can write this poorly for such protracted periods of time, and how long it will take before something actually happens.

Dog wants walk; later.

And now that's done. He enjoyed it. But not as much as he would have enjoyed a walk with my wife; she takes him south. I watch them go down the stairs; he knows, and he heads south, to the creek, the rich bouquet of stinks. With me he goes north, because it's a shorter hike – but when it comes to a certain corner, he always insists on crossing the street, as if to extend the walk a bit more. Half a block of The Other Side. It's the rule. It's like a kid who thinks that staying up until 10:01 is somehow much, much later than 9:59. He gets peeved if I take him down an alley – this is a shortcut, isn't it? I know you, you lazy SOB. C'mon. Someone may have peed over on the other side of the block. You'd deny me that. Fifteen years on, The Walk is still the lynchpin of his day. Halt, creaky, hips a'twinging, he's up for it. Tonight he was particularly insistent, and pranced over and put his head in the chain-leash I held open. I don't think he's ever done that before. Usually he suffers the imposition of authority. But there is no time for pretense now. Life is short.

The evening falls. Let us go now you and I.

Gosh I wish I more to say, but what is there to say? I could note the criminal state of contemporary pens, I suppose. I'm not a pen purist, like some; I know there are people who have a favorite pen, or ten, and rotate them, happy for the moment in the daily life when they have to sign something. Out comes the pen, click, and voila: the ink flows the moment the ball grazes pulp. Me: no. I bought ten boxes of pens last year at a Target sale. Papermate Eagle brand. You simply cannot trust them to write, and since “writing” is the sole
and total definition of their function, it’s annoying – but we all deal with this, yes? Everyone is accustomed to making a squibble on another sheet to remind the pen what it does. I have squibbles everywhere – the back of bills, the margins of the newspaper, on Post-It notes, each testifying to the balky nature of the contemporary pen.

To be fair: I don’t blame them for their inability to perform on store receipts. This is a different issue. Ball-points do not like the thermal paper produced by cash registers; it’s sand in the Vaseline, they shriek, you can hear them complain: I CANNOT EXUDE INK IN A NORMAL FASHION UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. I learned long ago that it’s not a question of the paper, it’s the underlying surface: try to write on thermal paper with an ordinary pen on a hard counter, and you’re asking for misery, brother. Whip out your wallet and put the paper on the soft supple surface: success. I tell cashiers about this. No one cares.

Oh, I used to love my pens – as I’ve said before in this space, I used to be a fountain pen enthusiast, and wrote exclusively with a Parker’s “People’s Pen,” a preposterously egalitarian-named instrument that used small plastic cartridges of ink. When you screwed the pen tight and felt the point pierce the cartridge, it was like the ecstasy of St. Theresa. (By which I mean the sensual implications of the Bernini sculpture.) (OBVIOUSLY.) The pens leaked like a BP well, though, and stained my middle-finger down to the knuckle. Periodically they broke in my pocket and left a blue blot on my butt as well. Some nibs were poorly made, and scraped the pulp of the paper. But a good People’s Pen with good paper and steady ink flow – when you’re jamming with those tools, there’s a connection between thought and product you simply don’t get with computers.

I used to end every journal with – 30 – and a flourish. You can’t make a flourish in a word processor.

You can type lines:

———

Yeah, that’s the same. That’s the equal of a John Hancock sig.

Hey! All the usual stuff today, and I’m too tired to get links. Bookmark ‘em! C’mon! But I will give you this, now: we continue the march through the cigarette ads of the 30s, here. Enjoy – and I’ll see you around.

Oh: “Blank 13″ was the title of this doc, which I wrote on the iPad and mailed to myself. I like the sound of it. Not to be confused with the Alan Ladd radio show.

64 RESPONSES TO blank 13
browniejr says:
August 5, 2010 at 1:17 pm

@hpoulter: re- dictionaries only reflecting current usage, rather than "correct" definitions and use of words: You need to embiggen your boundaries, my friend. Parameter is a perfectly cromulent word.😊

hpoulter says:
August 5, 2010 at 2:19 pm

It's not correctness I'm bemoaning, it's loss of precision. I am in favor of "ain't", in its place. I don't give a dern about whether to not split an infinitive, or prepositions, which we never end a sentence with. I won't belabor it. Everybody has a pet peeve.

RobertB says:
August 5, 2010 at 2:19 pm

I know this is a matter of controversy in some circles, but in my view, it is the very PURPOSE of a dictionary to describe current usage. Someone uses a word, and you don't know what it means, so you look it up to find out. That process fails if the dictionary only tells you how they SHOULD have used the word.

Of course there is a huge difference between a dictionary and a style guide. Style guides are prescriptivist by nature, and that's where you point someone when they're misusing the language. My favorite is Fowler's — the older the edition the better.

DryOwlTacos says:
August 5, 2010 at 2:20 pm

@ von Drupen-Sachs: I miss my Rapidographs, even though they clogged easily, and cleaning the double-ought required a veeerrry steady hand to replace its reed. I never used them for general writing, but Back In The Day they drew lots of clean borders and rules, and outlined figures in many a watercolor wash. Having a set of them standing at attention on my desk at work proclaimed me as a Nartist.

Kevin says:
August 5, 2010 at 2:39 pm

"Pen Island," huh?
It reminds me of the Large Hadron Collider, which is a typo just waiting to happen.

hpoulter says:
August 5, 2010 at 3:04 pm

It has happened more than once:

http://www.flickr.com/photos/skepchick/4445007033/

browniejr says:
August 5, 2010 at 3:50 pm

@hpoulter: so- did the agents from the future* cause that typo to happen, or have they just not gotten back to correct it yet?
*the ones that are supposed to sabotage the HaDRon collider to prevent it causing a tear in the fabric of space time…

**BlackOrchid says:**
August 5, 2010 at 4:16 pm

Oh, thank you so much Mr. Lileks!

I was starting to think I was the only one who hated these IkeaMystery books. And I'm slogging thru them for Book Club.

I'm next to pick and I might have to get some revenge . . .

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
August 5, 2010 at 5:06 pm

if you have Netflix & Tivo, Girl w/Dragon Tattoo is On Demand. Might save time.

**Chas C-Q says:**
August 5, 2010 at 6:00 pm

“Jack Roy” was the early pseudonym of one Jacob Cohen; son of vaudevillian “Phil Roy,” Philip Cohen.

**Chas C-Q says:**
August 5, 2010 at 6:03 pm

“Rob Roy” is a waste of good Scotch.

**JL Fan says:**
August 6, 2010 at 9:20 am

During all eight years of Catholic Grade School, it was cursive writing and my Parker cartridge pen. As you say, many a pocket was dotted with that blotch of Navy blue.

Nowadays, my standard pen of choice is the Pilot G-2 gel — smooth writing, skip free, and vivid inks.

**steveH says:**
August 6, 2010 at 8:07 pm

Currently, a Pilot G-2 (.38mm) is my favorite pen. Of the “buy ‘em in bunches” writing implement class.

For years I preferred a Schaeffer 585 fountain pen with black ink. It's still here, just in case I get some good ink. And spiral-bound steno pads on which to write.

Instead of Rapidograph pens, I've got a “Refograph” set by Reform, missing the #3 tip. (Wonder who borrowed it?) If I ever need to do some technical drawing on vellum…

It's been around a while; just noticed that it's marked as being made in “W. Germany”.

**Sumgai says:**
August 5, 2010 at 8:08 am
James,

A good pen for daily use is a no-brainer. Get a Parker Jotter and replace the cartridge with a refill cartridge from Fischer Space Pen (you can usually find these at major office supplies). The Space Pen refill comes with a little plastic adapter for the Parker pen and is a drop in replacement.

Advantages? Well, it's a nice pen to start with, but with that modification it will write anywhere. Always. EVERY TIME. Receipt paper? Ha! A mere bagatelle. Upside down? No problema. If you are in a 3 Stooges frame of mind, I suspect it would even write under whipped cream!

Try it. It's a cheap solution to cheap pens that don't work when you need them. A writer should have a pen that works.
I am as cranky as a bag of badgers, and I want a stiff drink and a weekend. This work stuff is NONSENSE. Let me give you a rundown:

Up, early, because the house appraiser decides that everyone gets up with chickens and it's safe to call people ear-lye in the mornin'

Shove down a bowl of rocks and one thin sausage adorned with a ribbon of Rooster sauce; elapsed time, 4 minutes. Say goodbye to wife. Hit the computer.

8:04 – 8:25 scan for stuff I can blog about; put stuff into the blog column,
other stuff into the video blog column.

8:25 Wake child, get her breakfast, have a nice calm happy Daddy-Daughter time

8:35 return to machinery; get her out the door when carpool comes ten minutes later – get hug even though a friend is watching

9:00-9:45 Post and write, assemble video script in head, because I don’t have a teleprompter, and have to just reel this stupid thing off without screwing up

9:45 Go to garage, fire up cameras and lights, make video, screw up. Redo

9:59: Discover audio sucks

10:00 AM Hey ho, Podcast time. Talk with Peter Robinson, Rob Long, and the governor of North Dakota. Bond deeply with aforementioned governor over Fargo.

10:40 Sign off, run downstairs, redo video. Now the planes are coming thick and fast; have to get the video done before another fargin’ Aeroflot comes over and drowns me out

10:45 – 11:30 futz with the video, adding PiPs, rendering green screen; also, post to blog

11:30 Lunch! One burrito with cheese, consumed while walking up the stairs to finish uploading the video

11:31 – 2:00 Blogging. This is not onerous because I am outside, getting a little sun; I allow myself some catching up with the news of the day as well.

2:00 – PJTV / XM POTUS channel interview

2:10 Leave house to pick up child from art camp; sit in an auditorium for a few minutes watching alarmingly good very small children act in some skits, thinking, this is like camp for budding liars

2:20 – 4:30 Blog. finish column for newspaper, deal with a spate of really, really nasty emails, upload column

4:30 Collapse on bed and attain unconsciousness

5:00 Up; make supper; clean kitchen; walk dog. The good part of the day begins. Play a game on iPad. Have a cigar. Have a cup of coffee. Ahhh. Life = good
6:10 – 6:40 Work out on Wii fit; take phone call in the middle of doing steps, am pleased I don’t sound like I’m dying. Hang up phone, go back to listening to radio. During commercials, listen to iPod. Discover iPod got sweaty and has seized up and the controls don’t work

6:40 Radio interview on Hewitt show

7:00 Shower; write column for a magazine. Not at the same time, of course.

7:45 It is 15 minutes until lemoncello

8:00 Lemoncello. From a bottle someone gave me. Hideously tooth-twanging sweet.

8:01 Pour out drink in sink. Pour Absolut Citron on rocks, add fresh squeezed lemon

8:02 – 11:00 Writing

11:01 Give up trying to make the flash video work on the 100 Mysteries site, blame encoder, self, dark matter, Satan

11:03 Scour wires for tomorrow's blogging

11:09 This.

So. Now I am done. Links!

Ten more covers in the Gallery of Regrettable Food. Remember, click on the pic to go to the next one.

A new addition to the Gallery of Regrettable Food: Vegetables. See? I'm serious about this upgrade o the Gallery. It is once again a going concern.

Bleatplus, here. (a few new members came on board – will get info to you Friday.)

There's a column at starttribune.com. About drunks punching police horses.

See you on the twitter and the tumblr and PopCrush and GAAAAAH ENOUGH ALREADY

–30–

PS Wouldn't have it any other way.

PPS 12:03 Take out the garbage.
browniejr says:
August 6, 2010 at 5:28 pm

@Patrick re: commute. Been there, done that. (In Northern/Central California). In my case, my affordable home was ~90 miles away from the well-paying jobs in the SF/San Jose Bay Area, so I did the miles. Depending on how long you do it, you will figure out ALL the possible shortcuts.

Your comments on the 4 hour commute and the planetary alignments, etc. struck a chord- I learned very quickly to always take the day off before Thanksgiving, for instance. My normal commute would expand to 4 hours plus because of all the families on their way to Grandma's house for turkey dinner the next day.

My job roles never really allowed me to telecommute- perhaps you are in the same boat. If not, I would suggest it as an alternative. I was able to work a “compressed” schedule where I worked 9 hour days and then an 8 hour Friday, and then I was able to take every other Friday off. You might also suggest this to your company (you may already have...)

Mark says:
August 6, 2010 at 8:44 pm

This has James Lileks written all over it:

Patrick says:
August 6, 2010 at 8:57 pm

@browniejr:

When I first started coming to Our Host's site, reading the Bleats, etc. I worked in one of our satellite offices, which was about 25 miles away from where I live. When we closed that office down in November 2008 due to our contract with the County that office was set up in, I had to go back to the main office in Norcross.

I currently live with my parents, but if I could afford it (moved in with them after finances took a nosedive along with my credit) I would move closer to work.

When I first went back to the main office, I told my former supervisor, under whom I would be back, that I wanted to work from home 3 days a week, and wanted more pay. When I transferred to the satellite, they docked my pay by $1 an hour. I said I wanted that $1 back, and to work 3 days a week. He talked with the CEO, and he called back and said they could do the $1, but let me work from home 2 days a week. I was fine with that.

Did that for a few weeks, until January 2009 when there was a shift in positions and rotation of people. The girl that had replaced me when I went to the satellite was moved to our paralegal department, where she assisted only them, and I, who had been assisting her, took over her old position, my old position. Same cubicle and everything. When that occurred, I was given yet another $1 raise, but was told I couldn't work from home anymore. Which was just as well, because (A) I couldn't do a whole lot, and (B) what little I could do, got done in 2 to 3 hours, tops.

The only way I've found to save money on gas on these long commutes is to buy a Wal-Mart gift card. The Wal-Mart near my
house has a gas station in front that accepts the gift cards. If I pay with the card, I save 3 cents per gallon of gas. It's not a lot, but every little bit helps.

I'm not as bad off as I was 3 years ago when I moved in with my parents, but I don't think my finances would allow me to be back out on my own. At least not yet, since I've got a lot of dental work to be done.

Patrick says:
August 6, 2010 at 8:58 pm

Our contract with that County ended in November 2008, that is, and they didn't want to renew due to budget restraints.

Kev says:
August 7, 2010 at 5:01 am

This has James Lileks written all over it:

Agreed, and that's a great link. My first thought upon looking at those pictures was, “Hey, it's Colorized Shorpy!”

Robert says:
August 8, 2010 at 8:58 pm

I was reading Jim Thompson's “The Nothing Man” last night and was surprised to read about the three editions of newspaper put out in a single day (afternoon, home and evening editions). I suppose the life of a blogger/columnist like Mr. Lileks is what equates for the frenetic life of the newspaperman of old.
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?
Sunday night I went downtown to judge a limerick competition, put together by local playwright and musician Max Sparber. The locale: Keiran’s at Block E:
My fellow judges: Jason DeRusha of CCO TV, and Bill Corbett, from Rifftrax and of course Mystery Science Theater 3000. (He was Crow. The second, or Dick Sargent Crow, if you must.) Hadn’t met Bill before, so that was a pleasure: heckuva nice fellow, and of course funny as hell. We read the list of limericks to be judged, and found a few of them to be as bawdy as the genre usually requires. So here you have these mild-mannered family men standing up in a bar – on Sunday! – reading these naughty lines they hadn’t written themselves. Of course, I had written 3 of my own, which walked up to the line of ribaldry without actually crossing over.

A man from Thailand name of Mooket

Decided to move – to Nantucket!

He was always surprised

by the look in their eyes

When they asked his home town. “Why it’s Phuket.”
I figured there had to be one with a Nantucket reference. Also had one for the Mayor, who had issued a special proclamation for the event, and managed to rhyme his name – Rybak – with “Just think of England and lie back.” A little too proud of that one.

Afterwards we talked about TV and media and the Fair and movies. Great fun. Here we are: Max, Bill, a Tall Gent who won, and Jason.

Before I walked around downtown and took pictures. Brutally hot, even at night – almost 90, humid, sun that almost knocked you down when you came around the corner out of the shade. Wandered around Barnes and Noble, which is open Sunday night, and marveled anew at the number of books they had, and how I’ve made some sort of psychological switch: I’m done with them. I want to read everything on the iPad or the iPhone. The idea of printing them up and stacking them in stores seems as odd as record stores now. Even the idea of a cover that doesn’t do anything is starting to seem frustrating in advance. Animate! Have a theme song! Anyway: some pictures from the evening are above in the rotating box – the last one is the top of the old Schubert theater, still undergoing renovation. When I parked my car in the lot behind it there was a fellow standing at the chain link fence, staring
through the hole in the back of the building at the ghostly remains of the seating area inside. He had his hands on the fence; he didn’t move. Architecture student, perhaps. I walked across the lot, across the street, then decided I’d put my sunglasses back in my car. Went back. He was still there. Hadn’t moved. I moved him from “student” to “on something.” I almost expected to see him there when I returned two hours later.

—

**It’s all chance and happenstance.** My daughter is going to camp this week. This means I can make different food. I bought some special pasta, with stuff she won’t want. But you know, it’s not enough. You need salad. So I crossed the entire length of the vast warehouse store, bought a bag, and headed back to the checkout lines – and stopped, astonished, because I saw Wandy.

Or did I? I looked again. C’mon, could be any middle-aged guy who looked a bit slow; the store is full of them – no. I was right, my immediate impression was right, it was Wandy.

Could it be?

“Do Wandy,” my daughter says some times when we're driving along with a friend of hers, and she wants to introduce the idea to her pal. I explain to the friend: many years ago – really, many – I worked at a restaurant, and there was this guy who was kinda slow, and he always ordered French toast with grape jelly. He would sometimes ask for more. He would come back to the wait station and say, in a loud braying voice, **MORE GWAPE JEWWY PWEASE.** He never tipped. His name was Randy, or “Wandy” as he would say it, and no one could quite figure out the nature of his disability. He lacked most social skills, was slovenly, but apparently lived on his own, and had some peculiar relationship to the University. (The Valli was a college-town restaurant, after all. Everyone there had some relationship to the U.) He might have been considered a harmless simpleton except for one fact: a friend who attended a lecture by Angela Davis reported that he interrupted her in the Q & A by walking down the aisle, saying **EXCUSE ME**, and asked her how she could support the Soviet Union after their invasion of Afghanistan.

So no one could really figure out Wandy. Not that anyone really tried.

The Valli closed; we all moved on; Wandy was a punchline when I got together with the old boys from college days. And now: sweet mother of God, here he was in a suburban grocery store, a quarter of a century later.

Well. I pushed my cart back to the the lines, chose the self-checkout, and was beeping my goods when Wandy came up to ask the manager a question. She was clearing out one of the self-checkout terminals, and I could tell she knew him somewhat; he got a familiar smile as she answered his question. He nodded and said **THANK YOU** and turned away with his usual furrowed expression, and I said:

“Hey, Randy.”
He looked at me.

“I remember you from Dinkytown,” I said.

He looked at the ground. “I remember Dinkytown,” he said. “Do you still live there.”

“No, I moved. I worked at the Valli.”

“They had good food.”

“Yes they did.”

“They had good breakfast.”

Oh say it say it please say it

I considered saying it, but that would be wrong. GWAPE JEWWY had to come from him unbidden, or it would mean nothing.

“There was a place like the Valli in Columbus,” he said.

“Did you move to Columbus?”

“Uh huh.”

“What are you doing back here?”

“Buying groceries.”

“Well, I thought I recognized you from the Valli. I was a waiter.”

“Who was your manager.”

“Oh, there were many.” I hadn’t thought of the managers for years, but suddenly they came to mind – the world-weary woman who’d spent her life in restaurants, heart of gold, country-western backstory, best in the shop; the flamingly gay waiter who was also married to the other head waitress, who was a lovely, kind, sweet woman, and remarkably ugly; ol’ Step-and-a-Half, a straight-laced evangelical with a bum leg and a wary attitude towards the rest of the staff; the second-in-command who looked like a goy Gabe Kaplan, the top man in the side office you never saw -

“There was a woman manager,” Randy said. “She was nice.”

“Corinne,” I said.

“Uh huh.”

I bagged my groceries and said it was nice to see him and waved and wheeled my way out.

“THEY LET PEOPLE SMOKE IN THE RESTAURANT,” he said. “THEY SHOULDN’T HAVE LET PEOPLE SMOKE IN THE RESTAURANT.”

“They don’t any more.”
“GOOD,” he said, and he turned away. I left.

It had been a quarter century since I'd seen him last.

Later that day we went to the Convention Grill, for diet-busting hamburger and fries. I was looking forward to this like you cannot imagine. When the food arrived it was . . . not hot. Warm, at best. The fries should be hot and the burger should be juicy; obviously, everything had been sitting out for too long. I apologized to the waitress, said there was hot and there was cold, and this was in between. She apologized as well and said stay right there, she'll have them make it again. Great! While we waited I got out my iPhone, and scrolled to a picture I'd snapped on the sly at the store.

Showed it to my daughter.

“This is someone I saw at the grocery store today,” I said.

She looked at it, frowned – who cares? What? Why? – then her face lit up. And she said, with amazement:

“Wandy?”

I nodded.

He'll never know.


63 RESPONSES TO gwape jewwy

hpoulter says:
August 9, 2010 at 5:28 pm

Nice tenor voice, too.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 9, 2010 at 5:31 pm

yes, “The United Servo Academy Men's Chorus Hymn” is one of my all time favorites and one of my ringtones.

shesnailie says:
August 9, 2010 at 6:56 pm

_@_.v – there once was a man from the minneapolis… ahhhh… too lazy to come up with a rhyme about him getting paid to buy a new
house…

cnguy says:
August 9, 2010 at 7:18 pm

No whiz-bang electronic gizmo can match the tactile pleasure of holding a real book and perusing each page, nor is there any substitute for the satisfying look of well-filled bookshelves. Maybe I’d feel differently if I could afford one of those iPad things (and the reading material to read thereon), but I somehow doubt it.

swschrad says:
August 9, 2010 at 7:53 pm

how do you dogear a page on a iThingie?

how do you write in the margin on a iThingie?

how do you cope when somebody in LawyerLand decides you are pure evil for getting a copy of a book, and they recall it off your iThingie?

do you still have your reads if your iThingie dies and you buy another?

you buy a dead tree edition, you have it forever. like Kirk, I likes me some dead tree editions.

Lileks says:
August 9, 2010 at 9:05 pm

1. You tap the corner of the screen; it not only saves your position, but syncs across all your devices, so if you're reading on the iPad you pick up on the iPhone.
2. Some versions include a note function, I believe; I've never written anything in a paper book, myself.
3. I buy the books. There was one case where they had to recall books, but it was a copyright issue. Rare.
4. Yes.

Al Federber says:
August 9, 2010 at 9:44 pm

James, you look unhealthy in that photo. Way too thin.

steveH says:
August 9, 2010 at 10:32 pm

3. If your iThing dies, the content is still backed up to your computer through iTunes. For that matter, it'll likely be backed up any other iThing you might have, too.

I like paper books just fine, but hauling @220 of them is a bit wearing. So I like having them (also) stored in a couple devices, whether I just want something small in pocked in case of DMV waiting line, or something with a bigger screen on the flight to MN.

Different tools for different tasks and situations; we're not living in a strictly either/or world.
Pencilpal says:
August 9, 2010 at 11:05 pm

There once was a guy with a Wii Fit
Who hoped it would prompt him to bii fit.
His high BMI
Instead forced the guy
To grab the dang Wii Fit and hiif it.

Happy Bday!

Joel says:
August 10, 2010 at 10:19 am

Yes, ebooks are great – I especially like the “cloud” function (I have a Kindle) that lets me see my books anywhere. …

However… it's nonsense to think that this replaces hardcopy books. For all the value and function the ebook reader has it just does not equal then random-page accessibility of a book (flipping across multiple entries in a reference book for example) or the reading one book/referring to another ability with two hardcopy books. Plus public libraries are wonderful.

With my Kindle I often download the free sample of the book, and request the hard copy from the public library to finish the book (and it's nifty I can do the request FROM the Kindle). But it isn't clear that James uses the public library – other than to look at the architecture…..

And – my Kindle's battery lasts for weeks, not hours.

nightfly says:
August 10, 2010 at 1:23 pm

I remember a limerick I wrote way back in high school… probably not all that clever but in AP English, it was 75% Shakespeare:

‘Pon a time Hamlet used to play tennis
Umpire Claudius called him a menace
He retired from the game
Moved away, changed his name
Now he works for the Merchant of Venice

zefal says:
August 10, 2010 at 6:39 pm

Our Wandy in my hometown growing up was Bowling Alley Bill. Hadn't thought of him in years.

Craig Treckeme says:
August 21, 2010 at 10:16 am

Benn mulling this over and came up with a similar limerick:

A man decided one day,
To finally take some vaca,
Left his home in Nantucket,
Flew to Thailand and stuck,
His toes in the sands at Phuket.

All hail the power of the written word, and all its derivative works.
The most significant thing that happened on my birthday: the expiration of my driver's license. Didn't even notice. It's not like they vibrate in your pocket or administer a small electric shock. My friend the Crazy Uke noticed, because he had a copy for our mortgage refi. So it's down to the DMV tomorrow, where I will sit for an hour or so - but I'll probably get a column out of it, so there's that.

Otherwise, just as I like it: not notable, mostly ignored. My wife brought me a small torte with caramel, then gave me a look: yes, you're on a diet, but don't think you can lick the bottom of the candle and say that's enough. There were no gifts or cards, because we did that Sunday before Natalie left for camp. It's the last camp of the year – after this, nothing. My wife was considering a few things she could do, but daughter pled for the right to sleep late and do nothing, and I stood up for her. Summer should have a big portion of nothing, a great lazy fortnight where you can drag out the last few days until they bore you . . . even though you want one more. Two.

School starts at the end of August around here. Before Labor day. Stupid cruel, that.

A picture from my downtown walk last night:
It's bolted to the wall of the old Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce building. I've passed it for years, and never really given it a good look. Turns out Minneapolis was part of the Last Frontier:
That just hits me, right where I live. I think I assumed it was the Foshay tower, but no: it’s a symbol of Mankind’s next great step, shaking off the surly bonds and headed to places where planets have rings. (Maybe it’s supposed to be the Foshay tower blasting off into space.) I miss so much about that era, perhaps because I conflate it with sci-fi dreams of boyhood. But I miss the feeling that this was next. They got it all wrong, of course – there would not be men in the Interplanetary Corps heading into the inky void in spaceships that had rivets on the bulkheads, because we didn’t get around to inventing Hyperdrive or Overthrusters or building colonies on the watery canals of Mars. Drat the luck. But most of all I don’t think they ever thought Next would someday be Then.

Spent the night cleaning up stuff, syncing devices, finishing up the month-long system-wide overhaul and retrofit, and found a few things I don’t need but must post, just because they make me laugh.

This makes me laugh:

Whoever decided that cash registers should be renamed Point of Sale machines was unschooled in the field of Preexisting Acronyms. Or he was planting a joke, knowing these machines would bedevil people forever, because they were programmed to accord with the wishes of managers who wanted all sorts of features, and had no idea what made for good UI.

Anyway. Without daughter it’s not much of a day anyway, just a long, hot
thing, and I'm perfectly content to do dorky stuff like streamline all my email-address logins and set up accounts and arrange things that were in folders into other folders. At the end of the day I'll finish an ep of “Life on Mars,” which I really, really like – even though I think I'm more annoyed by Super Ethical Modern Cop than they intended, and more sympathetic to Early-70s Mean Cop. The difference is meant to be striking; the former is a little slip of a fella, the latter a big bluff brute who'd sooner clout a punter on the ear than ask him a civil question, but the vocabulary of cop shows makes you want to throw your lot in with the throwback. He occupies his space commandingly, shall we say. The show gives you many hints that it's okay to like him, too.

At least it doesn't give us happy-clappy 70s; it's a miserable time. It's ugly, things are falling apart, everything smells like spilled beer, and looks old – or bright, new, garish and cheap. (This review refers to the English version; for the American remake, see the Bleat in three months or so.)

I wrote much today, and will work more on side projects tonight. I have killed or delayed two projects, including the Joe Ohio real-book version. Running the costs for a color book revealed I'd have to price the book at $49.99 to make three dollars a copy, or something like that. There doesn't seem to be an offer for “some color” – it's full-color or nothing. Fans of the series will be pleased to note that I'm working on new episodes, one a day as I did before, same rules: look at the matchbook, set the clock, write. One pass afterwards to clean it up, and that's it. The story picks up a year later, with the Boss dead and Joe running the company on behalf of the absent son who inherited it. These are the easiest things in the world to write.

However: it will be a pay site. Now don't look so glum. Really, I have to eke a buck here and there. I'm figuring ten dollars for 50 installments. If I can get enough people to sign on board for that, I'll have something to show to a publisher for the third volume. I'm still irritated my publisher passed on it, but we had come to a parting of the ways before that. “Too episodic,” was the verdict by some fresh-out-of-college reader. Well, yes, that was sort of the point of a collection of disconnected short stories with an underlying emergent plot.

Here's what I find interesting: for years I would walk up to resuming the Joe Ohio series, then step back. I wondered if I'd lost him. Sunday I just called up a matchbook, set the timer, and wrote. Everything came back. I'd forgotten: this is the easiest thing I ever wrote.

I also rethought the Matchbook collection e-book, for two reasons: it won't work with Kindle, since it needs color, and it really does work better as a web product – links, videos, audio, that sort of thing. That will remain free, and it's back next week.

(Flotsam is now a Christmas project, which is just as well, because I lost the main essay in the laptop crash. The one thing I hadn't backed up. Gah.)

I just reread today's Joe, and was stunned – no, I wasn't. I hate that word. I have a to-do list manager I don't use because “Stunning” is actually in the
title of the program. A stunning list manager. “Stunning” is a word that
should be reserved lest it leach out its meaning with overuse, but that's
probably happened already. No, I was . . . surprised to see I didn't realize
what I was writing about. It's proof that you don't know your own subtexts, I
guess. Mark this: Installment #56, or the Marion Drive-In Episode, however
it's numbered, was written on my birthday on a hot night in August. And I
didn't see what I was doing. Just remember that.

Joe isn't me. But I know him.

–

Later today: Comic sins! And the usual stuff elsewhere. Really have to update
the sidebar. LA Restaurants '62 is below, if you missed it yesterday.
See you around.

Pass it along, if you wish

63 RESPONSES TO the return of joe ohio

blivet says:
August 10, 2010 at 2:35 pm

James, I'm very happy to hear that Joe Ohio will be back. Ten bucks
is entirely reasonable, and I'm glad to be able to read the rest of the
story in whatever form.

That said, I don't think a printed Joe Ohio novel would suffer at all
from the absence of reproductions of the matchbook covers.

Jay says:
August 10, 2010 at 2:47 pm

@swschrad

Yeah, although some bars/clubs (as opposed to grocery stores selling
beer) are pretty high tech about ID-checking these days. They swipe
it through their machine at the door, etc.

jondru says:
August 10, 2010 at 3:29 pm

Have you looked into doing Joe Ohio (or other content) as a book
through Blurb.com? We've made a couple to commemorate fun
vacations and to celebrate our 100-year-old house, and the results
have been really impressive.

The output is gorgeous, you can build in whatever per-copy profit
you like, and (since it's print-on-demand), no minimum run and no
cost of production to you at all.

Those who want a copy just order it and you get the profit.

Lulu.com is probably better for content that is mostly text, but for
mostly images or a mix, Blurb is pretty cool. Something to consider
maybe.
vv
J.O.

**Mike** says:
August 10, 2010 at 4:38 pm

Thrilled about the Joe Ohio news! I'm in, whatever the format.

**lanczos** says:
August 10, 2010 at 5:23 pm

Best Driver's License Story:

In April 1996, I was flying Austin->DFW on a Friday@5PM to conduct a seminar on Saturday.
5PM-No plane, mechanical.
6PM-Ditto.
7PM-Bad weather at DFW; leave in an hour.
8PM-Ditto.
9:30PM-Ditto.

11:45PM-Left Austin! Arrived DFW: 12:30AM.
(Note: By this time, I could have driven to Dallas[200 miles], back to Austin, and then back to Dallas.)

Took Airport courtesy shuttle to (pre-reserved) rent-car office: A-a-an-n-nd Driver's License had expired in January: No Rental.

Postlude: Called hotel and by a miracle, hotel had kept reservation (with no notification, and 6 hours after I was supposed to check in.)

Took their courtesy shuttle from rent-car to hotel. After the seminar, caught a ride back to DFM on Saturday PM with someone at the seminar who lived near DFW. Monday AM: Drivers' License Office.

**Tom in Clareville** says:
August 10, 2010 at 11:12 pm

I know this is slightly off topic, but in the Avengers trailer, is that Diana Rigg from "The Prisoner" about 1/2 way through?

**jamcool** says:
August 10, 2010 at 11:32 pm

In the UK version of "Life on Mars"..it is a good representation of 1970's Britain including the weekly industrial strikes.

The US version seems to have believed that the late 60s continued into 1973 (it didn’t)

**shesnailie** says:
August 11, 2010 at 12:34 am

_@_v – in other news... it looks like the strib might've finally pulled the plug on the buzz... now we'll never know why marge should've told the truth...

**Baby M** says:
August 11, 2010 at 6:49 am

@shesnailie — Maybe this will explain Marge's motive for murder: http://www.xtranormal.com/watch/2726651/
Aleta says:
August 11, 2010 at 4:49 pm

Happy belated birthday, and Thank You for the Chamber of Commerce photos. I had no idea any CoFC but ours had a spacecraft in its logo.

I too mourn for the Bright Shiny Future of the mid-20th Century, but it's not lost, just… less loud than it used to be. Alas, reliable vertical take off/vertical landing spaceships are still years perhaps decades away – unless we get atomic power for the engines and I don't see that happening soon. So the near future in space will be a little scruffier and closer in flavor to Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines than 2001: A Space Odyssey.

But those of us who remember Colliers and Von Braun and Disney and Heinlein, and Men Into Space… we're still here and we're still working on that dream. Bringing it to reality is just taking a bit longer than we'd like.

fizzbin says:
August 12, 2010 at 9:51 am

Tip o’ the hat to Baby M for LL & friends 😊

M Brown says:
August 21, 2010 at 10:49 pm

About the book: I don’t know about most publishers, but the first book of the webcomic “Order of the Stick” was published in a part b/w, part color format. See: http://www.giantitp.com/

Joni says:
August 22, 2010 at 5:59 pm

Ahh! More Joe Ohio! I confess I absolutely LOVE Joe, and I read through his story at least once every couple of months (and I went to Butler University, so that particular matchbook always cracks me up. I even spent a semester or two answering the phone as my part time job!) I would pay whatever you are charging for more updates, and gladly.

No surprise that Joe is running the business… he seems like a guy with a good head for that sort of thing (dropping out of art school notwithstanding). But what I really want to know about is JANE.
Plumbing. I am not a plumber. Yet I plumb. The wife assumes I can plumb, so I get down under the sink to make things worse, and generally succeed. This problem: the sprayer hose in the laundry room sink leaked from the nozzle. Well, that’s no problem; replace the nozzle. I went to the friendly neighborhood store, bought a nozzle, went home, removed the old one. Or rather tried: unlike every other nozzle in the universe of sink-sprayer nozzles, it could not be unscrewed. It was there forever. Hmm. Well.

I got under the sink, which always makes me realize I would have stayed behind and waved ta-ta to the guys in “The Great Escape” as they went down the claustrophobic tunnel, and I saw where the hose connected. Fine: get a new hose.

Off to a larger hardware store; bought the hose with the nozzle. I had my choice of white or black. The old one was black. I bought a white one. Might as well brighten up the room as long as we’re fixing things. Went home. Got under the sink. Tried to unscrew the old hose.
It was impossible to get the old hose unscrewed. I used every tool I had, including something that allows you to loosen nuts from below, but I couldn’t get purchase.

I would have to take out the sink.

So. I undid four screws on the corner, started loosening the nuts on the water supply, screamed, hit my head, turned off the water, mopped up, continued loosening the nuts on the water supply, undid the PVC sleeve that connected the sink to the drain, and took out the sink. Turned it over. Unscrewed the big honking nut that connected the hose to the faucet.

And discovered that the hose was permanently connected to the faucet. Forever. There was absolutely no way to remove it. Ever. I would have to replace the entire faucet assembly. At this point I wondered if the entire sink was one piece, and could not be altered. Or the entire room. This would end one of two ways: we walled off the room for good, or moved. Since we are refinancing, I doubt the latter.

Next step: put the whole damn thing back together and get some plumber’s putty. I packed it in and cinched it up with duct tape.

Conclusion: it now leaks less. Not a lot less, but less less.

Mission accomplished.

I took a trip to the DMV today, and if you think I’m going to spend that here when I could turn it into a column: hah! I will note that I suffered a small moral dilemma on the way in; I was behind Slow-Walkin’ Dad and Look-At-Me daughter, who had a pace akin to snails on sandpaper; since we were all heading for the same door, and my pace did not exceed theirs by more than 50%, I had no right to pass them. When they entered the building they paused, and got their bearings. Now. It was logical to assume, given her age, that she was here for a driver’s exam, or some such rite of passage; turning left would take them to the library, and that didn’t seem like the point of their outing. (There’s a separate library entrance down the street.) But I took advantage of their confusion to dart, minnow-like, to the door that led to the DMV, knowing I was probably jumping in line.

But can you jump in line before you’re actually at the line? Are you obligated to infer someone’s line destination and poke along behind?

I spoke of this years ago on the AM radio version of the Diner. There are people who we know only as The Confounders, people whose sole purpose is to stand between you and the quick, efficient execution of your plan. Dad and Daughter were Confounders, and I felt only a slight pang when I found myself ahead of them in line. Because the alternative was to wait for them to decide where to go, and as far as I see it if you’ve stopped in a lobby to get your bearings you’ve abandoned all claims to your primacy in line.

On the way out of the DMV – took an hour, but I’d loaded posts for work on the iPhone, and fired them off on the preset intervals – I felt the fist of the
heat, and thought, well, okay, fine, if you must. It's been hot the last few days, and I am not about to complain. I like it. But today the heat seemed tired. The world seemed tired of heat. Tonight we got rain, which should pop up the green, but the last few weeks have taken the lushness off the lawns and the trees, and the world looks scoured and weary, as though Sol Invictus took giant human form and has strode the land applying a cheese grater to everything that grows. (Not one of those cheddar graters, but the ones you use for parmesan.) Something clicked inside as I crossed the parking lot:

Better to be done with summer before summer is done with you.

And better to have those thoughts before August is even half over, eh? Obviously I've been satisfied with summer, that I can even conceive of letting it go without a fight.

I'd planned on steak for dinner, but it was too damned hot for meat. So I stopped off at the cake-eater high-end grocery store, because I know they have tabouli salad and hummus and other fixin's for light summer dining. This is the store I've mentioned before, the one I used to shop at all the time with Natalie, the one that seems like a reminder of the boom days and the good times -

. . . except even then I worried. Worried about something happening. Worried about something coming along to change the ease, the comfort, the complacency. Then it happened. Then it happened again. Perhaps that's how they'll write the history of the era centuries hence, the way we look at an era long past and choose tent-pole events a decade apart -

“Red Owl,” said a tall man with a nametag. He was looking at my shirt. “How about that. The Red Owl.”

I get more comments on this shirt than any others. It has the Red Owl logo. People love it. I wore it to the limerick judging contest, threw it on today to leave the house because around here I live in loose small tank tops b/c of the heat, and that's not public gear.

“Where'd you get that?” he asked.

“Electric Fetus, Franklin Avenue,” I said. “If only I could find one for the SuperValu logo.”

“I don't remember that,” he said. He frowned.

“A chevron,” I said, thinking, that's the only time this week I'll use that word in conversation with a stranger. Possibly this year. “Pretty basic. Then there's Piggly Wiggly.”

“Oh, Piggly Wiggly,” he said. “Right!”

Sensing the subject had exhausted itself, we smiled and nodded and moved along. I checked out.

“Hey,” said the checkout clerk. “Still teaching?”
Hmm. “Actually, I don’t teach. I think you have me confused with someone else. I write.”

“Oh right,” he said. “Still writing?”

“I am still writing.”

He nodded and beeped my hummus. “I thought you taught too. You wrote that piece in the StarTribune about grocery stores? We had that up on the wall in the back.”

“Well, cool. Thanks!”

The other fellow at the end of the belt looked at me, and smiled expectantly.

“Paper,” I said.

—

Black and White world a bit later. And the usual usual. See you around.

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**60 RESPONSES TO paper, i said**

**Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:**

August 11, 2010 at 2:19 pm

@bgbear, I know EXACTLY what you mean. Had an old house built in 1930, still had mostly original plumbing. Woke in the middle of the night to the sound of the Cat, playing with a pinhole leak in the toilet riser. With that old plumbing if you touch anything, the next coupling upstream starts to fizz. Ended up having to replace the entire iron supply system with copper, from the meter. Felt like Dagwood for a while, but it ended up pretty nice.

**swschrad says:**

August 11, 2010 at 2:20 pm

@bgbear: ah, excellent. congratulations for not just putting Con-tact paper over the whole thing and putting a bucket underneath in the basement.

our bathroom redo came about because we finally got Son #2 to cough up the whirlpool tub sitting uninstalled in the foreclosed house he bought. a tub he was not going to use, he wanted a multi-jet shower. also, the vanity finish (hoovered) and we had some crumminess starting in the salmon tile wall around the existing tub.

oh, the ugly holes in the joists under the tub when we pulled that up and out. had to sister two of them and rerun the drain, as well as the vent because we needed to move a closet wall.

nice results. almost worth the fooling around.
Kevin says:
August 11, 2010 at 2:21 pm

Re “Summer,” here in the Bay Area the sun has not shone before noon for four weeks now. Here it is, mid-August, and the high will be in the mid-60s. It makes one appreciate the outlook on life of a Poe character.

swschrad says:
August 11, 2010 at 2:24 pm

@Wagner von: redid all the folks' pressure plumbing in the early 80s with copper. the white sediment clogs in Fargo plumbing keep water inside that old galvanized iron stuff.

you don’t want to bang too hard and chip that inside, believe me.

the professional plumbers who ran the new sewer and water to the street a year ago? just heaved up on the copper to the water meter instead of cutting and fitting it, the meter is at a 30 degree angle now. didn’t want to look up and see what they did above to my pretty L-wall plumbing.

GardenStater says:
August 11, 2010 at 3:39 pm

@hpoulter: “A lot of confounders are not old. They are just slow and oblivious.”

That's the truth. I've had to stop in my tracks several times because someone younger than I was walking straight toward me, eyes focused on the gadget they were using to send a text message, instead of looking where they were going.

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 11, 2010 at 3:40 pm

Watch it there sonny! I'm due for my own appointment with geezerdom in just a few more weeks when I hit hit 60. Simply amazing. I didn't think I'd make it past 35 for a while there in the 70's.

Statler and Waldorf, those two great Muppets geezer characters in the balcony who so relentlessly ridiculed Fozzy Bear seem like cohorts to me these days.

Ben says:
August 11, 2010 at 4:42 pm

“...but I haven't yet gotten rid of the eye twitch or my propensity to panic whenever I hear water running.”

I know that feeling… The first time I tackled a major plumbing job, there wasn't even anything broken, just bad water pressure, so I decided to replace all the old (1927-ish) steel pipe with new copper, which meant replacing a segment from the water meter to where the hot water heater used to be (everything past that point was already updated to copper), and I also replaced the bath fixture while I was at it… Anyway, getting the hang of sweat-soldering copper pipes took at least 5 tries, and every failed attempt started with a false sense of accomplishment and ended the following morning with sweeping up the water from the basement floor, and
lots of cursing. On the 5th and final try, I spent the night trying to sleep on an uncomfortable inflatable couch in the cold basement, and every time the furnace kicked on I thought it was the sound of a leak springing. I didn't sleep much that night. But it turned out I was successful that time, and finally had mastered the technique of getting the copper to suck up the solder.

Now I'm going through a similar experience with PVC because the new house I bought hadn't been properly winterized, and the lawn sprinkler system (which uses PVC) had cracked over winter. I'm on attempt #2 right now, after the first one leaked as soon as I put half pressure in the pipe (and I waited a full day for the glue to cure). In a few hours I'll turn it on again and find out if I got the technique down or not... Fortunately this is just the sprinkler system, not critical for my survival, although the grass is quite dead now.

browniejr says:
August 11, 2010 at 4:42 pm

Mr. Lileks- Plumbing tip: Duct tape probably will not last, despite its legendary utility and uses. You need a roll of a specialty plumbing tape that sticks to itself, and not the pipe or anything else. It is a certain type of rubber that stretches and seals against leaks. I think there is actually an infomercial going around that has it in all kinds of pretty colors, but you can get a roll of black for about 5 bucks at any good hardware store. Get some and keep it in a convenient place for your next plumbing crisis. (Learned this the hard way when I had a leaky fitting on my refrigerator water dispenser- been ~4 years now, with no leaks.)

swschrad says:
August 11, 2010 at 5:15 pm

@Ben: prime the PVC with, yes, PVC primer, and you're set for glue. it should harden up to pressure within 10 minutes. (it's glue and go with PVC conduit, which takes no pressure except the wire pulling, there a couple minutes is all I need.)

where you had the copper transition to galvanized is where the clog happened. at the transitions, all the incoming scale deposits drop like a rock.

provided you don't have the pipe hole up due to electrolytic corrosion there, first. you have to use an inert transition fitting (brass, plastic, or a plastic insulating insert) where you change metal pipe styles.

Mahariness of Franistan says:
August 12, 2010 at 9:47 am

Hoses and nozzles are very easy to repair. My 5 year old daughter fixed both.

I guess it's easier to buy new ones.
Still not finding what you're looking for?
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!
Note to anyone who runs a camp:

“Hello, lucky parent of a wonderful child, who’s having a great happy time being in perfect health, this is the camp calling to tell you she’s not only enjoying her stay, but looking forward to seeing you without any broken bones or concussions. As long as I have you on the phone, we have a question about which bus you wish her to take when she returns.”

This is preferable to the usual greeting, which is “I am calling from Camp Grenada, and I am contacting you because you are listed as the parent or guardian.” Because then you think your child is dead. Okay? Okay. I didn’t even get the call – my wife did, at work, which is odd because I’m the
primary contact, with two numbers. But I’m thinking that maaaaybe the organization figured Dad would be at the office doing Seriously Important Dad Stuff, and might possibly be in a meeting, and Mom was the one who’d be close to the home phone. Not an assumption I’d make.

In fact earlier today I’d had to confront the wonderful world of modern assumptions. The appraiser was coming by judge how much this pile is worth, and since he was due at the exact same time I was supposed to start a podcast, I left a note on the door saying “come around to the side door, it’s open.” But what salutation to you? Mr. Appraiser? What if it was a female-type appraiser, and she bristled at the assumption, and was thus inclined to lowball the house? On the other hand, “Appraiser” seemed abrupt. “Dear Appraiser” seemed archaic and epistolary. I just went with Appraiser.

It was a she.

I don’t have trouble with sex-based terms like waitress and waiter – I prefer them to the horrible “waitron,” which was the vogue in my waiter days. It implied a gender-neutral automaton would be bringing you your flapjacks and sausages. This was actually the case for a few of the staff, but in general if half your staff wears vests, and the other half wears dresses, yeah, you can go with waiter and waitress. It seems impossible that they wore dresses, but they did – and nylons, too. The dresses were brown with white lines down the front, made of a type of synthetic fabric that had been designed specifically for its ability to repel all stains. I think it was later marketed as “Kevlar.”

Actor, actress – these still seem to have currency, despite the efforts of some. Wonder why we never invented “Writer” and “Writress.” The one I mourn the most: Aviatrix. For that matter, wouldn’t you have waiters and waitrixes? Actors and Actrixes?

Appraitrix?

Anyway. “So Natalie is fine,” my wife said on the phone as I drove home from the office – turns out Important Dad was at the office doing Important Office Dad Stuff – “but the camp called to see which bus she should take.”

My wife knows how to preface these things. And I still had a little bump-up in the heart rate, just imagining what they could have called about.

Good day – hot as hell again. Did the first video from Studio B, aka the Basement. I dismantled the garage greenscreen set-up and started working
on the basement version, because in the winter it’s freezing in the garage, and the noise is annoying. Yesterday I started to do a video, and the rain started. Damn. Had to wait; then the planes came. DAMN. Now I’m in the area I once called the Battle Bridge, and it’s like a concession that summer will end eventually. Foresight always has its downsides, if you’re inclined to read the implications.

I did enjoy not having to get my daughter from someplace at 3. Everything that has to do with kids always seems to end at 3. After a few days I retrain myself, and 3 means nothing – it seems a wonderful release, a reminder of days long long past when the parental tumblers didn’t start to click into place around 2:36. So I wrote, I napped, I wrote a Joe Ohio, worked out, relaxed, revised yesterday’s estimation of summer’s eventual end – greedy for more, I am. Today obliged: rain, sun, warmth, clement night loud with chanting crickets and a big-arse June bug banging around the gazebo, the illusion of Summer Eternal. I even found in my fathomless iTunes library an album from 1987 I’d ripped and forgotten, some quasi-jazz from the Yellowjackets I’d listened to while writing the first novel. Music can be a time capsule – you don’t bury it, you just forget it, but one day you stub your toe on it, dig it up, and a time and place is brought to life. We live the daily life through our eyes and the top-level brain functions, but in the end it’s sound and smell that yank us back.

This annoys me. As a Civilized Person this annoys me. I’d like to think things are contained in my head in neat indexed folders I can access by keywords, not some elemental stink that trips the switches in the lizard-brain segment. What’s even more irritating is that the scent-memories seem triggered only in reverse – you don’t note the moment the bond is forged between a place and a smell, you only recollect the place when the aroma occurs again in a disparate locale.

Questions, then: why do I associate chlorine with freedom?

What’s the scent that pitches you back?

**Column night:** back to work. Beat as hell. Happy. Cooking up many things for you to enjoy tomorrow. It’s the Curse of Thursday! See you in the usual places.

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**92 RESPONSES TO muddah, faddah**

winterhawk says:
August 12, 2010 at 10:48 am

Diesel. Even after all these years, the smell of diesel reminds me of childhood trips to Disneyland. It was the trams in the parking lot—the first sense that the trip was *real* and soon I would be experiencing Disney goodness.
I'm not nearly as much of a Disneyland fan these days (I know, blasphemy, sacrilege and all that) but even now that smell always has happy associations for me.

NukemHill says:
August 12, 2010 at 10:56 am

As has been pointed out—chlorine == pool.
For me? The smell of freshly cut grass. Best smell in the world. It means Spring; which leads, inexorably, to Summer.

QED.

GardenStater says:
August 12, 2010 at 11:02 am

“Cheap cigars remind me of my late uncle in a good way.”
My grandfather smoked three cigars a day (one after each meal). Muriels, White Owls, and Dutch Masters were his stogies of choice.
I still love the smell of cigar smoke.
And Grandpa lived to be 94.

Erica says:
August 12, 2010 at 11:07 am

Having been raised on a dairy farm and not living anywhere near one now, the sweet sweet smells of fresh cut grass for hay bales and of cow manure are powerful. Not only do they transport me to my youth, but they immediately conjure my dad. I can’t breathe enough of it in. I imagine my dad laughs knowing I think of him when I’m near bovine poop.
And there are authors and authoresses. Cruel for those with a speech impediment.

strychnine says:
August 12, 2010 at 11:07 am

I personally can’t understand the (recent?) convention where anyone who acts in front of a camera is an “actor”. Was it demeaning or sexist to be an “actress”? For someone to demand to be called an “actor” because it seems more important than the lesser “actress” basically affirms that “actress” is the lesser. Which it isn’t.

I never once snickered when hearing “actress”, as though we all just KNEW she wasn’t good enough to be an actor…

My rule?
If the preponderance of people involved in an occupation are male (or female) then the simple common male (or female) term is fine. That is, unless you actually SEE the individual and can (reasonably) discern their sex.

Therefore, until I see a woman coming out of it, it is a “manhole”, not a “personhole”. And when the of-course-equally-capable female electrical worker comes out of the hole into daylight, I will, with no trace of sexism, point out to whomever I’m with that “That there, for
the moment at least, is a womanhole"

Very simple.

Another cuppla examples... “Did the mailman come yet?” “Yes she did.”

“How do you like the night nurse? Is she pleasant enough?” “Yes, he was.”

When the mail is delivered by a roughly 50/50 male-to-femal mix, maybe I'll ask “Did the mail come?”, but to worry and agonize over whether the term “mailman” is correct or disrespectful is disproportionate to the potential offense.

Gromulin says:
August 12, 2010 at 11:12 am

I recently re-discovered a smell that instantly kicked in the happy endorphines: Eau du Boat. There's a certain smell that ski /runabouts get. Part gas, part lake, part fiberglass, part wet carpet, wet towels, hot vinyl...all happy. It's been 10 years since we sold the last one, and in shopping for a new(er) one lately I keep getting these rushes of happy memories every time I get in a prospective purchase, and it's all based on the smell.

Cambias says:
August 12, 2010 at 11:19 am

I guess I wasn't outdoorsy enough: for me the Proust smell is old, slightly decaying books. The smell of a used bookstore. Add the odor of a gas-fired space heater and I'm thirteen again, haunting the Maple Street bookstore in New Orleans on a wet winter afternoon.

Ben says:
August 12, 2010 at 11:19 am

A cigar. Everytime I smell one I'm in the bleachers at Sportsman's Park with my dad. Gets me every time!

the wolf says:
August 12, 2010 at 11:37 am

“But I'm thinking that maaaaybe the organization figured Dad would be at the office doing Seriously Important Dad Stuff, and might possibly be in a meeting, and Mom was the one who'd be close to the home phone.”

That's one possibility. Another is that, since you are the male half you were assumed to be an incompetent dunderhead who couldn't handle a simple decision regarding your daughter and a bus ride.

Smells...there are a lot that trigger memories for me but one that comes to mind is a Jessica McClintock perfume that an ex-girlfriend used. Occasionally I will get a whiff somewhere in public and my mind gets pulled right back to 1991.

HelloBall says:
August 12, 2010 at 11:45 am

Ditto diesel = Disneyland.
I wonder if the “vague licorice smell” of something growing along the river is akin to the summer-day smell of the redwood-choked foothills I commute through to get to Silicon Valley.

As a little guy I had been intrigued by that smell on our many day trips up to the woods, but it was only after my first encounters with, er, liquid puberty, that it has triggered a different sort of memory.

One hot afternoon when my son was 11 or 12, I rolled the window down and made a roundabout comment about the smell as we were driving over the hill. He got wide-eyed and blushed, and he quickly changed the subject. It was kind of good to know it wasn’t just me!

Enjoy your meal! Sorry.

xrayguy says:
August 12, 2010 at 11:55 am

What scent? Headshops or headshoppes, whichever. Something is gone now that we have lost the smell from my teen days of sandlewood, patchouli, sweat and a vague uncurrent of something...hempy in those shops. Takes me back to trolling thru' album stacks and “Zap comix” at Dirt Cheap.

swschrad says:
August 12, 2010 at 12:04 pm

@the wolf: that sounds like the thinking process of a typical dunderheaded man.

smells: acetone takes me to 1962 and the film editing bench. there is a dusty waxy hot smell peculiar to old tube electronics that takes me back to master control. pork roast with a layer of onions on it, finishing up on the stove or in the over, takes me back to the living room floor, in front of the heat register, around 1960.

pine and spruce aplenty, not the chemical air-freshener substitute, take me to a slightly damp morning at a campsite in the wilderness. just waiting for a loon to sing.

browniejr says:
August 12, 2010 at 12:10 pm

@strychnine- “There are no small parts, only small actors”- Stanislavski

http://urlmin.com/images/mini_me.gif

hpoulter says:
August 12, 2010 at 12:32 pm

“vague licorice smell along the river in the summer” – probably wild fennel. It grows almost everywhere, and has a nice licorice-y smell.

swschrad says:
August 12, 2010 at 12:42 pm

@hpoulter: could be anise, too. grows in low areas, deer like it. commercial licorice is actually flavored with anise root.
Spud says:
August 12, 2010 at 12:53 pm

I don’t get to smell it anymore, but every summer whilst growing up we would go to Omaha for family visits, and you knew you were close to the end of the trip when the stockyard smell wafted through your nostrils. It got stronger right at the end as gramma lived close to the meat packing plant (late 1960’s). You got used to it, after a while 😃.

Otherwise, it’s happened twice where I have smelled some girly perfume that was close to what my girlfriend wore back in college. I find myself having to remember to breathe and restart my heartbeat. Talk about the lizard brain coming out!

I don’t know if they use it anymore, but the smell of the cedar stuff janitors would use to cover up and clean kid’s barf at school is quite distinctive. Don’t know if it would make me want to hurl if I smelled it now …

Aleta says:
August 12, 2010 at 1:07 pm

Is chlorine the smell of freedom because pools are disinfected with it, and the one thing uppermost in your mind as a youngster, as summer approached, was a run and splash in the newly opened pool, one that opened after school closed?

For me, a few scent-and-song specific memories:
Castor oil: hot summer days, model airplanes buzzing and snarling in the air, silk and balsa wood in my hands, the feel of my latest creation as I do weight-and-balance before flight.

Over-ripe bananas: I’m down in the cool twilight of the basement, painting airplanes.

Peppermint: Instantly back in the kitchen, baking. In the winter I kept a small cast iron pan on a back burner filled with water with a few drops of peppermint oil in it, to sweeten the air in the closed-up house.

“Summer in the City”: I’m back working on Gemini and other space stuff. I can see the dull gray lab walls and hear the soft chuff of the bell-jar vacuum pumps.

“The Letter” by the Boxtops: instantly I’m in engineering school. The song expressed my loneliness: I was happier when I was working.

JeffdeCal says:
August 12, 2010 at 1:13 pm

Dictionary.com informs that “-trix” is a feminine suffix that comes into English from Latin “agent” nouns (indicating someone who does something) that end in “-tor.” The examples given in an early post all follow this form: administrator, orator, benefactor, inheritor, aviator, actor.

So nouns ending in “-er” don’t qualify, e.g., waiter.

Of course, English never felt is necessary to use the suffix as a hard and fast grammatical rule as Latin did, so only a handful made it
into common usage. The suffix was already waning when gender-neutral speech codes arose in the last generation, an off-brance of the overall silly political correctness ideology. I'm 50, and I've only bumped into a very few of these in common use, and mostly from watching re-runs of old B&W shows from the 50s like Perry Mason and such. Their use in the legal world is disappearing at a slower rate, due to the effect of the Latin tradition and the fact that legal language is less affected by trends.

As for the word “sex” falling on, um, hard times (sorry): “sex” indicates biology: “male” or “female;” “gender” describes attributes; whether something is “masculine” or “feminine.” Gender is plastic: sex is fixed. That's why “sex” has been usurped by “gender:” the rise of social pressure to reject the idea that if you are biologically male (your sex), then masculinity is naturally expected. Now we just have gender, which skips right over biology to arrive at attributes.

Sex = male or female (fixed in biology)
Gender = masculine or feminine (attributes)

My father operated earth-moving machinery for 37 years, so my childhood nostalgic smells are: diesel fuel, dirt, the tang of ozone from welding; and Brylcreem & Skin Bracer. I'm still using the Skin Bracer.

JeffdeCal says:
August 12, 2010 at 1:16 pm

Oh: by eliminating the “-trix” suffix, I think we are losing something that never really hurt anyone. And my mailman is a charming woman who is very good at her job.

DryOwlTacos says:
August 12, 2010 at 1:26 pm

Chlorine + coconut oil = summers at the swimming pool, every day. I never smell pool chemicals and suntan lotion without thinking of those uncomplicated days of childhood, even though I sometimes go years between visits to swimming pools. I must amend that. Do I need to buy a new swimsuit if the knees and elbows in my old one are still good?

Tory Mitchell says:
August 12, 2010 at 1:35 pm

Dirt, and road tar; verily, the smell of Terra Firma. When I smell them together, I am a young boy again.

Wagner von Drupen-Sachs says:
August 12, 2010 at 1:42 pm

“The Oscars (TM), (C), (R), (K), (etc)” still use Actor and Actress, and you'd think they'd be the most PC bunch in the world. But Hollywood is sometimes a little bit hypocri– I mean inconsistent, isn't it.

Smells: when the coffeemaker is just about to boil dry, it smells like mmm, BACON.
Brisko says:
August 12, 2010 at 1:46 pm

@ xrayguy

Headshops are alive and well. I walk by one downtown in my city at least once a week, and I know of two others in my area.

I don’t smoke and I’m not a hippy, so I’ve only been in the one downtown once, but they still have the hippy oils, candles, and hundreds of pieces of smoking paraphrenalia (along with many huge signs saying they are for tobacco use only and any indication you will use them for other purposes will get you ejected from the store).

They replaced the magazines and comics with sex toys, though.

Kevin says:
August 12, 2010 at 2:10 pm

2 smells for me, both probably rather rare:
The first is actually a combination taste/smell, and I encounter it extremely rarely, but it reminds me of coming out of the anesthetic after each of my knee surgeries.
The second is much more evocative (and wonderful): the smell of burnt castor oil takes me back to the races at Ascot Park in the 1960s, to which our father took us fairly often. It was quite a thrill, decades later, to meet Skip van Leeuwen in person, who was so dominant at Ascot in the 60s.

Chris M. says:
August 12, 2010 at 2:22 pm

> Wonder why we never invented “Writer” and “Writress.”

Actually, we did. “Author” and “authoress” used to be common terms. “Authoress” went out of fashion before the 20th century, though.

Patrick McClure says:
August 12, 2010 at 2:28 pm

“They replaced the magazines and comics with sex toys, though.”

So that’s why people are reading less nowadays.

Uncle Joe says:
August 12, 2010 at 2:40 pm

The smell of salami makes me think of “My Son the Folk Singer.”

Scorebord44 says:
August 12, 2010 at 3:01 pm

lunch time walking into what they call a middle school now (junior high back in the day).

The smell of Tator Tots. or the combined smell of everything they have cooked again and again and again. In every school in the district I work (not a teacher) they all smell the same and they all smell EXACTLY like my junior high did back in like 1972.
Mark E. Hurling says:
August 12, 2010 at 3:36 pm

@Terry Fitz,

That railroad smell is probably the creosote on the ties. So you hitched freight train rides on the southwest side of Chicago? Must have been around the Santa Fe Nerska yards just a few blocks from Marie Sklodowska Curie High School. Am I close? By the way, the Santa Fe is now known as the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF). At one point in my working life my job as a special agent for the railroad was to prevent such life threatening antics (and hence not pay out claims to survivors who slipped under the wheels).

Normie says:
August 12, 2010 at 3:40 pm

@Joe, the first commenter – you may be remembering the scent of tea olive (Osmanthus fragrans). My family lived on a US Army base in Japan from 1969-1972, during my middle school years, and it wasn’t until 1990 that I smelled a tea olive blooming here in Florida and it triggered a memory that I didn’t even know existed. Apparently it grew in the area we lived but I never acknowledged it until it appeared again. Now it’s one of my favorite landscape shrubs and always have it growing wherever I live.

Funny thing, my oldest brother was visiting my home a few years ago and smelled the tea olives while walking through the yard. He immediately got a faraway look in his eyes and asked what it was; it reminded him of Camp Zama.

swschrad says:
August 12, 2010 at 3:46 pm

@Wagner von: actually, when the coffeepot is boiled dry, it smells like metal pickling. that's when they rough and clean it up in a hydrochloric acid solution before dumping it into plating tanks.

man, that's rough smellin' stuff. somebody's making chrome near work again. almost makes me wish they'd take that new 20 foot topper off the stack at the plastic plant. the waste styrene isn't bad in light concentrations.

pauljose says:
August 12, 2010 at 4:13 pm

Smells...

Growing up as an Air Force brat, the smell of fresh house paint has always taken me back to the many moves of my childhood, inspiring a mix of possibilities (new base to explore, what's the PX like) and terror (new school, new bullies...).

Having served in the Navy, every once in a while I need to make a pilgrimage to a warship museum for a fix of “ship smell”…diesel, paint, cigarettes, coffee and fried food….for the full effect, I need to find a submarine museum, as there's an additional ammoniac smell from the air scrubbers...

AnnaN says:
August 12, 2010 at 9:04 pm
@Spud

Here in Boulder County we call that Eau de Greeley whenever the winds shift and come in from a westerly direction.

AnnaN says:
August 12, 2010 at 9:06 pm

Brisko: “They replaced the magazines and comics with sex toys, though.”

Well, at least print died for a good cause.

Nick Fury says:
August 12, 2010 at 11:12 pm

…..Camp Lake Hubert?

Terry Fitz says:
August 13, 2010 at 9:27 am

Mark E. Hurling –

You are pretty close, but the yard I’m remembering was between 75th & 79th between Oakley & Western Av. We’d typically hop on behind Dawes Park (80th & Damen) by running alongside with our right hands on the ladders until we were sure we were at speed with the train, then hoisting ourselves up and catching the bottom rung with our feet. The best (scariest) ride took my pal and I all the way to 87th St. By that time we thought if we didn’t get off NOW we would be on those ladders for a long, long time. Sounds like you had a similar experience?

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 13, 2010 at 10:11 am

I was close but not quite correct. That particular yard (and I’m reaching waaay back down the memory hole here with Mr. Peabody and Sherman) was probably a Burlington Northern railyard. That one is a few miles further East of the Polish neighborhood around the Nerska yard. Also close to Five Holy Martyrs Church. Boy, did that neighborhood go up for grabs when John Paul II visited it in the late 70′s. There were probably more Poles around that parish than there were in Warsaw that day.

Ben says:
August 13, 2010 at 2:31 pm

Forgot about the train smell… That one brings me back too. Growing up just blocks from a busy train track in southeast Minneapolis, and just a few more blocks from a very large train yard (I can’t think of its name, but I seem to remember hearing that it’s one of the largest train yards in the country…), I spent a lot of time playing around on the train tracks. We would craw up underneath the bridges over the neighborhood streets, and flatten coins on the rails when trains go by, and just generally enjoy the industrialness of it all. I don’t smell that smell much anymore because I don’t find myself near train tracks much anymore, but when I do catch a whiff of that smell, it brings me back…
**Beidar** says:
August 14, 2010 at 1:33 am

Legal language — and especially, perhaps oddly, probate & estates law — has a lot of “[something]trix” words. My second favorite is “Executrix,” meaning she who's been nominated and appointed to execute the terms of a will, sounds to my ears much like the decidedly non-judicial word “Dominatrix.” But my favorite, for reasons I will leave you to infer, refers to a woman who's executed a last will and testament: the “Testatrix.” Mmmm.

**Mal** says:
August 15, 2010 at 6:50 pm

No hesitation: mixed gas.

**Tracye** says:
August 15, 2010 at 9:20 pm

Opening a fresh can of coffee takes me back to eight years old and hot summer city nights catching lightening bugs. We poked holes in the plastic lids and stored our bugs in old coffee cans. Not sure why in retrospect, as we couldn't enjoy their lights in a can (no jars?? why??), but the smell of coffee will forever remind me of catching lightening bugs as a kid.

**Foxfier** says:
August 24, 2010 at 10:32 pm

Gin smells like Christmas.

... That sounds like it's going to end bad, but it doesn't. Gin smells like juniper, and I grew up in the California/Nevada highlands, where juniper is a weed-tree and thus very easy to get for Christmas. (looks nice, and doesn't shed needles, too)

I didn't realize that gin smelled like Christmas until my ship was in the Philippines, homesick, and gin and tonic was the only drink I could think of.
The standard Thursday night shut-down is in FULL FORCE, having spent the day yapping and typing and the rest. Since I start work on Sunday night this is more or less my Friday, except there's another Friday appended to the week afterwards. Ah well. There's plenty to keep you entertained here today, starting with this:

**FRIDAY!**

The standard Thursday night shut-down is in FULL FORCE, having spent the day yapping and typing and the rest. Since I start work on Sunday night this is more or less my Friday, except there's another Friday appended to the week afterwards. Ah well. There's plenty to keep you entertained here today, starting with this:

**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.

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**A BOOK I RECOMMEND**
I don't have the full ad booklet, but there's a link in the Covers section of the Gallery of Regrettable Food. The book was designed by an illustrator now forgotten, Vernon Grant, who also did Snap, Crackle, and Pop. (There was a fourth one, Gunmo, but his name suggested the cereal went soggy, and he moved behind the scenes.) Grant died in 1990, and I'm certain no one knew his name. I didn't. All the illustrators are forgotten. If you're not a famous big-name painter from the Renaissance or Norman Rockwell or a comic book artist, no one knows or cares.

I spend too much time studying old ads, so I found these “retro” ads for modern social networking programs to be annoying, as only a purist and an anal-retentive font dork can be annoyed. Nearly everything is wrong. The art, which clever, is wrong. The typefaces are mostly wrong. Making all the pages look yellowed is wrong: most of my magazines from the 30s are slightly yellowed and faded; the stuff from the 50s and 60s, which I gather is the era in which the ads are set, is bright white. But it's the copy that really stinks:
Striking, miraculous? *Share abundant*? “Facebook is the enchantment ‘next-look’ in social team-ups. Eloquent economical and modern examples of communication adequate for our times.” This is bad copy run twice through an online translator. It appears the originators are from Brazil, which may explain why they got it all wrong. I certainly couldn’t tell you what old ads from Brazil looked like, and if I tried I’d probably be more off the mark than they were.

But folks here in the states who might know better loved these, possibly because they looked “retro” and that was enough. Now, I don’t meant to deride anyone who looked at them, had a larf, and moved on; that’s the internet, and clenchy little purists just spoil the fun for everyone, provided anyone takes them seriously. But a few decades ago there was a contretemps over “cultural literacy,” whether people were aware of the details that preceded the incredibly important NOW. Handwringing there was, to quote Yoda, and there were books and quizzes, and then most people went along imagining that the interesting part of history began around their second year in high school, when there was that one show they watched every week and
even though it's kinda lame now they see clips on YouTube and feel old because the 90s were THE BEST 1111

Not saying everyone should be acquainted with the subtle variations in woodcut styles used to illustrate the frontispiece of an 18th century monograph, but the internet is built on the remix culture, and without knowledge of what you're remixing it all comes down to asking “Will It Blend?” And of course it does. So? So nothing.

So that's what I think of the ads, if you were wondering.

Anyway! Here are a few updates to amuse you, if you're in need of it. Least to greatest:

Two, yes two 100 Mysteries installments; the second does not have Megan Fox, but you'd be excused for thinking it did if you lost your glasses and had a few. Start HERE.

1930s ads: four examples in Miscellany.

The Gallery of Regrettable Food continues its triumphant redesign / new content spree with ten more covers. Remember, just click on the cover to go to the next one. There is a cussword in #39. These things happen.

And also . . . this. Vegetarians strongly advised to skip this one.

Strib column in the usual place - no live link at the moment, but you should be able to find it if you scroll down to the tiny bar where the online site displays the columnists for about seven minutes.

Aaaand tumblr and PopCrush and twitter and man, I am done. I thank you for your patronage and patience, and I’ll see you on Monday . . . with something cool. Have a grand weekend!

---

**Pass it along, if you wish**

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**66 RESPONSES TO friday!**

RLR says:
August 13, 2010 at 2:37 pm

“Bone Taint and Pump The Pickle” is now my second-favorite band name ever.

terrace says:
August 13, 2010 at 3:01 pm

My memories of Junket are of the love/hate variety. On the one hand, it always seemed to me the “Brand-X” dessert, like “Hey ma, if you're gonna make it in the same bowls as Jello, why can't we just have Jello?” On the other hand, it was dessert after all, never an inherently bad thing. The fact that Junket was similar to Jello in
some ways, but opaque rather than clear intrigued me in the way that anything else that contradicted conventional reality did. Something that looked like it should be hard but was in reality wiggly. I probably enjoyed playing with it more than eating it. I remember the flavor intensity being distinctly on the wimpy side.

DryOwlTacos says:
August 13, 2010 at 3:35 pm

Sorry, I didn't find the lamb-slaughtering manual funny at all. Linda McCartney is spinning in her grave.

The foods on the recipe book covers didn't do much to improve the mood. Bleah.

tterrace says:
August 13, 2010 at 3:39 pm

You ought to see the way wolves do it.

Cristiane says:
August 13, 2010 at 4:39 pm

The main difference between Ava Gardner and Megan Fox (blasphemous comparison!) is that Ms. Gardner never sported that utterly vacant expression (not to mention the lack of any gift for acting) that is such a large component of Ms. Fox's, um, talent. Not even in her earliest MGM bit-part days, when they were trying to beat the North Carolina accent out of her. As far as I'm concerned, she was the most beautiful woman EVER in movies. Elizabeth Taylor and Vivien Leigh may have been the ultimate in pretty; but Ava was BEAUTIFUL. Grace Kelly comes in a close second, though.

shesnailie says:
August 13, 2010 at 9:21 pm

_@_v – i'm just dreading the day you find an escargot cookbook worth commenting on...

Bohemienne says:
August 13, 2010 at 10:16 pm

The mash-up culture will probably speed us sooner than we think toward this comic strip's conclusion:

http://xkcd.com/771/

Popsmush says:
August 14, 2010 at 12:24 am

Insult, sin- and blasphemy! Relative to the medium, of course. What Fox has achieved, she did so through plastic surgery and plastic acting and probably plastic everything. Anyone who has a big, ugly tattoo of Marilyn Monroe is trying to tell you something.

Just because you make a living off Pop(Crush), don’t let it steal your soul! Just saying.

Congratulations on your upcoming #100 Mystery. It's been all very enjoyable, I hope you cook up something similar to it once it's done.
Cory says:
August 14, 2010 at 4:09 am

Christiane:
Get Gene Tierney in there somewhere

cheryl conrad says:
August 14, 2010 at 8:15 pm

I'm at an arizona cardinals game in phx. Daughter in mpls at wa frost and all excited that james lileks is sitting behind her. I have 25 texts from her. Please james go say hello. She's a huge fan. Thank you from cheryl in phoenix.

xrayguy says:
August 14, 2010 at 10:25 pm

Font dork?

cityites are odd says:
August 14, 2010 at 11:38 pm

After reading your thing (you're quite preoccupied – aren't you?), I bought the Morton Home Meat Curing Book at Amazon for $9. Looks to be a good book to have around the farm. Good bye.

browniejr says:
August 14, 2010 at 11:52 pm


I believe Mr. Lileks should have said “Font Geek” …

GardenStater says:
August 15, 2010 at 2:15 pm

@Cristiane: “Ms. Gardner never sported that utterly vacant expression”

Not to mention the idiotic tattoos. What is THAT all about?

Must disagree re: Grace Kelly. To me, Grace was one of the most beautiful women ever. But, hey–potato, potato, etc.

Cristiane says:
August 15, 2010 at 4:36 pm

Hey, hey, hey Garden Stater: I just said that Grace Kelly was second only to Ava Gardner. Pretty fast company, that.

RPD says:
August 18, 2010 at 10:23 am

Well, days late (I've been on vacation). I gotta wonder who the home lamb slaughter kit is aimed at really. Rural folks who do this, learn it as kids from those who already know the process. So who needs this book? The suburbanite DIYer who wants to try something new?
A weekend of odd, neurotic weather. Rain! Sun! Rain during sun! Hot and humid, then cool and dry ten minutes later. Torrents of rain in the evening, temps 20 degrees below what they were the night before, and now a pale blue sky with a breeze like a preview of September, approved for all audiences. Usually when the weather is odd I get more done, but this summer I've gotten used to writing outside all the time, feet up, sipping something, pretending it will be like this forever. It won't, of course – but just as I wrote that a cicada started up, reminding me they're still around. One day they go. No one ever notices. Sometimes I forget about them until I hear the first one the next year. If only they'd sign off in style – not those little razzing Bronx cheers, but maybe something coordinated. Have them all buzz at the same time, and do shave-and-a-hair-cut, then wait until the next summer to kick off the season with two-bits.

Nothing really notable for the weekend. I think the most exciting part was finding out that Seven of Nine is not only on Twitter, she follows me and has one of my books. Well, heck yeah. I took some stuff to the second-hand store. Wife cleared out the shed. I cleaned out half of the basement Closet of Shame, which became stuffed with stuff again, somehow. Some items went to the antique store, to put them back into the stream of ephemera. The store had redesigned again – they change their look all the time, but this was really something:
Immense light-fixtures from some old restaurant, and below, 30s lino:
Someone had dumped off a bunch of old lids:

Who saves this stuff? People like me, I suppose, but lids? Maybe they were used to hold nuts or screws. Maybe some kid set them aside but didn’t get around to blowing them in the air on the Fourth. (I used to take baby-food lids, empty many Black Cats on a stone, put the lid over the powder, light it, and put it into orbit.)

Watched some of “Shutter Island,” which began with great dark ominous wonderfulness, and turned into sludge; haven’t finished it. I started to drift during the 15th dream sequence. Odd how people in dreams always seem
themselves from the 3rd person perspective, and have symbolic, surrealistic dreams that have great relevance to the plot. Also, the evil government seems to be involved. Much more satisfying was “Princess and the Frog,” which I watched because it’s Disney and I need to know what they’re up to, so all the emails and marketing pitches make sense. I was surprised how much I enjoyed it. It was not everything I don’t like about modern animated movies. Something I noted I may have noted before but forgot: in the opening Disney sequence, there’s the castle:

![Castle Image](image)

Close-up:

![Close-up Image](image)

I swear I’ve posted this before, but maybe not. So. That references . . . what?

**Anyway.** Last Friday I said I’d have something cool today, and I hope this qualifies. It’s a new site devoted to Google Street Views of microscopic North Dakota downtowns, with a particular eye towards the old buildings that seemed to anticipate a grander future than the towns ended up having. Some are modest little brick banks; others are three-story buildings with the
obligatory Opera House; others are strange, spooky old structures long abandoned. It's frustrating to note the towns that the Google drivers skipped – what, they were on a schedule? Figured they'd come back next time? – but they did quite a few towns, and for this I'm grateful. Each page links to the town's website, if it has one, and these range from rote-n-homey to impressive. Every one's glad you're here. Every one would love you to visit. Every one knows that once you come you'll want to stay.

Fat chance of that, for me – I love these places, but I would go insane if I lived there. Especially in winter. You may agree, or not; if nothing else, after you've viewed them all, go back and use the window to explore a bit. Each one of these pages is like a teleportation device that lets you stroll through town remotely. You can head out of town and find the road and keep clicking. You'll run out of day before you run out of road.

Here you go. Enjoy. There will be more to come – and if you're wondering about LA Dining 1962, that'll be up in the afternoon. See you around in the usual places.

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Pass it along, if you wish

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34 RESPONSES TO the next new site

**Joe** says:
August 16, 2010 at 1:00 am

Regarding the close up view to the right of the castle: I haven't seen the movie in the last 20+ years or so, but I think I recall a scene where characters were walking a trail at night carrying lanterns that looked very similar to this in Disney's “Fantasia”. I just thought I'd throw this out so I could get the prize from James for first to get it right. There is a prize, right?😊

**Dave (in MA)** says:
August 16, 2010 at 1:30 am

The Mott Knights of Columbus building was interesting with its windows of alternating high and low positions. I don't know if I've ever seen that before. I'd have guessed that he lights at Disney were merely the lights along the monorail tracks.

**Beryl** says:
August 16, 2010 at 2:51 am

It the cars at the drive-in. Though I can't figure out why the Disney in-house animators would be referencing the Pixar Kidz.

**hpoulter** says:
August 16, 2010 at 5:06 am

I also thought of the lanterns at the end of Fantasia (too late to beat Joe to it).
hpoulter says:
August 16, 2010 at 5:11 am

This Youtube clip shows the sequence (Ave Maria) which comes at the end of Night on Bald Mountain.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJjei4VVBoW

madCanada says:
August 16, 2010 at 6:53 am

Fantasia! Ave Maria! Not yet 8am, and several Bleatniks beat me to it. Shoulda known.

Mxymaster says:
August 16, 2010 at 7:19 am

Nah, it's the security fence. Got to keep the dwarves in.

(Or the Overtakers? Ridley Pearson ref.)

I enjoyed P&TF more than I expected to, although I kept wondering why Big Daddy couldn't have just put up the dough for the restaurant. And Louis the Alligator was just annoying–but Ray helped offset that. But the whole thing was worth the price of admission for a good bad guy and, especially, the “Almost There” number. Great stuff.

hpoulter says:
August 16, 2010 at 7:23 am

I loved the Princess and the Frog. Sure, it's Disney, but Disney animation studios have been totally reorganized under the leadership of John Lasseter (who was fired by Disney animation in the early 80s). Since he took over, they have made Meet The Robinsons, Bolt and the Princess and the Frog, which had good music and fine animation. The biggest problem it had was “Princess” in the title – which is a big marketing problem for Disney. Almost no boy would be caught dead going to a “princess movie”. My 7th-grade nephews were incredulous and somewhat indignant that I had the DVD in my library. I suspect they will have trouble with the upcoming Rapunzel movie for the same reasons.

Patrick says:
August 16, 2010 at 7:49 am

Dang it, late to the party again. Immediately thought of “Ave Maria” from “Fantasia”. Need to look for the DVD on Amazon tonight. Already have 5 Nintendo DS games, a few books, and a couple of other Disney DVDs, mainly featuring the Silly Symphonies, lined up for purchase.

Scott says:
August 16, 2010 at 8:03 am

It's just a bridge leading away from the castle in both directions. The lights are on the top of lampposts, and they (the lights) get farther apart as the bridges curve and the perspective of our view changes.

I reference to the lanterns in Fantasia? Perhaps, but I think y'all are
overthinking it. Sometimes a lamppost is just a lamppost.

**Greg** says:
August 16, 2010 at 8:05 am

@Mxymaster:

Security fence is there to keep the smoke eisner out, not the dwarves in.

**Brisko** says:
August 16, 2010 at 8:08 am

My proudest day on the internet was when Tony Isabella, one of my writing heroes, chose to follow me on Twitter. It still brings a big grin to my face when I think about it.

It's a funny and wonderful thing to read someone's work for years, and then discovering they read yours, too. Or at least are aware of it.

**Brian J.** says:
August 16, 2010 at 8:13 am

One could take disc magnets and glue them to the back of the jar lids to make interesting and comment inspiring refrigerator magnets.

If they didn't cost $5 each.

**GardenStater** says:
August 16, 2010 at 8:15 am

Much as I love small towns, especially those that are far from major cities, some of those NoDak towns are really depressing to see. Feels like you could lie down in the middle of Main Street and take a nap.

**juanito - John Davey** says:
August 16, 2010 at 8:18 am

As far as 7 of 9 on teh Twittah, I've long followed Shatner, Nimoy, LeVar Burton, and Spiner. Just found that Nichelle Nichols is on Twitter as well. Shatner & Nimoy's back & forth is quite amusing.

I like the NorDak site!

**Dave Heaton** says:
August 16, 2010 at 8:36 am

My first thought was the force field security fence from Forbidden Planet, but I'm just weird that way.

But it *does* have a Disney connection….

**Jimbo** says:
August 16, 2010 at 9:06 am

Anyone who grew up in southwestern ND is probably more familiar with Mott's unofficial motto:

*Mott's the spot that God forgot*
browniejr says:
August 16, 2010 at 9:07 am

Disney Lights- I had the Fantasia connection like others, but what bothers me more is the castle. It didn't match my memories of Disneyland, so I searched the internet. The castle at Disneyland in Anaheim is not as wide, and the movie logo version has some elements of the castle in Florida, but seems wider- probably a 16:9 thing for the movies, whereas the originals were made for a 4:3 ratio for old fashioned television? Does it match EuroDisney or Japan?

One last problem- why does the moat flood the entrance?

Bonnie_ says:
August 16, 2010 at 9:13 am

The close-up shot definitely shows the outlines of cars. Did Walt love drive-in movies?

Mxymaster says:
August 16, 2010 at 9:35 am

HPoulter:

Apparently “Rapunzel” is now going to be released as “Tangled,” to try to cover up the fact that the main character is a you-know-what (prncss--shhhhh).

swschrad says:
August 16, 2010 at 10:28 am

there is interesting stuff in NoDak wherever you look, contrary to some Noo Yawk opinons.

One of these days, I have to get me a slide scanner. a buddy and I spooled up a bag full of 35mm and took a day trip to Maza about 32 years ago. a farmer there painted up every window on every building before h/she died, and the little tumbleweed gallery was fun to look at.

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 16, 2010 at 10:32 am

Cicadas in August. Just typing that makes me feel sleepy and out of focus, just like I felt as a kid at that point in summer when they'd be buzzing away with a vengeance.

Bill Peschel says:
August 16, 2010 at 10:50 am

Coincidentally, we were watching National Treasure II (great start, meh third act when they turn into Indy), and they were zooming around the castle. Off in the distance, near the beginning of the pan, you could see some kind of river off in the distance, and my wife asked if any part of that landscape was based in reality.

Meanwhile, another vote for “P&tF,” which was far more entertaining than I expected. Now, if you're interested in a little animation talk, the guy who runs “The Cartoon Cave” had a
A dissertation on drawing eyes and uses Frog as an example of How Not to Do It. It's the kind of shop talk that movie-goers would not understand, but animators would. Interesting:


He did go see it and liked it, although he thought it was flawed:


**bgbear (roger h)** says:
August 16, 2010 at 10:59 am

I believe it is simply an expanded version of the bridge to Sleeping Beauty's castle.

**Spud** says:
August 16, 2010 at 11:04 am

@hpoulter: “My 7th-grade nephews were incredulous and somewhat indignant that I had the DVD in my library. I suspect they will have trouble with the upcoming Rapunzel movie for the same reasons.”

Myxmaster just beat me to it, but yeah, the movie has been renamed. The studio heads realized that they need to broaden the base and are reaching out to the pre-teen boys for animated movies. Otherwise they'll stay in their Yu-Gi-Oh and Power Ranger universe.

James: did you watch P&F with the young lady (G)Nat? It's a movie targeted to her demographic, and I'm curious to hear if she had a reaction to a strong female taking charge of her life, rather than being a passive princess. I also loved Raymon' and the songs, especially “Goin' Down the Bayou” and “My Evangeline”.

**hpoulter** says:
August 16, 2010 at 11:29 am

Yeah, I saw the trailers for “Tangled”. I don't think the name change will fool them. It's not like they know who Rapunzel is, anyway.

I thought the red and white queens's castles in Tim Burton's Alice in Wonderland (a Disney film) both looked like bizarre variations on that Disney castle.

**D Palmer** says:
August 16, 2010 at 11:52 am

I loved the car in the foreground of the New Leipzig shot. An 80's vintage Chevy Citation, which appears to be in very good shape. It gives the impression that the picture was taken years ago and somebody from Google scanned it in so they didn't have to send a photo car to rural ND.

**xrayguy** says:
August 16, 2010 at 11:52 am

You're all wrong; alternating tree/lights pattern is Morse code giving location of Walts frozen head. Also, is it odd that a river runs to the front of the castle instead of a road?? Is the moat then dirt to keep the fish from attacking?
nixmom says:
August 16, 2010 at 12:40 pm

Re: “Tangled”–I was at the movies yesterday with my 10-yr old son and although I thought the preview appealed to me completely, the little man just gave me A Look and shook his head. He was not buying into it one little bit.

Which is, I guess, what kindergarten-aged nieces are for. 😃

Judge Crater says:
August 16, 2010 at 1:05 pm

I watched Princess & Frog with my 10-oy son. He ended up really liking the movie, which really hits all the classic Disney animation story-telling motifs.

Each time he sees the Castle intro, he says “Look Dad it’s the Santa Ana river! It's flooded Disneyland!”

ScottG says:
August 16, 2010 at 4:44 pm

“Some items went to the antique store, to put them back into the stream of ephemera.”

Which may be repurchased by you at a later date after you’ve forgotten about them???

browniejr says:
August 16, 2010 at 4:46 pm

@bgbear: Here is the opening logo in HD: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1IfpwJmHd8&feature=related
Perhaps it is the winding river behind the castle as the camera (digital renderer?) pulls down that impresses the idea of a river in my head, but the cobbles on the bridge leading up to the castle sure are wet/ shimmer a little to much to be solid, at least to my eye.

Just watched it a few times- the river clearly flows from the back of the castle through the front, like the castle is just a facade/ movie set false front...

Still is a great logo for the beginning of a movie.

Shanquin says:
August 16, 2010 at 4:55 pm

What antique store? I want those red lamps!

Mr_Fastbucks says:
August 16, 2010 at 5:55 pm

It was the most exciting part of my weekend as well.
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

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I installed some new security / firewall software, and it is a nightmare: somehow I set it to make a short, jarring buzz alert every time something on my computer wants to access the internet, and I cannot find out how to disable this. I've been through every possible setting and pane and menu option. There's nothing for BE LESS GHASTLY or STOP WAKING UP FAMILY. Will have to remove and reinstall, and use something other than STRONG settings – but why wouldn't you want strong? Hmm, this looks like a good internet security program. Just hope it has a WEAK setting that only lets in trojan horses designed to copy my email and forward it to nuns who will pray for me.

They would have to pray extra hard today, because I almost lost my temper today, and as St. Yoda has noted, Anger leads to violence, violence leads to suffering, suffering leads to misquotes, or whatever the hell the freakin’ frog-goblin said. While I was making dinner there was a knock at the door, and there stood a guy in a pink shirt and a cheap tie and the laminated badge of meaningless accreditation. He said he didn't mean to disturb me but he was in the neighborhood trying to help the children.

No, I thought, you’re not. You’re running a door-to-door scam. I’ll bet it’s magazines.

“Sorry,” I said, “but it’s dinner time, and I don’t do door-to-door solicitations.”

“That’s fine, when should I loop around and come back?”
“As I said, I don’t do door-to-door solicitations.” I should have stopped right there and shut the door, but I was not brought up to be abrupt to people until they’ve truly earned it.

“That’s funny,” he said, and he got himself some sort of quizzical look, like a fella what thinks it’s amusin’ that the they guy he’s about to beat to death prolly thinks it’ll be okay if he ups and bleeds all over the trunk on the way to where they figger to bury him, out by the still, yonder in the holler? Where old man Cletus lives? ‘Bout there. “Folks in this neighborhood say they don’t want to talk to door to door solicitations, but then a kid comes around to solicit for their school, and they’ll talk to him.”

I’ll admit I was somewhat surprised by the line of attack: what’s he up to?

“As I said, it’s also dinner time. And I have to get back to making dinner.”

“What time is it?”

“Excuse me?”

“What time is it?”

This was now officially fascinating. “It’s five forty,” I said, staring at him. The dog in the backyard on the other side of the gate was barking and barking and barking but Mr. Salesman was cuke-calm.

“You all eat early,” he said. “Sun don’t go down until nine.”

“Well, trust me, I’m making dinner.”

“If you could just spare a moment for the kids,” he said. He produced a thick folded sheaf from his back pocket.

“You’re selling magazines, aren’t you,” I said.

“I am,” he said.

“And we’ve had crews moving through here all summer. It’s a scam. If I ask you who you work for you’ll give me a name and if I search it I’ll find it’s connected to some other company.”

“Ft. Worth magazine sales,” he said, or something like that. “We’ve had three complaints in ten years.” He held up his hands like the world’s most innocent man.

“Fine. You’re the one guy who’s on the level. That’s fine. But I’m not buying. Have a good night.”

“You know, it’s funny,” he said. He got that look again. “People will buy magazines from kids in their neighborhood for their schools, but they don’t want to help other kids.” He looked regretful, but deep-down angry, the way any man would feel angry about injustice. This was the point where I should have told him to get the hell down the stairs and leave before I called the police, but there are times you just enjoy the combat. Almost for sociological
purposes.

“I know the kids around here,” I said. “I send my daughter to their house – “ I pointed down the block – “I know who they are. I know which school they go to. They send their kid over here to sell grapefruit for the Scout Troop, I know who he is. You I don’t know.”

“I got kids of my own,” he said, and flashed a big grin, and reached for the sheaf in his pocket. “Four’ve ‘em.”

“I’m sure you do. I’m just saying I don’t know you. So if you could go now.”

“They sell food door to door?” He looked quizzical. “I never heard of that. Mostly it’s magazines.”

Oh for criminey’s sake. “Look. As I said. It’s dinner. I don’t buy from door-to-door salesman. So have a nice night.”

“Well, so you said, but -”

Snapping point. “Yes. So I said. This is my property, and if I said I don’t talk to guys who show up wearing pink shirts, then that’s how it is.”

I stepped inside and shut the door. Two things:

I can’t quite communicate the strange, creepy, aggressively sarcastic tone of this dillweed. There was something really, really off about him. He looked like a sociopathic version of that guy on PBS who used to paint nice trees.

If you’re thinking I was putting myself at risk here somehow, well: I had a cup of hot coffee in my hand, was standing two steps above him, and could have thrown the coffee, smashed the cup, and carved him up a treat. If the need arose.

It did not.

Later in the evening my wife took the dog for a walk, and he got beat up by a rambunctious pooch someone had let off the leash. They’d walked up a hill to the water tower; apparently he likes going up there, hard as the climb may be on his old joints. The dog ran over, jumped him, shoved him, and Jasper rolled down the hill a few revolutions before he could right himself. I wonder what he dreams about sometimes when he has those whimpering nightmares; maybe that.

Or worse. Who knows what strange unfathomable shapes and fears lurk in the dog’s mind. Speaking of which: I mentioned yesterday that I’d seen “Princess and the Frog,” and liked it, and noted the lights in the opening Disney castle sequence. It’s a callback to the end of Fantasia, the Ave Maria sequence. And there’s this from “Princess”-
Those are straight out of Night on Bald Mountain.

One other thing I forgot to post: the item I bought at Hunt and Gather, the neighborhood antique store I frequent. A thing of utility and beauty:

It's my coaster. It's a bar mat, in perfect condition. I should give you all a video tour of the studio some day; I'm curious whether people think it's exactly what they thought it would be. Because it's probably not. This is an Arts and Crafts house, not a swank post-war pad, and reconciling the two isn't easy. But it'll do.

Anyone up for that? A video tour of the nerve center of Lileks.com?

Later today: Comic Sins, the return of the Matchbook Museum, and of course the other stuff. See you around!
103 RESPONSES TO *the salesman*

**meryl** says:
August 18, 2010 at 1:25 pm

Mere words are inadequate to describe the envy that Winston provoked in my mid-century, (soon-to-be) ex-smoker's heart.

**Soozcat** says:
August 18, 2010 at 11:50 pm

Yeah, count me in for the tour.

I've tried all sorts of things to discourage solicitors. In point of fact I have a [long, rambling disclaimer](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7795) next to my front door, and I can count on one hand the number of people who have come up to the door, read it, and gone away without knocking.

Perhaps a 12-gauge would do the trick. Or a cutlass.

Or perhaps I should do what some friends have done--install a webcam discreetly outside and screen all would-be visitors at the computer. Like Caller ID for your front door.

**Dana W** says:
August 19, 2010 at 9:44 pm

I like to answer the door wearing a holstered “and licensed” Glock.

Con men lose interest with AMAZING speed. 😈
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?
There's a chill in the nighttime air lately. I'd like to think it's a passing thing, but everything is a passing thing.

Twitter comments I need to back up: I said I'd discovered a link between the “Matrix” soundtrack and the score for “Where Eagles Dare.” There is a comparable ostinato. I will say no more. Don’t know why I called up that number on the iTunes, but I did, and loosened the plaster. After which there was a voice down the hall from my daughter’s room:

“What the hey, Dad.”

What the hey indeed. Lately I’ve found the need to play something old every night and play it LOUD. It’s usually a piece that has some long-buried connection, and there are few as long-buried as “Where Eagles Dare” – I bought it before I’d seen the movie, because it was a buck in the cutout bin in Woolworth’s downtown. “The Chase to the Airfield” – love those plain descriptive titles – is a brass-geek throw-down, and after all these years it’s still hard not to fist-pump or mock-conduct or over-hyphenate. Last night it was “West Side Story,” the gym-dance sequence. Brings to mind the concept of the “desert island disk,” so popular in the 90s, back when people thought of discrete collections like disks. Now it would be desert island playlists, wouldn’t it? But you can’t assemble your Top 100 without thinking “this is the soundtrack for my wake.” But maybe that’s not a bad idea. But then you have to leave behind instructions: play this! And then you imagine your friends
and relations eating a ham sandwich and talking about work while the sound system plays Mahler, and someone turning around and asking “can we turn that down? Just a little?” Sigh. Life. It's always about the living, isn’t it.

**Got my Fair assignment today:** only have to shoot 8 small videos on the first day. Only 8. Then there’s the other 5 I want to do. I look forward to this, though; it's always a challenge to find something new, and this year I think I’ll do the best videos I’ve ever done. It's odd to think that's my job, but it is. Odd and wonderful. Make your hobbies your jobs, and you're happy. Making your job your hobby might make you happy in the short run but eventually someone notices.

The next two weeks will be scant around here, as the work picks up. Still banging out the Joe Ohios, though, building up a back catalog I can release at leisure. It's my favorite moment of the day, falling through the page, letting the story flow out from the great mysterious somewhere. A new character walked into the story tonight; an old character returned, if only in a passing moment of recollection. There's no plot, but I feel a plot beneath it all anyway. And I remember the editor's dismissal: too episodic.

That's the point.

**Today:** daughter slept in, way late, as kids should do in summer. Stay up late and sleep in, and if Dad walks past the closed door thinking “you're sleeping the day away,” then he's forgotten what it's like. I used to while away the entire summer doing nothing, which is why I’m a bit more forgiving than my wife when it comes to the daughter's supposed indolence. She's drawing and animating and writing up there in her room, which is a damned sight more than I ever did. I took bike rides, true, but that's because I wanted to get out and explore. I'm sure that time will come for her, and it'll be one more sign that there's a private life about which I know absolutely nothing, just as my parents had no clue. But that's how it goes, you know? You need to establish some distance, carve out your own time, bike to the woods at the edge of town, and huff some paint from a rag. I know I did.

She also lives in the future; she has a friend who's now in Illinois on a trip, and they chat on Skype and swap drawings and discuss anime and draw pictures of cats who stand erect and wear ties. I suppose she should be out running in the grass and doing other summer things like . . . running in the grass, but I look at her sketchbook and see she's working on difficult forms of perspective, and I think: it's one thing to lay on your back and look at the clouds and see pictures, and it's another to be able to draw them. I think she is more inclined to experience life through intermediate mediums and reshape it with tools, which is not something I am unfamiliar with. Ahem. Wonder where she got that.

My fault? Probably. This is what happens when Dad works at home. Sets a bad example. But I always turned off the TV after the morning Rolie Polie Olie, and commanded her to do something, and from the earliest possible days manipulating a mouse and keyboard to create something was her
preferred choice. Perhaps because I was sitting at the table doing the same. We spent time on the floor building things with blocks, or laying out tracks with the Thomas the Tank Engine play set, but she never seemed to have a desire for architecture or the intricate dance of interstate rail transport. But I tried.

Ah, where did the time go? Same place it always does: around the corner, down the hill, into the dark woods at the end of town. We always ask where the time went. We never ask where it's coming from.

She just came downstairs to announce she was hungry. I made her a bowl of cereal. We talked. She said it was weird to be 10 because it was like she was just 9 and before that she was 8, and that seems so young. “It all goes so fast,” she said. I said this was why it was important to produce: draw something every day. Write something. Make something. At the end of the year you can see what you did. And what would you have if you did nothing?

“Nada,” she said. “Literally NADA.”

Heh.

“Do you remember the Spanish classes you took years ago?”

She frowned. “Not really. Kinda. Oh yeah.”

Then she put her bowl in the dishwasher and skipped back upstairs. She had to finish a drawing. That's what it's all about. Something. Literally something.

So I don't forget and post it late: B&W world, now open for your amusement. Trek connection? Hell yes. Also, a post on Ricochet about Kids Today and what they do, and don’t, know. Tumblr and PopCrush of course. See you around.

HOST WITH THE MOST
48 RESPONSES TO literally something

jamcool says:
August 18, 2010 at 1:15 am

The man on the left in the picture seems to be channeling Don Knotts.

Cory says:
August 18, 2010 at 5:41 am

Judy Exner- aka Judy Campbell – I don’t think it was too “possible”, more like pretty damn sure when she signed White House logs. Pretty damn sure Frank got her a date or two with Momo. I wonder if Frank met her through this guy.

Mamie Van Doeen- married to Bo Belinsky for a while. Look him up.

CatCalloway says:
August 18, 2010 at 6:04 am

I’m surprised that James doesn’t regularly tune into streamingsoundtracks.com . I play it at work all day in the background. In fact, I liked it so much that I joined just so I could choose tracks to play. Listening over time gives you a completely new appreciation for how rich and complex movie soundtracks can be.

lohwoman says:
August 18, 2010 at 6:04 am

John Saxon — I recognized him right away by the eyes. Dig that crazy hair.

Gene Dillenburg says:
August 18, 2010 at 6:37 am

“Too episodic” may have been a critique of the work's marketability, rather than of its form.

rbj says:
August 18, 2010 at 7:29 am

““What the hey, Dad.””

Um, I had always assumed that it was parents complaining that kids were playing music too loud, not the other way around. I’m really beginning to think that I did fall through the rabbit hole. Just a question (as long as we are in Where Eagles Dare time, in this world the good guys did defeat the Nazis & Japanese, right?

juanito - John Davey says:
August 18, 2010 at 7:57 am
rbj says:
August 18, 2010 at 7:29 am

“What the hey, Dad.”

Um, I had always assumed that it was parents complaining that kids were playing music too loud, not the other way around.

3 years ago, the kids “got me” a new small amp for father’s day. Went out to the garage, plugged in, put the distortion to half, a modicum of reverb, and the volume to “2”. Warmed up/ Tuned up with the 3 chord sequence (like there is any other) from Asia’s “Heat Of The Moment”. Instant response “Dad, that's just too loud”. Almost an exact quote of Huey Lewis in Back To The Future. Sigh.

The nine year old has recently taken to reminding me “Dad, next next year I'll be ten!!”. Darn those sagacious kids. Our hour glass is emptying quickly, and I can practically see the last grains from here.

John Saxon – The great Planet Earth /Genesis II conundrum. Regardless of the role, John Saxon always seemed to be a villain to me. Probably from his turns in The Six Million Dollar Man.

Drew says:
August 18, 2010 at 8:02 am

Re: the list of what incoming freshmen know: one must remember that it's put together by Beloit College, and as such these are things that our academic betters think are (or should be) on everyone's minds. Obviously and 18-year-old not only isn’t going to care about Soon-Yi Previn let alone know who she is, I suspect the name has slipped from the minds of the 18-35 demographic, too. Cross-burning and Kevorkian? What 18 year old thinks on these things at all, let alone tries to imagine their pasts? Number 54 just floors me: “The historic bridge at Mostar in Bosnia has always been a copy." The what in the where in the who? Not only is an 18 year old not going to question its authenticity, she's not going to be able to find Mostar on a map.

So thank you, academics, for your little piece of masturbatory angst. You're smarter than us. I realize that's what you really mean to say. Enjoy your artificial superiority. You still can't barbeque ribs to perfect on a charcoal grill.

Drew says:
August 18, 2010 at 8:11 am

Something else occurs to me in regard to that list. Taken as a whole, it appears that we really haven't advanced that much in the last two decades, except in the areas of communication and celebrity.

hpoulter says:
August 18, 2010 at 8:16 am

The woman in the middle is truly frightening. She looks like her head has been grafted onto a Punch-and-Judy puppet and she just can't stop rockin'.

Rob says:
August 18, 2010 at 8:51 am
Hmmm… Something tells me that ten years from now, we’re going to be following Natalie’s blog… the girl seems to be coming on strong.

**Jeff** says:
August 18, 2010 at 8:36 am

I love episodic stories – my favorite TV show, THE FUGITIVE, was episodic, and a most engaging show. Seems to me with 300 million people in this country, not to mention the billions around the world, there might be more than several that would buy into an Episodic Adventure, especially with Noir undertones.

Just my opinion. But I would buy it!

**Grebmek** says:
August 18, 2010 at 10:00 am

@Drew: the Beloit college list is not for students, but for old geezers who will recognize these things. They are reminders for faculty that the world of 18 year olds is much different than ours, and old cultural references will fall on completely deaf ears. But its true, some of the items on the list are pretty dumb, but it’s interesting to read the list and be reminded how long ago these things took place. In a few years, the OJ Simpson trial will make the list, although today’s college freshman will likely know nothing about it, since they were 3 at the time (was it 1995? I forget)

**B**

**badger** says:
August 18, 2010 at 10:26 am

The disturbing picture of the haggard wench with Don Knotts on her right elbow is odd in another sense… the other guy is a ringer for Jerome (Curly) Horowitz. The Uber Stooge was not actually bald, shaved his nog for the role. An uncredited appearance? Nah.

**Ron Moses** says:
August 18, 2010 at 10:36 am

That's funny, I was blasting Where Eagles Dare last night too! Of course, it was the Iron Maiden tune, but still…

**swschrad** says:
August 18, 2010 at 10:37 am

@jamcool: absolutely, Don Knotts on about two fifths of gin and ten grams of bolivian marching powder. he’s herding mermaids on unicorns in what’s left of his mind, you go, squirrel. if you can stand. fall off the stool if his legs weren’t hooked into the rail.

@juanito: take it to 3 and flange it.

“something:” projects are good. at 10 I was burning up tubes and getting shocked with junk like homebrew live-chassis AM modulators. cutting film. reading Shirer and The Blue Book. by this time, when I took something apart, I usually got it back together again.
bgbear (roger h) says:
August 18, 2010 at 10:40 am

At the few Sci Fi/Fantasy conventions I went to as a high school kid, William Campbell was probably the nicest guy next to Bob Clampett. Campbell and Saxon were Hollywood up and comers who fizzled out but, kept working steady (Saxon still does). Thank goodness for TV.

browniejr says:
August 18, 2010 at 10:47 am

@badger- good eye! Here he is at an earlier dance party: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBLKZuvUbws&feature=related

Drew says:
August 18, 2010 at 10:51 am

@Grebmar: You're probably right. It just hit me as being such a small, insular sort of list. And you're right — it's not for the 18-year-olds, it's for us middle-aged folks. But as a middle-aged person, the list seemed like a lot of stuff that doesn't really matter that much to me, either.

JamesS says:
August 18, 2010 at 11:06 am

John Saxon and Gene Roddenberry shot a pilot?! Now we see the violence inherent in the system.

Got away with it too, apparently. That Hollywood, what a place!

Gary says:
August 18, 2010 at 11:23 am

“What the hey, Dad.”

I love the automatic “need I ask” identification of the culprit.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 18, 2010 at 11:29 am

@juanito: yes! I always thought I was imagining that Roddenberry took two bites at that plot apple. Thanks to IMDB and you I know I am not too confused.

Alex Cord? not quite Tom Selleck, not quite Sam Elliott.

Jay says:
August 18, 2010 at 12:01 pm

@Drew It's Beloit College, not Yale. They aren't anyone's “academic betters,” especially given the number of typos and incoherences on that list. But, I also think you're probably taking your paranoia about being condescended to by scheming professors a little far.

xrayguy says:
August 18, 2010 at 12:08 pm

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7805
If you work the Star Trek connection with the Kevin Bacon Matrix, can you connect everyone in the world... or at least America?

nightfly says:
August 18, 2010 at 12:14 pm

@xrayguy – thanks to Patrick Stewart and the Movie Villian of the Month Club, there are enough old-time Brits in there to work in a sizeable part of the English-speaking world.

Sadly, the only thing I can think of now when I see John Saxon, is Mitchell. “It's Johnny Mathis! Quick, get my gun!”

John says:
August 18, 2010 at 12:39 pm

Yes, yes, the Class-of-'14-Never-Knew list is pretty silly – I looked in vain for “To them, ‘Doonesbury' has always been as dead as ‘Peanuts' and ‘Pogo’” – but the Mostar reference is in my opinion a very thoughtful inclusion. I think the big question in Europe will be “Just how Yugoslavian are these people?” and the answer will be “Plenty!” The breakup of Yugoslavia, featuring capers like the destruction of the old Mostar bridge, was a showcase for just how nasty these people can be, especially when they decide they've had a bellyful of brotherhood, unity, and Islam.

As for academia in general, I used to think, when I was teaching at a Sunbelt diploma mill, that if anyone was so employed, he was doing one of three things with his academic career: (1) starting it, (2) ending it, or (3) mismanaging it. (In my case, #3, definitely.) But now I've come to extend this to any college. Since I'm on a prediction jag, here's another: soon a college degree will not only cease to help its possessor get a job but will become an actual hindrance, as employers jib at taking on people who need to be deprogrammed first.

swschrad says:
August 18, 2010 at 12:56 pm

@John: the illiterate in business will always look for cronies who don't intimidate them.

Your smart businessmen will always look for well-rounded complete people who may in fact be smarter than them.

Problem is, the numbers of the smart businessmen seem to be dwindling.

I refuse to be drawn into witch hunts over why. I got my suspicions. you got yours. let's leave it at that, OK?

D Palmer says:
August 18, 2010 at 12:57 pm

1. Few in the class know how to write in cursive.

What? I don't have kids, do they not teach cursive any more? Are their no essay tests in school? If there are do kids print only?

juanito - John Davey says:
August 18, 2010 at 1:29 pm
bgbear (roger h) says:
August 18, 2010 at 11:29 am

@juanito: yes! I always thought I was imagining that Roddenberry took two bites at that plot apple. Thanks to IMDB and you I know I am not too confused.

Not just two bites at that apple, at least three (down to the core) since one of the plotlines involved a space probe that became sentient (1 TOS The Changeling, 2 Star Trek The Motion Picture 3 Genesis II Robots Return) and three cracks at the post apocalyptic Earth of the Future, the last being Strange New World, albeit without Roddenberry's direct participation. It borrowed plot lines and concepts from both Genesis II and Planet Earth, as well as John Saxon (as a different character this time).

Further, using “Dylan Hunt” as a character in Genesis II, Planet Earth and Andromeda.

My, but Mr. Roddenberry was persistent.

rivlax says:
August 18, 2010 at 1:29 pm

Vacationed in Austria in June and visited the castle where “Where Eagles Dare” was filmed, the Festung Hohenwerfen. Neat place.

swschrad says:
August 18, 2010 at 1:30 pm

“Are their no essay tests in school?”
/snark haven't been for a while /nosnark

the three little theres have been killing writers for several hundred years. nobody pounds your head on homophones any more.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 18, 2010 at 1:46 pm

@juanito re: recycled names, I was watching “Have Gun Will Travel” (Paladin) and there was an army officer named Capt Robert April, a name shared by one of the Enterprise captains according to the animated series and other ST lore.

I checked, sure enough Roddenberry wrote both the HGWT and the ST:TAS scripts.

You know, “Space Paladin” would have been a lot more entertaining than post apocalyptic Earth krep.

D Palmer says:
August 18, 2010 at 1:57 pm

#@%$@%, are THERE no essay tests…

This is what happens when you type fast and don’t proof read your comments.
bgbear (roger h) says:
August 18, 2010 at 2:06 pm

their, they're sun, wee awl make mistakes.

Dean says:
August 18, 2010 at 2:16 pm

everything is a passing thing.

Great Line!

MikeH says:
August 18, 2010 at 2:31 pm

John Saxon. Lots of B-movies, karate stuff and even CSI. But my fave role of course as Walter Deany in MITCHELL!! (Heart pounding, veins clogging, MITCHELL!!) I'll stop since I'll start breaking out the MST3K quotes.

Spud says:
August 18, 2010 at 2:33 pm

“...a brass-geek throw-down”. I've always wanted to hear a live band perform the Jonny Quest theme song. It'd be da bomb.

A few years back, before the DVD set was released, I found a site for Jonny Quest music/audio clips. Besides the intro, you could download clips from different scenes: the tension build-up, monster about to pop up, driving in the car, etc. It's interesting to hear how the composer would interplay strings and brass for effect.

Those clips would come in handy for some office experiences: walk to your manager's office, prior to and just after giving a powerpoint presentation to a large group, filling out your performance review... (Hope I didn't inspire too many earworms.)

D Palmer says:
August 18, 2010 at 2:38 pm

James, I just got back from pop Crush lunchbreak (a must visit for me everyday). Love, love, LOVED the Col. Clink shout out wrap.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 18, 2010 at 3:03 pm

Mitchell, Vaseline the horror

juanito - John Davey says:
August 18, 2010 at 3:10 pm

Spud says:
August 18, 2010 at 2:33 pm

“...a brass-geek throw-down”. I've always wanted to hear a live band perform the Jonny Quest theme song. It'd be da bomb.

I like this version by Reverend Horton Heat. A medley with Stop That Pigeon thrown in at the end. Tasty.
efurman says:
August 18, 2010 at 3:28 pm

RE:Running Wild
My favorite thing about 50's movies was how they always used people in their mid to late 30's to play 'teenagers'. And how they always 'looked' like they were in their mid to late 30's. It's like they were terrified of actual young people. Of course Hollywood has gone to the other extreme in the last couple decades. Both extremes are and were stupid.

Cory says:
August 18, 2010 at 5:08 pm

Roddenberry cut his teeth on HGWT as did many notable actors and actresses. Defy you to show me a better 22 minutes of Western than Richard Boone doing what he has to do. Also the best Western theme song among many great contenders.

Philip Scott Thomas says:
August 18, 2010 at 6:22 pm

The guy on the left, yes, channelling Don Knotts. And the guy on the guy? Sure a very young Buddy Hackett.

Kev says:
August 18, 2010 at 7:19 pm

the Beloit college list is not for students, but for old geezers who will recognize these things. They are reminders for faculty that the world of 18 year olds is much different than ours, and old cultural references will fall on completely deaf ears.

That may be true in some cases, but other things have weathered the years pretty nicely. It always warms my heart when the vast majority of my high school and college students can quote lines from Monty Python and the Holy Grail, and more than a few understand the “This one goes to eleven” line from This Is Spinal Tap.

Spud says:
August 18, 2010 at 8:37 pm

@Juanito – thanks for the link. Not quite a “brass geek” thang, but interesting. Rev. Horton seems to be an acquired taste.

Now that I have some time I think the following link for JQ audio clips is what I had mentioned before. Just click on Media on the column to the left for audio files.

browniejr says:
August 19, 2010 at 12:02 am

@Spud- Great Link! Thanks for posting it.

fantabulous says:
August 19, 2010 at 9:13 pm

That ubiquitous movie still of the wacky hipsters:
“Yeah... YEAH!”

**Dr. Whiggs** says:
August 23, 2010 at 7:55 pm

Mamie Van Doren didn’t take her top off in a movie until Slackers.

In 2002.
Cool, cloudy day. Couldn’t get the brain to play along, and the day was just a smear or work – until it wasn’t, and then I roused the child from her machinery and told her we were off on errands. The bank. Target. Piano.

“All together?” she moaned.

“No, sequentially.”

“What does that mean?”

“One after the other.”

“So all together then. Sigh.” She actually says that: “Sigh.”

But we had a grand day. The bank was fine; I had to get a check for the closing. We were greeted at the door by a manager, who personally walked us to a teller. The teller, upon learning of our needs, summoned another teller, who summoned a personal banker. We went to his desk and did the paperwork; another banker was called to countersign the event. The personal banker walked us to the perimeter of the personal banking department, and we were on our own for three yards, after which two managers standing by the door thanked us for coming and hoped we had experienced total completion of our banking needs.

“That’s a nice bank,” she said. I asked her what she would do with the check if I gave it to her.
“Go to Japan,” she said.

It’s been a very long time since we went to Target as a manner of course every week. She used to sit in the cart and grab things and grin and then she grew up and walked around but still wanted to linger in the aisle with Hello Kitty and My Little Pony and Polly Frickin’ Pockets, with their ten-billion plastic parts . . . but we ended up in the same aisles, because I steered her there, and now we’re making fun of the stuff. But gently.

“The ponies still come with the useless hairbrush that cannot comb pony hair,” I said. “But now it’s worse.”


“It’s worse. Look at her legs. They bend backwards.” It’s the Laura Palmer in the Red Room of My Little Ponys.

“What do you mean?”

“Pony legs bend the other way. The merpony legs are bending up.”

“Merpony!” She laughed and went down the aisle and called me over to the Polly Pockets display. There are now mutant items that combine small animals with small inanimate objects:
“Take a picture,” she said. “Put that on your blog. It's super creepy.”

Who am I to argue?

I had to get some stuff for my wife's bunco affair at the house, and got out the list. It included “Nibbly bits,” which had made me ask my wife the previous night if she was one of the characters from AbFab. “Nibbly bits? Do you want some champers too, Pats?” My wife was voted least-likely to ever use the phrase “nibbly bits,” but there it was on the list.

“Get some Swedish Fish,” my daughter said. “They had that before at Bunco.”

“I'm thinking she wants something with a bit more . . . distinction.”

“Dad, everyone likes Swedish Fish.”

“We could use them as bait and get even larger Swedish Fish.”

“Dad.”

I was also commanded to get some soda, and got a few 12-packs of absurd flavor combos (peach-ginseng-mango-rutabaga!) then headed to the checkout. By now I was in a merry mood, and jumped on the cart and rode it a few yards.

“DAD! People will think you're a man with a problem.”

“I feel like a boy with a problem,” I sang. “I can't believe what you've forgotten.”
“DAD. Jeez.”

Off to piano. We picked up a copy of the adult education booklet, and I made fun of the pictures. She laughed so hard she begged me to stop, but I kept going, and did so with less and less insight, until she said “okay this is getting kinda old now.”

“Yes. I took it too far.”

“You did. You have ruined it forever.”

“I have.”

Pause.

“Take a picture of that cover and tweet about what you said.”

So I did. She went into her class; I went down the hall and read more of the awful book – apparently there's one guy in Sweden who doesn't hate women – and then picked her up and we walked back down the hall. It felt like Friday, but it wasn't. There would be no pizza at the end of this.

“I wish it was Friday with pizza,” she said.

“So do I.” And then we raced for the elevator and she beat me, as ever, and pushed the DOWN button, as ever. We got in the elevator and saw the picture on the cover of the education book, and started laughing again.

We walked outside. The sun had come out. “I wish summer would last
forever,” she said. “Sigh.”
So do I, child. So do I.

—

Today: I will have a PopCrush LunchBreak video up at noon where I finally unload on vampires. I am so sick of vampires.

Out of Context Ad Challenge returns today as well! Stop back, and I’ll see you around.

---

Pass it along, if you wish

58 RESPONSES TO merponies

hpoulter says:
August 20, 2010 at 7:44 am

@browniejr – re “other”:
I knew an old lady originally from rural Georgia (no longer with us) who would refer to a Coke as a bottle of “dope”. That would raise some eyebrows.

Brisko says:
August 20, 2010 at 8:03 am

Uh oh, no new Bleat. This bodes ill for the flow of my day.

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
August 20, 2010 at 8:07 am

Y’all don’t know a thing about how to mortify your children. Use my method: get a banjo. If you have an opportunity to pick them up from school, take the banjo with you. Play it in the car with the windows down, while waiting. Or if you can, get out of the car and play it in the open. If you must, you can play it at the bus stop or on your front porch when they come home.

browniejr says:
August 20, 2010 at 8:48 am

@Wagner – You’re a-Pickin’ !, and “And I’m a-Grinnin’ !”
I really enjoy good playing- sort of a guilty pleasure (I can’t play a note…)

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
August 20, 2010 at 9:32 am

I couldn’t play either, until I got the banjo and learned how to play it. There are lots of free and cheap resources online. No free banjos, alas, but good deals enough.

If I can grin, then I’m not picking fast enough. If others are grinning,
it's usually in the “...and bear it” kind of way. But as Steve Martin says, you can't play a sad song on the banjo. It's all happiness.

**Mark E. Hurling** says:
August 20, 2010 at 9:36 am

What really did happen on the Cahulawassee River? Dah, dah, dah, dang, dang.

**jeischen** says:
August 20, 2010 at 3:09 pm

Went on a rafting trip this summer. One of the guys made T-shirts for everyone. On the back it said: Paddle faster, I hear banjo music. I wore it yesterday and an older manager at Staples burst out laughing. He said, I guess you have to be of a certain age to get the joke.

**browniejr** says:
August 20, 2010 at 4:21 pm

Fast forward to around 1:10... [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whpKt7_vWEk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whpKt7_vWEk)

(sometimes the parody is funnier than the real thing...)

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June 2013
May 2013
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January 2013
December 2012
November 2012
October 2012
September 2012
August 2012

Please install and activate the "Twitter for WordPress" plugin to use this section.
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?
Hectic and pell-mell, the day; the blogging, the videos, three interviews, karate lesson with daughter, and now the house is full of womenfolk playing bunco. Up early tomorrow to sign a passel of unintelligible financial documents for the refi. I am spent, so it's mostly links.

But there was something fun after dinner. A neighbor raises Monarch butterflies, and invited a few kids over to participate in their release. He removed them from the aquarium, put them in a bucket, then put them in the fridge to chill them out so they wouldn't fly away. Natalie was a bit nervous about it, since she never forgot a moment at the State Fair's butterfly exhibit a few years ago when one of the creatures supposedly peed on her. And there's the innate dislike of insects some people have – not something I want to display, lest she think “Dad hates bugs so it's okay if I hate bugs,” but I don't like bugs. Butterflies are beautiful, but close up, and sitting on your hand, there's the creepy factor built in to most people's brains. Fish we can deal with. Mammals have eyes that seem to be looking at us like we look at them. Insects are like college dorm roommates: we're thrown together on this planet, but that doesn't mean we have to like them.

I talked with the neighbor about the butterflies, asked if he banded them. He did. I asked when they'd show up in Mexico, and he said “November 5th.”

Really?

“The Day of the Dead,” he smiled. “All the ancestors flocking back home.”
I didn't know this. I didn't know I knew they went to Mexico until I said it. But they migrate, and appear in great swarms in early November. Why? The cold. As the northern tier of the continent cools, they move south; as the cold pushes south, they press on, until they find the place where it's just right. I almost don't want to google it, and find out that they didn't lead to the Day of the Dead celebration; I'd like to think they did, because it's a typically human piece of social evolution, finding some spiritual or mystical meaning out of the result of the indifferent mechanics of evolution. That's our job, after all. We invented beauty and meaning, and we're promiscuous in application of both.

"It might be the angle of the sun that makes them go," he said. He's an engineer, and loves the practical, the aesthetics of logic. “They loved my milkweed this year,” he went on. “How do they know it's there?”

“A chemical scent?” I said. “The plant releases something, a few molecules hit the antennae, like the way ants talk.”

He nodded. “They know a few things. It gets cold, they slow down, they move south. They pick up a chemical, they eat.”

Flying computers. If A is true then go to B.

One of the butterflies flew off Natalie's hand and went up my shirt. I looked down and saw wings coming from beneath my garment. I lifted it up and off it went. It flew up, hooked left.

And went south.

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Here's your linkage: Gallery covers, and a new Gallery site: Minute Rice portfolio! That's about 22 new pages added to the site, so don't come 'round...
here accusing me of slackage.

Not that you would. Have a grand weekend! Back Monday; see you then.

Pass it along, if you wish

33 RESPONSES TO instinct

browniejr says:
August 20, 2010 at 9:51 am

“There is no twelfth dish.” Figures.

Hopefully you won’t get the heebie jeebies if you ever go over to your neighbor’s to eat- I know I would. (“put them in the fridge to chill them”)

juanito - John Davey says:
August 20, 2010 at 9:52 am

There you are!

We used to hit Pacific Grove in October to see the Butterfly migration. Harder to do now, with the kids in school. San Diego Wild Animal Park has a neat Butterfly exhibit, as does Gilroy Gardens. We have about nine butterfly bushes in our backyard. They work as advertised. I imagine being along the creek assists in their effectiveness.

The “Illustrated Woman” in the Parowax cover is sort of a reverse of Pleasantville where the scene stays in color while the character changes to black and white.

Twelve Dream Dishes? About eleven too many.

John Robinson says:
August 20, 2010 at 9:54 am

I've always maintained that if butterflies didn't have wings, no sane person would let one climb on their skin. I mean, look at the two on Natalie's hand. Pretty, right? And then visualize them wingless. What you're left with are large, spindly, black, polka-dotted bugs. Yeewwggg.

Dora Standpipe says:
August 20, 2010 at 10:03 am

I have a monarch in a chrysalis waiting to hatch right now. Maybe by Tuesday it will be done.

Already "grew one" with my boys and they named him Mark and let him go.

My mom used to raise butterflies when I was a kid. She used them in art projects. They would be put to death in the freezer. Nothing like opening up the freezer to see a bunch of dead butterflies when your friends are over and you want a popsicle! *shudder*
William Overby says:
August 20, 2010 at 10:10 am

Does anyone know what those gorgeous fonts are on the Parowax cover?

swschrad says:
August 20, 2010 at 10:21 am

did a science fair project with Monarchs back in junior high... raised four, kept two, a male and a female. photographed the whole cycle and captioned it. cut a Robt. Burns box in half for the showcase shadowboxes of the euthanized butterflies.

at the time in the mid-60s, it was not reliably known that Central Flyway Monarchs wintered in Mexico. it was reliably known that West Coast Flyway Monarchs wintered in Baja.

Nat is holding two females in the photo. males have large black “pods” in their pattern mid-bottom of the back wings, about twice the width of a normal black line.

the project was used by a teaching neighbor for 20 years as a classroom aid, until some wack kid beat it up between therapy sessions.

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 20, 2010 at 10:24 am

The butterflies indeed are part of pre-columbian belief by the Aztecs that they are the happy dead, as opposed to the grateful dead, I guess. I learned this in one of my college anthropology courses from Professor Mountjoy who had been on digs in Mexico.

EG says:
August 20, 2010 at 10:36 am

Excellent work not squishing the butterfly when it flew up your shirt. That might’ve ruined the magic moment.

Flying computers – isn’t nature amazing?

Wramblin' Wreck says:
August 20, 2010 at 10:47 am

Yesterday's Out of Context Ad Challenge was particularly difficult. I still have not figured it out.

GardenStater says:
August 20, 2010 at 10:54 am

@Wramblin’ Wreck: “Yesterday's Out of Context Ad Challenge was particularly difficult. I still have not figured it out.”

It was an ad for laxatives.

Will says:
August 20, 2010 at 11:05 am

I love butterflies, but I’ll terminate their nocturnal cousins (Army Cutworm Moths, here) with extreme vengance.
I’m fond of ladybugs, but most other beetles creep me out. Weird.

**Spud** says:
August 20, 2010 at 11:09 am

Oh, I don’t know about butterflies being flying computers ... maybe flying iPads 😊.

I also have a butterfly bush in the backyard, and it’s nice to watch them, along with the humblebees, work it. My wife put out hummingbird feeders, and we thought we were just helping the local wasps until a few weeks ago when we were visited by a few hummingbirds. They’re always fun to watch how they fly.

NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT:

I checked on PopCrush but didn’t see it mentioned, it being the [Last Tour to Endor](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7820), held last week at WDW – Hollywood. The link at AllEars.net gives pictures and Youtube clips of the celebration. You can enjoy the clips in fullscreen HD too. The audio for Hyperspace Hoopla was oversaturated, but it’s neat to see a typical Disney stage show. For fans of the Indiana Jones – Raiders of the Lost Ark movie lot at Disney-Hollywood, they did a special show where the worlds of Indy and Star Wars meet: Raiders of the Lost Jedi Temple of Doom. The video is about as good as you can expect from a handheld DVR, and it brought back some good memories (as well as a few chuckles) of the Indiana Jones set.

(Sorry if I highjacked the thread, but I wanted to share this before the week was over.)

**nixmom** says:
August 20, 2010 at 11:11 am

Regarding the impressionistic walnuts in the Gallery Covers link.....does anyone else think they look like plucked turkeys fording their way up the cake?

Or is it just time for me to chuck the work week and go home?

**Wagner von Drupen- Sachs** says:
August 20, 2010 at 11:17 am

Yeah, we got nut rustlers down here, too. They're after our pecan logs.

(Dang, you're right. Everything sounds like a double entendre.)

**Joe Btfsplk** says:
August 20, 2010 at 12:13 pm

My wife was a kindergarten teacher for many years and used Painted Lady butterflies as a class project. She would order them from some supplier in NoCal. They would arrive as these teeny little green wormlike things, which they would put into glass jars and feed this green muck paste that came with the kit. Eventually they would grow into giant yucky green worms and then hang from the jar lid and spin a cocoon. When the cocoons would hatch, the kids would release the now beautiful butterflies, thus learning that every yucky green worm turns into a beautiful orange and black butterfly (except for the ones that didn’t eat their “veggies” and shriveled up into a desiccated stick). Now THAT’S a lesson that sticks with you for life!
**swschrad** says:
August 20, 2010 at 12:26 pm

@WramblinWreck: ah, clever dig.
@GardenStater: not diggin' this.

Remember... if the ad has Ronald McDonald, the Hamburglar, and golden arches, it IS a laxative ad.

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**raf** says:
August 20, 2010 at 12:46 pm

@Wramblin Wreck

Are you insinuating slackage? The horror!

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**Marie** says:
August 20, 2010 at 12:48 pm

Cruel, cruel world .. . 1 recipe short of a cookbook.

It was the brownies & cocoa desert that really got to me. Chocolate is good, but brrrrrr.

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**Ed** says:
August 20, 2010 at 1:26 pm

You know, whenever I hear the phrase, “pell-mell” in my head it is always followed by “tumble-bumble”.

😊

My child's 3rd grade class had the opportunity to go to Mexico to see the Monarchs when they where there. I thought that was pretty fantastic, sadly we couldn't go that year. It must have been simply amazing.

---

**Dean** says:
August 20, 2010 at 1:51 pm

I don't like bugs either. But, I never really think of butterflies as bugs. I think of them as little bug-like birds.

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**bgbear (roger h)** says:
August 20, 2010 at 2:05 pm

I always liked the Viceroy butterfly because it was thought to be a sneaky and lazy little opportunist. Now it seems it is just a wannabe.

---

**Paul in NJ** says:
August 20, 2010 at 2:15 pm

Um... wait, what? It's after 3 on the right coast, and no PopCrush Lunch Break? Awww....

That “Get back to work!” is my Friday motivation.
bgbear (roger h) says:
August 20, 2010 at 3:08 pm
That is how you spell Pabst-ett. never could figure it out during “The Great Gildersleeve” Kraft ads. I assumed it was proto-Velveeta, now it makes more sense.

ebt says:
August 20, 2010 at 3:09 pm
I enjoyed the reference to good old “cheese food”. Always loved that name. I used to say I really liked cheese food. Always fed it to my cheese.

GardenStater says:
August 20, 2010 at 3:28 pm
Am I the only one who isn’t able to see the PopCrush videos?

Paul in NJ says:
August 20, 2010 at 3:42 pm
You won’t see the Popcrush videos on the main page, as James noted w/ exasperation earlier this week... click on the title and the subpage will have the video.

But there ain’t no video for today! Du-u-u-de! I am bummed!

Lalawojo says:
August 20, 2010 at 4:23 pm
I thought the bacon, eggs, cheese, and rice dish actually looked pretty good! Maybe I’ll try to re-create it using the picture as a guide for brunch this weekend.

browniejr says:
August 20, 2010 at 4:27 pm
I think the twitter feed explains the lack of a Popcrush today. (signing refi papers) Of course, we may need Mr. Lileks’ signature to prove it...

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:
August 20, 2010 at 5:33 pm
@Ed, pell-mell, tumble bumble, is from The Poky Little Puppy, a Little Golden Book.

Jennifer says:
August 20, 2010 at 8:38 pm
There was a Spongebob episode with a butterfly that creeped out Spongebob and Patrick when they caught a good look up close. Sandy's pet, Wormy, wasn't a worm after all.

I guess it's getting close to that time of year again–I can look out my office window (15th floor) in NYC and see the Monarchs in the midst of their trip south. Not swarms, mind you, but you notice them.
shesnailie says:
August 20, 2010 at 10:51 pm

@_v – pel-mel makes me think of the other other white meat... supplied by pel-freeze...

http://www.pelfreez-bio.com/assets/MainGraphics/LeftCorner.jpg

shesnailie says:
August 22, 2010 at 8:23 pm

@_v – also... in regards to the upcoming movie based on the rainy-day game of battleship... battleship? you couldn't greenlight my 'hungry hungry hippos' project? couldn't get lindsay lohan and paris hilton to sign on for my 'cooties' epic thriller? it's snailism, that's what it is...

Maharincess of Franistan says:
August 24, 2010 at 8:10 am

What killed Pabst-ett was that no one could pronounce it easily. Hardly rolls off the tongue, does it?

I would think that a Pabst-ett was some kind of cheerleader for Pabst beer.
to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
The tide pounded us back, but we struggled into the heaving waves, tossed back on the hard shore, rising, struggling forward again. With a mighty effort I picked up the raft and hurled it forward and climbed aboard, thinking I might be safe – and just as grabbed for a hand-hold the highest wave hit, picked me up, flipped me over, and shoved me down. When I stood I was blind.

Lesson 2: you don’t want to lose your glasses in a wave pool.

To which you might well ask about Lesson 1: don’t wear your glasses in a wave pool. But the previous night I’d never gone down, had kept my bearing, and amused the kids by throwing their rafts into the waves, letting them get swept up on the concrete shore. It was manly work! Honest toil! All the summer’s workouts had led up to this, being Wiry Strong Dude whose small size belied his strength! Uh, yeah. But when I lost my glasses I realized I had committed the hubristic sin of thinking I could best the elements. Act fast: the undercurrents will take them away. The feet of the multitude would crush them, and then I’d be utterly undone for the weekend. Few things make you feel as helpless as trying to find your glasses, because the very thing you need is the thing you seek. But I saw them – I lunged – I got them.

The frames were fine. The lens looked like I’d dodged a velociraptor attack just in time. Gah. So. To the weekend’s hemorrhaging of funds, add that.

Ah well. Things happen. It’s vacation. Things happen.
**It was an unusual vacation:** in addition to our own child, we had two more, kids of a wife's friend. Yes, it was the first family vacation where the kid has peers, which changes the dynamic right away: no longer just the nuclear family but the nuclear family plus protons. Our destination: the Wisconsin Dells.

If you haven’t been to the Dells, you have . . . no idea. It’s a family resort down known for its scenic natural water-based attractions, like, well, Dells. As in the Farmer In The. You can rent a ride on amphibious vehicles, see water shows – or, more likely, pack into enormous pens with a few thousand other half-naked people and bob around in a pool or ride screaming down water chutes. It’s Vegas for kids. They love it. Parents want to call in an airstrike after two days. It depends where you stay, I suppose; some hotels have the water parks built right in, so you don’t have to go to Enormo Splash-World. We stayed at the Great Wolf Lodge:

![Great Wolf Lodge](image)

part of a chain of such places, as manufactured and ersatz and kid-friendly as you can imagine, right down to the robotic animals in the lobby that tell a tale about, altogether now, THE CIRCLE OF LIFE at eight every night. The Circle does not include predation or scavengers, as far as I can tell. Actually it was the Rhythm of Life, something to which the Wise Old Owl is perfectly attuned, as opposed to the rest of us humans who have to be hit on the head to realize the seasons are changing. The kids thought it was SO COOL and AWESOME: ah to be ten. And not paying for it.

It only took three hours to get there. We arrived after four. The room wasn’t ready, so we decided to play MagicQuest, a rather ingenious money-sucker erected in a four-story building next to the hotel. Kids get a wand, which they use to activate items all over the structure. They are on Quests – the usual quasi-medieval stuff where you have to wake the Man in the Stump, find the Rune of Mystery, accumulate skills, and all the rest of the stuff that inevitably
ends by confronting a dragon and killing it. The rhythm of life! (Dragons are the only creatures you’re permitted to kill nowadays, it seems.) It required running all over the structure and pointing your wand at things that said “You have already completed this quest” or “You already have this object,” and since you had dozens of kids playing at once the bedlam of pre-recorded underemployed actors speaking in vaguely British accents was enough to make you lose your mind by the third day, which I did, but that was a few days away.

After we got our room – spacious, with a special room for the kids decorated in fake logs – we ate at Buffalo Phil’s, which had a special room for everyone decorated in fake logs. The attraction? Your food is served on a train! A small train runs around the dining room, and sometimes it has drinks. Most of the time it had action figures. Everyone got big paper hats with Buffalo horns. Our waitress was from South Africa, a med student from Madison down the road. She was old enough so her parents grew up under apartheid. I imagine they are tremendously proud. Lots of foreign students, for that matter – all from different places on the planet, serving pizzas to Midwesterners wearing paper buffalo horns.

Then the water park. Good Lord. The enormity. I thought one room was enough; there were three. Everyone splashed around until exhausted, then went back to the room and collapsed and expired. I was ready to go home.

But no! Day two was exactly more of the same, except we went into town, past one motel and resort after the other. There’s a place called Mt. Olympus – stretches for about a half a mile, and includes an enormous Trojan Horse:

(Took those on a twilight trip to see if I could get some good shots of old motel signs.) (Could not.) We drove through downtown, which is astonishingly well-preserved, albeit smothered with signage to the point where the old downtown buildings are almost invisible. At the end of the downtown I found something that made my heart sing:
And on the way back, an homage (*cough* steal *cough*) of the Great Sign. Ahhh:

**UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU**

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7827) for the full menu. Enjoy!

**BLEAT PREMIUM**

Go [HERE](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7827) to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ulta links is [HERE](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7827)!
We decided to play miniature golf about five minutes before the sun came out and the temp went up 20 degrees, which made for a punishing course. We were right behind a family not having the time of their lives: one utterly sullen tween daughter who threw fits, a Winston-voiced Ma who seemed to fancy herself a Miniature Golf, and Big Daddy, with his stick legs and enormous belly and John Bolton mustache, walking around in silence with a kill-me-now expression. They were slow, partly because sullen tween kept whacking the ball into the bushes JUST TO SHOW YOU ALL HOW STUPID THIS IS.

Once we were done we headed back to MagicQuest for more Questing, then went to eat at the place of the kids’ choosing. Denny’s Diner! Denny’s DINER! It was indeed done up in Diner style, even though it was crammed with anachronisms. Drives me nuts. Hey, let’s put up a picture of James Dean, a 1917 Coke ad, a ROUTE 66 sign, and call it retro! Add 30s style light-fixture and a stamped tin roof and 60s-style booths! It’s all part of the same deal, which is to say it’s THEN, as opposed to NOW. But I did not let this stop me from enjoying it, anymore than this ruined my morning shower.
Anyway. Next stop on the roller-coaster of fun was an enormous indoor arcade called Knuckleheads, which turned out to be attached to Buffalo Phil's. You know the drill: get your tokens, put them in machines, get tickets redeemable for nothing in the world anyone needs. Kids love these places and you love to see kids enjoy them. They give my wife a headache, though, so she went over to Phil's to hear a band play at the bar. I played some air hockey with my daughter; she's good. Cautioned the kids not to waste their tokens on the idiot-traps, the ones that have heaps of tokens constantly raked back and forth into piles; you add your coins in the hopes they'll push over the heaps, which gives you . . . tickets. I've seen people play these things at Vegas, but here there were grown adults feeding tokens into the machine to get tickets, as though you could possibly come out ahead on this transaction. The place wasn't exactly packed for a Saturday night; the large parking lot was sparsely filled, and the restaurant wasn't jamming either. As with so many things these days: wonder if they're making it.

Wandered back to the bowling area. Wandered over to the party rooms, which were decorated in “Old West” themes – including a jail.
So . . . Sheriff Woody put the kids in jail? If that's the case, he seems unnervingly happy about it. (Stretch was in another picture, also with bars.) I'm sure all the rights were paid. Along the wall I saw a poster for a movie I'd never heard of, but I know I must see it now. On the way down the kids had watched “The Pink Panther” – the modern version, of course. Sigh. (They were somewhat surprised when I started whistling along with one of the songs on the soundtrack, which was “The Race” by Yello.) It got me thinking about Blake Edwards, how he was first known for witty radio scripts, and eventually was known for brilliant slapstick. But a Blake Edwards western, with James Coburn? Sold. Sealing the deal, and this is easy: name that artist.
We cashed in our tickets, where the machine had a picture that looked like Pinbot's juvenile-delinquent younger-brother. Is this supposed to be appealing to kids?

Met wife, bought kids soft drinks, sat down as the band began its second set.
Mungo Jerry. “In the Summertime.” All the families, sing along! If her daddy’s rich, take her out for a meal / if her daddy’s poor, just do what you feel.” I had a double vodka. It had flies in it. Double flies.

But it was all fun. Everyone was having fun. No one argued, no one got sulky, threw fits, begged, whined, or anything. I even enjoyed the ersatz Old West theme, since it reminded me of last year’s more authentic Deadwood / Rushmore trip. I sang along with Mungo Jerry, to my daughter’s humiliation. It had been a fun day. Let’s go back to the wave pool!

Two hours later, I was trying to read a book through a lattice of scratches on my glasses, and dealing with a popcorn hull that has apparently worked its way into the nerve ending of a tooth, but that’s life.

The next day we went to Danny’s Diner for breakfast. Danny’s Diner is across the street from Denny’s Diner. Which might explain why Danny’s Diner was closed and for sale. Since I was in no mood to troll the strip for breakfast – I am unreasonable when hungry, and get feral – we went to McDonald’s, because A) the kids would be happy, and B) having laid a check on the refi people the morning we left, I’m not exactly feeling like I want to strew ducats in my wake. (Did the previous day for $115, including meals, excluding lodging, which is not bad for a party of five.) That’s where I finally lost it. Not because of the staff, most of which looked like more imported college students, but because of the people: they had ten minutes to study the menu, and still couldn’t figure things out by the time they got to the line. After they’d placed their orders, some unknown imperative made them drift over to the place where the coffee and condiments were kept, where they formed dense squat knots you could not move with a chainsaw. The Confounders! Curses! At this point I had just had enough of people, and the entire world looked like a giant obstacle course that stood between me and normalcy.

Because this was the beginning. As you’ll see over the next few weeks.

Anyway: we packed the car, then went back . . . to MagicQuest. They had to finish the 12th Quest and kill the dragon. I pointed out that this could be accomplished by unplugging the projector that displayed his image, but they were purists. Well. While they played I wandered back to the gift shop and bought my daughter a little wolf snow-globe, because she likes those, and I could tell now and then she sorta kinda missed by Only Child who was special, and I wanted to slip her something that was one of those dad-daughter things when it was all done, and we were home.

First, though, we had to get there. Fine. Three hours. Piece of pie. Drove along the highway, noting the upcoming construction: LANE CLOSURES. Usually I hate these, because they give me agita in the form of claustrophobia, but I’d checked the Wisconsin highway department site, and all the work was nocturnal. As it should be. But it made me smile, in a crooked, bitter fashion: on this very stretch of highway, many many years ago, I’d gotten stuck in highway construction on the way back from a disastrous weekend with a girlfriend who was away for the summer and not
being, shall we say, true to her school. This had upended my world at the
time, and the kinghell panic attack – the second; the first was a month before
– hit with world-flooding fury, and I found myself in the middle of a convoy
of National Guard vehicles, unable to go left or right or around, and my heart
started pounding, my feet went numb, my hands went numb, my solar plexus
went numb, and I thought I was going to die.

I made it home, but that changed my highway joy forever, and it would take
many many years to conquer what eventually became a bonafide anxiety
disorder. This was that road.

On the other hand: it had a been a great trip. Fumbled for my iPod,
thumbscrolled around to Holiday Road, and hit it. Really, that's what a dad's
job is, in the end. Get them to WallyWorld.

Note about this week: relations are piling into Jasperwood. The Fair begins.
Two weeks of wonderfulness starts Monday, and this means the temporary
suspension of most updates to the site. Rest assured that I will chip away at
the updates as I can, so when normalcy returns in September – cursed be the
very name, cozening foe of Summer – I can deploy everything. See you at the
usual places in the meantime, and as ever, you can check Twitter for any
tumblr updates. Summer

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### 59 RESPONSES TO *hi-ho the merry-o*

**swschrad** says:
August 23, 2010 at 4:58 pm

immensely enjoyed both Maui North and the Gulf Coast the two
times I've been there. had time to tempt the fates and get burned
both places.

Pacific surf was fun indeed to charge into, but it took three tries.
they don't call it the "cold California current" for nothing. until I
couldn't feel my feet, I couldn't get in deeper than my toenails.

**jeischen** says:
August 23, 2010 at 5:01 pm

I'd like to see that movie poster done Don Martin style, with big
noses and flappity clown feet. Then again, maybe not.

I sent the wife and kids on vacation by themselves a few weeks ago,
for the first time. Deadlines at work. Missed the cool Rocky
Mountains while broiling in a heat wave at home. But the solitude
was a welcome break. I'm good for about three days, maybe four
tops, on vacation. Then I start getting restless. I need to learn how to
relax. Sometimes vacations are more stressful than the rat race you
left behind.
Al Federber says:
August 23, 2010 at 9:01 pm

I was quite surprised to learn that James does not travel with two pairs of glasses.

Larry says:
August 23, 2010 at 9:41 pm

To the guy that questioned if was Mad always this bad, see the National Lampoon parody of Mad which contained a spoof entitled, “You know you’re too old for Mad when...” piece.

http://johnglenntaylor.blogspot.com/2009/12/what-me-funny.html

Mad may have gone down hill but mainly you are no longer 13 years old.

Dave (in MA) says:
August 23, 2010 at 11:56 pm

Re: “enormity” (Merriam-Webster)
Ain’t nothing wrong with what James done wrote.

Mr Tall says:
August 24, 2010 at 12:14 am

A note to swschrad: if your son needs too much correction to allow for lasik, he might consider looking into ICLs, i.e. intraocular contact lenses. I had the same problem — I was far too shortsighted to qualify for lasik — but had ICLs inserted about a year ago and am very happy with the results. The surgery is a bit more involved than lasik, and more expensive, but it’s still just an outpatient job, and the freedom from glasses and contacts (with increasing problems with eye dryness and infections as I aged) has been more than worth it.

Mikey NTH says:
August 24, 2010 at 1:23 pm

Thare are these straps that go over the temples of the glasses and around the back. I got a set when I was whitewater rafting and I still have them for sailing.

Mikey NTH says:
August 24, 2010 at 1:31 pm

And don’t forget that Blake Edwards produced “Peter Gunn”.

Patrick says:
August 24, 2010 at 8:11 pm

After Bill Gaines passed away, MAD went down hill so fast that Don Martin (also deceased) wouldn’t have been able to find a sound effect for it. Last time I picked up an issue (a few years ago) I noticed they started putting ads in the magazine. Not their parody ads, mind you, but real ads. Ads for vidya games, snacks, and anything else appealing to a teenager.

I used to buy a lot of the “Collector’s Edition” issues, which featured
reprints from various earlier issues, all pertaining to one topic. I had one dealing with pets, another dealing with TV shows, and a couple others that were “Readers’ Choice”. I thought the earlier stuff was funnier than the newer stuff, especially Don Martin’s comics, as well as any of the Spy vs. Spy comics.
We learned why a neighbor's house had skid-marks on the lawn and a pair of knocked-down trees: while we were away for the weekend, a car thief being chased by the police had shot through the neighborhood, missed a turn, smacked into a parked car, went up on a hill, flipped the car – and escaped. I hate criminals. You look at those tracks and you can imagine how many lives this idiot has marred.

I love the fact that my job actually includes composing music. Not that it's good, but I get paid for it. Tonight I had to whip together a quick intro for this . . . very, very cool thing we're doing for the State Fair. It's a secret project. It's got social networking automagically baked in! to use all the cliches. I have to go to the Fair on day 1 and shoot, oh, 13 very short videos, which should make for an interesting day; this is for the main intro to the sequence. It's a great job when you get to write your own theme music.

That was the day – writing, doing a video in the basement, writing more, napping, making dinner, then writing music, then trying to watch the Miss Universe pageant with my mother-in-law in the room. Once again, the job comes to the rescue: I hit “record” on the DVR and said “I have to write about this tomorrow.” I really do. So I also love the fact that my job actually includes watching Miss Universe.

The high point of the day, perhaps: encouraging daughter to copy someone else's art. She found a painting she really admired, and I told her to trace it.
Learn how the artist did the fur. “That's cheating,” she said. Not really: in college I copied writers I liked, which is a form of tracing. I still have echoes of my favorites in my work; sometimes I look at a line, and think: I know exactly which S. J. Perelman line inspired that. Sometimes it's the deadpan declaration of a Fran Lebowitz line – man, we thought she was brilliant, and then she wrote another book which was somewhat more along the meh end of the spectrum, and then Salinger city for her. The one writer I'm glad I shook was Woody Allen, who had that collegiate knack for pretentious allusion mixed with absurdity; it seemed very smart and clever at the time, but now sounds silly.

Anyway: when I walked by her room later, she was tracing the drawing. Then she did one of her own, and the background was really quite fine.

“People make a living as background artists,” I said. She asked what I meant, and I said there were people who designed the backgrounds for animation, and this was just as important as the people who drew the characters. More so sometimes. Makes me wish there were background artists for fiction; would make my life more interesting. Someone to write the long expository scenes that seem to consist of people walking here and picking up this and looking at that . . . but enough of the “Girl With The Leaden Author” series.

I finished the second one while in the Dells; it certainly picked up towards the end, but I'm a bit tired of Lisbeth Salander, Unstoppable Cyborg who also has the physique of a 14-year-old but can't be stopped because she's angry and brilliant! Yes, I have to read the third one now. It must be done. If nothing else I will remember this summer by these books, just as I remember last summer from the Steve Saylor “Gordianus the Finder” series. Also, since I'm writing fiction a lot these days, it's a good primer for what NOT TO DO. Or what you can do if you throw in lots of tedious sex. The author reminds me of those guys in college who hoped they'd be regarded as cool and enlightened because they agreed all men were gynophobic would-be rapists, in a meta sense, except for me, of course, I'm cool. Want to talk about Kate Chopin?

I did take a class in Women's Lit in college, as part of my English major. It was an erective. Sorry! An elective! Ha ha. Inadvertent assertion of the inherent phallocracy there, can't be helped. I thought this was what I was supposed to do, study proto-feminist writers and all, but I've never felt such bristling hostility as I felt on the first day of class: YOU ARE GOING TO RUIN EVERYTHING. I suppose I did. But that was my first introduction to the Gender Wars. You weren't really expected to participate in your own reeducation.

So that's all I have. I warned you it would be that sort of week. Bonus joy for the day: since I ruined my glasses within six months, I was entitled to half off their already preposterous price, so there's that. I got to make daughter lunch, which is a rare thing and cause for joy even if it's a bagel, so there's that, too. I took a picture of the dog, which I should do every day except he always has the same noble posture, so it's rather redundant. But here you go.
And now I’m going to watch Mad Men.

100 RESPONSES TO personal theme songs

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 24, 2010 at 12:00 pm

@Bill Peschal, sorry for your loss. We had a British Blue cat named Esmerelda who lived for nearly 25 years, even before my Dearly Beloved and I were married. It was sad when we (including 4 year old daughter) had to return her to the earth. Her absence left a gaping hole in our family and house for some time.

Brisko says:
August 24, 2010 at 12:01 pm

@Joe Sixpack

What concern is it of yours how someone else raises their child as long as the kid is healthy, happy and well-adjusted?

I guarantee the young Ms. Lileks is having a better childhood than
your pathetic ass had. Get a life and live it, loser.

hpoulter says:
August 24, 2010 at 12:12 pm

@Bill Peschel – My sympathy. I have buried a few cats – the one that broke my heart the most was a big, lovable part-Maine-coon who took sick suddenly and died in his prime. I'm glad yours had a long run.

@Pencilpal – you're right, that's a waltz – and a glorious one. Makes me want to go get happy drunk.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 24, 2010 at 12:13 pm

Sorry Bill, cats are little devils when it comes to stealing your heart. Our last cat was like a fixture of the house since we had him the entire time we lived there. The replacement cat is still the “new guy” even though he has been around for two years already.

@swschrad, so, have you taught your cat to use the insulin injector/hypo despite his not having opposable thumbs?

Mr_Hat says:
August 24, 2010 at 12:15 pm

Good to see Jasper still doing so well. Our old dog (14 y/o) passed away this spring. We now have two younger smaller dogs who are absolutely delightful, though as different as can be from the late Mr. Puppy.

Glad to see someone else weigh in with multiple theme songs. Peter Gunn, of course, and its cousin Planet Claire. Friend of the Devil and Mexicali Blues are great for summer. Ghost Town for autumn. Also Henri Rene's Compulsion to Swing.

GardenStater says:
August 24, 2010 at 12:38 pm

@Bill Peschal: So sorry for your loss. We lost our 14-year-old St Bernard in May, and I cried like a baby. Always hard to lose a furry companion.

swschrad says:
August 24, 2010 at 12:42 pm

@Brisco @JoeSixpack: hey, take it outside! we run a clean joint here! don't need no more coppers in here, we just got our license back!

RebeccaH says:
August 24, 2010 at 1:14 pm

For what it's worth, and not that anybody cares, but I despise “women's lit”. The stories always have that kind of vague, lost, whiny main character who's trying to find her inner woman warrior, and that's the kind of character whose face I would want to push into the mashed potatoes, just because I could.
Mark E. Hurling says:
August 24, 2010 at 1:32 pm

swschrad, that was almost a verbatim restatement of something I heard from a barkeep as I came in the side door to break up a fight in Creve Coeur, IL. Too funny. Unfortunately for him the place lost it's license again.

shesnailie says:
August 24, 2010 at 1:39 pm

_@_v – ‘money montage’ from the taking of pelham 1-2-3

Mr. Manager says:
August 24, 2010 at 1:55 pm

“We’ll Meet Again”- (the Vera Lynn/Dr. Strangelove version) is my theme song if I’m feeling down and “If I Only Had A Brain” is my theme song when I’m feeling cheerful.

Writeaway says:
August 24, 2010 at 2:06 pm

When I'm slogging through a project, (as I am right now) I think of “I Want to Be Sedated” (after all 24 hours is 3 work days).

swschrad says:
August 24, 2010 at 2:07 pm

@RebeccaH: you find yourself by getting out of the house and doing stuff. I have a relative who never got to that stage, and the urge to drag them downtown to confess it publicly, never mind how urged, periodically rises.

I can call on the Lord's strength to beat it back. there is no way in the world I can fathom how anybody would pay hard cash money to read “you don't understand!!!” in a whiney book.

it makes me contemplate lime, shovels, and a roll of carpet in a rented van, frankly. Simon, help me out here… .

Medium Wave says:
August 24, 2010 at 2:16 pm

Due to my being a math major and the fact that my formal education was concluded prior to the introduction of “women's studies” courses and their ilk, I totally avoided the touchy-feely stuff. No regrets at all.

Theme song: BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN DANCING IN THE DARK 12" MIX

Courteney Cox.

Good pic of His Jasperness!

MJBirch says:
August 24, 2010 at 2:19 pm

Ah yes, Women's Literature, or MsLit as I called it. Or if you add the letter “c”… never mind. Ignore that.
I remember one particular class discussion “could a MAN actually write a believable WOMAN character or a valid book about WOMEN?” We had just read “Lady Chatterly's Lover” — general consensus was “No, no, of course not, never, NEVER…” When called upon, I said that whether it was believable or not, D. H. Lawrence at least deserved kudos for creating a really great female fantasy (Mellors, the gamekeeper… yum).

Silence from the room.

I once earned myself a row of nasty glares when I said that too much of the women's movement was overly-organized self-pity. (Don't want to be equal; prefer to remain superior!)

But I WOULD like to be a middle-aged fictional woman in a book written by a middle-aged woman because those characters always wind up with a really nice man by the last page. (I'm guessing that this is because only middle-aged women read this sort of book any more — personally, I'm reading “Last Call” and “How the Irish Saved Civilization”).

Cats… purring, ticking grief-bombs. Sooner or later…

hpoulter says:
August 24, 2010 at 2:29 pm

I'm sure women readers have had to put up with a lot of preposterous female characters imagined by male writers, but the reverse is often true, too. I read a couple of those “Cat who” mysteries by Lilian Jackson Braun (not to be confused with lesbo-womyn activist Rita Mae Brown, who also writes cat mysteries). The key to her “detective” character, James Qwilleran, is that he thinks and acts just like a little old lady.

RPD says:
August 24, 2010 at 2:36 pm

@Grebmbr: Thanks for the data. Sometimes reflexes are too strong to be denied.

Irish Al says:
August 24, 2010 at 2:58 pm

I'll look out for the police chase on America's Most Dumbest Amazing Police Criminal Videos III.

swschrad says:
August 24, 2010 at 4:17 pm

@Irish Al: sounds like the warmup act for the Redneck Comedy Tour. or the first show at the Moonshine Drive-In.

this time in, I'm back-seat, don’t put me in the trunk.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 24, 2010 at 4:29 pm

On the suburban country road we travel on to get home, someone drives through a fence about once a year, often the same fence (maybe the same driver).

I assume alcohol may be involved but, do not rule out: unfamiliarity
with the winding road, sleep deprivation, deer avoidance or a combination of all.

I have not seen a sheriff patrol car on the road in years so, police chase is not on my list.

boblipton says:
August 24, 2010 at 4:44 pm

I've been reading Dickens over the last couple of ears — currently DOMBEY & SON. I don't know if his female characters are real, but they have problems that I can sympathize with.

Bob

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 24, 2010 at 5:01 pm

Here's a question to take it away from literature for a bit for a different perspective.

Who is usually more convincing, a man impersonating a woman or a woman impersonating a man? I don't necessarily mean the body looking correct but, the act itself, the pantomime, the overall impression.

Seem that some of the same factors are involved as in writing a part for another sex.

Patrick says:
August 24, 2010 at 5:09 pm

We've had two losses in the pet household over the last few months.

Early this year we had to say goodbye to our Seal-point Siamese, Kim, whom we had been owned by since 1998. Her health had been going downhill for a couple of years, then one night she apparently had a stroke and went completely blind. She was pretty much already gone when my dad took her to the vet to ease her pain forever.

A couple of weeks ago, we said goodbye to our black lab Magic, whom we adopted from an elderly woman that lives in the Section 8 housing authority behind our house. Magic was more my dad's dog than anyone else's, although she got along fine with my mom or I, especially if TREATS! were concerned. Especially COOKIES! or MEAT! She was 17 years old, and had congested heart failure.

Kerry Potenza says:
August 24, 2010 at 5:38 pm

@MJBirch

I, too, read “How the Irish Saved Civilization” -what an excellent book! That was probably the last book I read before nursing school and slogging through all the textbooks. After a recent spate of trash reading, I am now ready to tackle literature again. I think I'll start re-reading Dickens.

@boblipton: “Dombey & Son” is probably the only Dickens I haven't read yet. Perhaps I'll start with that one.
Kevin says:
August 24, 2010 at 7:40 pm

I once got a “C” in an Indian Philosophy class, because I had the audacity to challenge the weak epistemology that the Professor was trying to foist onto us. Everyone else was taking it for General Ed. credits, but I was a Philosophy major, and I was the only one trying really to do Philosophy. Not that I’m bitter (34 years later), but it did keep me from graduating Summa Cum Laude. Which– come to think of it– had not had the SLIGHTEST impact on my life. Guess I can stop complaining now, huh?

boblipton says:
August 24, 2010 at 8:00 pm

Kevin, I say this more in sorrow than in anger: you deserved that C. You got it because you did not understand the point of that class: it was not to study philosophy, but to get an A, and when you are confronted with the Truth, arguing is a sure sign you have not understood the truth.

I learned this valuable lesson in high school chemistry lab. I did the experiments, recorded the data and got an F, because the data I got was not the data I should have gotten. Fortunately I learned this lesson in time. I still ran the experiments, but I recorded the data I should have gotten and was able to get my grade up to a B+ by the end of the semester.

When you are not dealing with quantifiable results, the issue of correct data becomes a little more vague on the surface, but it is easily understood: whatever the professor tells you is the truth. Just spout it back. Never mind this is not education as you and I understand it, but rote memorization, it satisfies the goals of any class, which is to get an A.

When you reach grad school it gets more interesting, since you must agree with the major theses of the professor, which will prove you a Sound Thinker. But you must challenge at least one minor lemma. This will demonstrate your originality. Fortunately, people who start from ridiculous bases are usually bad thinkers and it's easy enough to do.

Bob

Mag says:
August 24, 2010 at 11:30 pm

BgBear, a woman impersonating a man is more convincing. She just have to shuffle around and grumble and be more blocky in her movements, but impersonators don’t get the girly thing right. Too femme/swishy.

Soozcat says:
August 25, 2010 at 2:11 am

I know I’m probably going to regret saying this in a public forum, but: I will only consider taking the feminist movement seriously when feminists stop their endless yammering for “equal rights” and start stepping up to accept equal responsibilities. I am thinking specifically of registering for Selective Service, a duty currently only required of young men in the United States, but there are numerous
other examples. If you really want equality, you’d better be willing to shoulder the load equality requires; it's not all ice cream and no lima beans.

**hpoulter** says:
August 25, 2010 at 7:19 am

Woe am us, the Bleat is late again.

**Grebmar** says:
August 25, 2010 at 8:07 am

State Fair season cometh. Hence the regrettable detainment of our daily dose of Bleatage.

**RPD** says:
August 25, 2010 at 8:13 am

The Bleat may be late but we have a vast richness of contributors to read in regards to yesterday's Bleat.

**Charlie Young** says:
August 25, 2010 at 9:48 am

boblipton-I don’t know if I agree with you on your example of the high school chem lab. Lab science is just as much about technique as it is about results. You stated you got the wrong data and therefore failed. Instead of modifying your technique, you fudged the data to get your desired grade. You knew what results you should have had from an experiment, so you just formed your data to conform with what had been set as the known parameters for a specific reaction. Though time was limited, you should have either repeated the experiment under better conditions or tried to understand where your technique failed. There was also the possibility you were correct and you may have been on your way to a Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
August 25, 2010 at 10:12 am

@mag, I suppose if you are impersonating femme/swishy woman that is what you get.

Martin Short does a a very good Katherine Hepburn without relying on “girly” exaggerations.

The only woman I recall that does a good man is Tracy Ullman and of course Linda Hunt won an academy award for playing a wee man.

**swschrad** says:
August 25, 2010 at 10:17 am

it has been my experience that teachers prefer a No Bull effort in the sciences.

**Wagner von Drupen-Sachs** says:
August 25, 2010 at 12:12 pm
I love those “Truth is Stranger than Fiction” stories (a la Tumblr), don't you? EXCEPT WHEN THEY'RE FICTIONAL! “This is not a true tale, but who needs truth, when it's dull?” (Mason Williams, The Exciting Accident)

**swschrad** says:

August 25, 2010 at 1:47 pm

**Doin' The Fair:**

much of MN will either shut down to move to Falcon Heights for the next 12 days to be part of the state fair, “The Great Minnesota Get-Together™.

Big Iron on Machinery Hill has become a canard, there are a few tractors and trucks, along with slicks and their brochures. mostly it's food booths, food animals young and old bringing enterodisease to your kids and their grubby, pawing hands, rides. food booths. folks handing out gimme bags with big logos to haul all the brochures and stuff around. lots of sales booths.

almost hidden away is the crafts building, where the quilts and woodworks and seed art hang out. there are some magnificent things to see in there.

and the huge fish pond full of muskies and paddlefish and other legends of the north. a “follow” of the bait is the culmination of a muskie fisherman's year. talk about no-lifes watching reality shows 😄

Today, Our Genial Host is hiding out, layering his special work clothes with hidden pockets of Maalox and Immodium, sewing $20s into the hems, so he can duck us and do newspapery things tomorrow.

if you were a Minnesotan, ya sure, then, Sven, so what would you do if you dropped $8.50 at the gate and swirled through 40-70,000 other Norskies downwind of the barns and upwind of the funnel cakes? then.

if food, remember, it has to be on a stick to be counted.

**Kevin** says:

August 25, 2010 at 2:38 pm

To boblipton and Charlie Young:
Curiously, I now provide admin. support in a natl. scientific lab, and the issue of 'fudging the data' is not trivial. I know a couple of researchers who have had to withdraw a publication due to the data having been fudged.

Yet others of my scientists also tell me of the pressure to walk in lockstep, mandated to a degree by the funding agencies, and to a degree by the accepted orthodoxy.

It has been significantly enlightening to work here– prior to starting here, I had the view that the general public has, that scientific research is close to as pure an endeavor and pursuit as exists today; after having been here for 20 years, it's not that I'm jaded, but I know that scientists are just human, too, and they too have their worldview prejudices and their own requirements to which they feel compelled to submit, to accommodate what C.S. Lewis calls the Spirit of the Age.
swschrad says:
August 25, 2010 at 2:56 pm

@Kevin: it has been often thus. otherwise called “publish or perish.”

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 25, 2010 at 3:19 pm

What is annoying is that many find it easy and understandable to be skeptical of research funded by RJ Reynolds or Standard Oil but, don’t see the possibility of outside influence/pressure by funding sources that have “good intentions”.

swschrad says:
August 25, 2010 at 4:03 pm

just found a wonderful circular reference job on Fox.


... the CIA had a front company that helped fund the predecessor to Google Earth. that satellite pix company used technology from two other new-tech outfits renting commercial photo satellite technology of, uhhh, interesting financials, shall we say, IIRC. all on Da ISH.

one of the acronym agencies in the intelligence cluster (and boy, what a cluster) responded to a FOI by Fox and others, and wonderment! — there was a no-bid contract about to be awarded to Google to allow repurposing that satellite info for access by the rest of the intelligence cluster. apparently because the hi-res stuff DSA, NSA, CIA, m-o-u-s-e has is too hard to get to.

and Microsoft Bing wants a piece of the action, now that it’s been found out. except their contracts with the public skypix outfits are not as fulfilling in places of interest, like, Iran and so forth, and there are lots of “no map available” from Bing.

moral: good intentions or not, be skeptical, period.

Charlie Young says:
August 25, 2010 at 4:07 pm

I’m still a firm believer that what people learn in school has the least to do with most great discoveries. It forms a foundation, but it all really comes down to what you do with what you learn and your tenacity and desire.

Most great discoveries come not from an “ah-ha!” moment of learned knowlwdge, but a “WTF” moment, when things don’t go the way you planned. The “ah-ha” comes much later after you put the real work into finding out what went wrong.

Charlie Young says:
August 25, 2010 at 4:09 pm

Maybe that explains why kids have to make the same mistakes their parents supposedly told them not to make.
Mark E. Hurling says:
August 25, 2010 at 4:39 pm

@swschrad, I've know of the DIA, DSS, and DEA. First I've heard of the DSA, and can find nothing about it. Do you have more info on that new alpha soup?

Gene Dillenburg says:
August 25, 2010 at 4:48 pm

Natasha Fatale was, of course, Boris Badenov's partner in fiendishness.

We lost a kitty about a week ago, and it wasn't even ours. Scrawny little fella shows up in the neighborhood of a Thursday night, scavenging road kill. By Saturday, he had figured out that the people in the gray stucco house were a soft touch, and he hung out in our back yard. There was, unfortunately, never any chance that we could keep him — we have 3 already, which is pushing our limit, and none of them took kindly to the little interloper. Still, it was a joy to watch him running around the yard, exploring the garden, come mewling for scratches, collapsing at our feet, and curling up on our laps to fall asleep.

Come Tuesday, it was time to take him to the animal shelter. This proved to be a surprisingly difficult thing to do. On the way down I kept telling him how lucky he was — the doctor would get him all fixed up, then he'd get a new home with new people to take care of him forever. I guess I was talking to myself. At the shelter, he immediately charmed all the county employees.

The next afternoon, the phone rang. The shelter wanted to know if I knew the whereabouts of his mother and littermates. Turns out he had feline leukemia — fatal, painful, incurable, transmissible. They had to put him down, and wanted to get other infected cats off the street.

Thurber said it best: “A thing of beauty is a joy for such a short time.” I don’t have a theme song, but if I had a theme author, it would probably be Thurber.

swschrad says:
August 25, 2010 at 5:17 pm

@Gene: sorry, the life of a wild cat is not special and not long.
@Mark: brain fade. there is a DMA (defense mapping agency) and of course the DIA (oxymoron), but D-S-A is purely the result afailk of typing with the wrong foot.

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 25, 2010 at 5:20 pm

Well as you no doubt noticed I have some issues with that too. DMA is almost certainly the one. They don't quite inhabit the spook house but will waft out to the fence to moan at you when you whistle past the graveyard.

swschrad says:
August 25, 2010 at 8:44 pm

DMA has to have enough liasons to intelligence to grid and GPS the
photos off the satellites. In any event, I don't even see TV shows of those circles, so anything I know about them has been in the open for so long they're probably not using jumbo green crayons any more.

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 25, 2010 at 11:28 pm

This may just be a slight variation of what you said, but their job is providing maps and coordinates for all and sundry in the Intel and Armed Forces communities. Coordinates for things like the Cruise missiles for instance. They give (gave) generic data to these folks some years ago and are now probably only allowed to rattle some chains despairingly and warn of impending doom these days. Much like the ghosts to Scrooge in Dickens' Christmas story.

Gene Dillenburg says:
August 26, 2010 at 9:39 am

@swschrad: All life is special. It's pretty much the most special thing there is. And while this particular kitten may or may not have been born wild (we have reason to believe it was an uncared-for pet), it certainly became a cherished companion.

Thank you for your concern.

xrayguy says:
August 28, 2010 at 9:09 pm

Sorry I'm late reading everything this week (not that you look for me, but anyway….)When I work the weekend at the hospital, I let the Bleats pile up so I can have something to read between patients. Background artists-I was watching one of the original Tom and Jerry films (back when it WAS film) with my son and saw in the opening credits "background artist" and a name. I am sorry to say I don't remember the name, but by Gawd I looked at those backgrounds. There was variation in the edge of the rug, seams in the corner quarter-round moulding on the floor and NOT the same floor lamp going by during the chase-damn good job done by someone WHO WAS AN ARTIST. I hope the guy went on to become a lead animator somewhere or worked on the Coke campaign for BBd&O or something. He was better than the any of the hacks that came along 10 yrs later.
Note: forgot to post the post last night, so today has a bonus Bleat.

I love when the mail delivers something that instantly screams out to be A COLUMN NOW, please. I have a piece due Friday for the National Review, the back-of-the-book cultural “bright” spot usually inhabited by Mark Steyn. You know those scenes in horror movies where the heroine has a haunted dream, and everything's desaturated, with dead leaves blowing around? Well: the new Restoration Hardware catalog arrived today. It's like that.
Apologies if the bright, vivid colors sear your eyes. The dead muted palette has a purpose: the preface specifically ties the new look to “the global economic collapse,” and seems to suggest you should buy these things so you can position yourself as an aesthetic curator of the best of pre- and post-industrial civilization.
My God, who died? The level of pretension in the item description is just precious. **Genuine reproductions!** Oh, this will write itself.

**Happily now** we roll towards the wonderful hell: Fair starts Thursday. I have been writing about the Fair for twenty-five years. It’s like writing about the same battle, over and over again. Little changes, which is one of the eternal attractions, but it makes for interesting challenges. You have to presume people remember what you wrote before, and since I have a horror of recycling material, this means coming up with new, fresh perspectives on the About a Foot Long Hot Dog stand.

I have to admit I’m not looking forward to the About a Foot Long as I have in previous years. The last few dogs have not settled well. Hot weather, cold – doesn’t matter. They hit the stomach, and then they laugh at you. Couldn’t resist, eh? Well, do what you want, but I’m not going anywhere. Or maybe I am! Comin’ up! Just kidding. I’m not even that crazy about a corn dog, to be honest. I like them, and it’s certainly part of the Fair to have one, just as it’s part of the ritual to buy a bag of Tom Thumb donuts (Light as a feather!) and save a few for later, only to find they have turned into a donut version of something that staggered out of the Pet Semetary, all wrong. Just wrong. But you can’t eat them all at once, because then you’re sick. Fair food turns on
you faster than a French ally after the war’s won.

Heresy it may be, but with age comes wisdom, and maybe I don’t have to eat what I ate a quarter-century ago. They’ve probably changed the grease. But still. There’s a hot dog place that makes an unbelievable chili dog on a seeded roll. There’s a place that serves hamburgers whose flavor whispers of drive-ins long ago. There’s a joint I know where you can get hot meatloaf if it’s a cold day, and they have Heinz 57 – the old Lutheran Tabasco – if you want to give it a jolt. And the coffee’s unlimited, too.

Stop! I’m blowing material! Good Lord, I must be mad. I’ll be writing and shooting and talking about this enough in the next ten days.

The Fair, again? It was just the other day. Where did the year go; what did I do?

Lots, as it turns out. The year between this Fair and the last was a pile of barbed wire, but it got better and better and now it’s fine, all things considered. But I shouldn’t be writing: I should be cleaning. One houseguest left today; another arrives tonight, and you know your wife wants the place to look spin and/or span for her sister, so I’ve been polishing and wiping and straightening while blasting techno from the iPod. I draw the line at sweeping the garage, though. If she wants to put on white linen pants and crawl around on hands and knees, well, then a price will have to be paid.

Back in a bit.

So. This morning I had a meeting at the kitchen table with one of the paper’s bright young multimedia guys; he’s got us hooked up with something that will add location-based social media and several other buzzwords to our Fair website offerings. Get this: here’s how my job keeps changing. Today I wrote the replies people will get on their cellphones when they enter certain answers into the program. I was chosen because I could deliver Snark, if needed. Since we’re also pumping tiny 10-second videos as part of the plan, I had to write ten little scripts, deliver them in front of my greenscreen in the basement, then ship those off. Tomorrow we shoot the introductory video, and the motto is “fast.” Mike me up, get the camera off the sticks, 360 around me while I yak, and bang, next scene. Then I will shoot my own video, blog about the Fair, write a column about it, and that ends the first shift around four.

Something I’ve noticed about people in multimedia and web-related professions: the entire day is the workday. I like this. I mean, it’s hell if there’s no downtime, but everything’s exploded: there is no office in the old sense, just places where the magic rays of wifi connect you to the throbbing invisible gristle of the great Imaginarium. There’s no five o’clock quitting time because you might have a great idea at seven. You live your profession, more or less, sliding in and out of work and personal roles. It’s that last point that makes it different from soul-crushing jobs like, say, being a law partner: you’re always billing, you’re always working, and it’s all either-or. Some days I feel like I spent two decades twiddling my thumbs waiting for this world.
Really: when I got into newspapers and was given a computer hooked up to the AP wire, it was heaven. But frustrating: do more! Be more! Have some more colors! We would read Wired and dream of the world to come. When the internet eventually arrived – and it seemed to do so all at once, bang, here's the browser, GO – it was like being starved for a week and getting a plate of hamburgers with a frosty malt and oh, we invented safe non-toxic cigarettes full of vitamins that enhance lung functions; light up and drag ‘em deep! It's everything you've been waiting for, chum.

Anyway. Nothing more redundant than spending your time on the internet writing about the internet; sorry. Little else to say today. Took my daughter to piano. Glared at the sun for not being warmer. BE WARMER. Gave the dog a scrap of pizza, then took it back because my wife reminded me I should cut it up for him so he can't eat it all at once and enjoys it more.

But it's possible he's frustrated because it takes longer to eat.

She didn't agree. I think she's wrong. For dogs there are two states: FOOD and NOT FOOD. Once they hit the second state the fact that there was ever FOOD in the first place is forgotten; they are now experiencing NOT FOOD, and so the mission is now FOOD. Which is why he drove us nuts today. From me he expects no scraps while I eat. I never gave him any. As Alpha, I eat what I want, and if there's anything left, that's another issue. But the rest of the pack always shared, out of that peculiar human virtue called kindness – or, more likely, their inability to turn down that pleading, curious face – so he has, over the years, come to view their food as his food. So. When they come home after I've had supper, he harangues them. When they eat separate meals spaced a half-hour apart, he has to yell at them. When everything is done but there are still visual and scent-related clues that the possibility of FOOD exists, he will bark to be let outside where we sit, BARK to demand we go inside, BARK when we get there, BARK when we leave in exasperation, and BARK until someone does something stupid, like give him a few bits of kibble, which guarantees more barking tomorrow.

The wife and child say “he feels cheated” otherwise, but I try to explain that they are investing human emotions into a rather simple creature. What dogs want is this: they want an answer. Is there someone at the door? Yes or no. Is a walk about to happen? Yes or no. Is there more food? Yes or no. If the expectation is YES and the answer is NO, then they put their head down and stare and sigh, that wonderfully human gust of disappointment, but it's the sound they make when they get the answer, and it's the wrong one. But that's okay. It fits in the order of things. Dogs hate uncertainty. It makes them neurotic.

My dog's not neurotic. He just has his priorities straight and knows what works. From that we could all take a lesson.
dumblone says:
August 31, 2010 at 11:09 pm

My personal computer was down for the past few days so I'm just catching up on back Bleats, and about fainted dead away when I saw the "Restoration Hardware" catalog. Got ours the other day and my husband said something to the effect "when James Lileks uncovers this sometime in the future, it will be perfect fodder for "Interior Desecrations part Deux." Why the giant clocks in every room? (I guess so your guests can say "My! Look at the time!" ??) Why the plinths? Why why why?

We had an odd feeling of betrayal. Back when my husband and I were newlyweds restoring our little Sears bungalow, Restoration Hardware was actually a source for well… hardware, for, I dunno… restoration. The place to go to try to find a match for the missing cabinet hinge in our kitchen and the like. Pretentious enough, in its way, as I guess but … my goodness what have we and RH become? Have we sunk from mildly persnickety people who want our old cabinets to match to some kind of self-absorbed czar of the McMansion, who can not rest until we have built a temple crowned by our own reproduction of Big Ben in every room of the house?

Just re-subscribed to NRO dead-tree edition a few weeks ago, and was delighted to find James Lileks was there on the end page. Reading the comments here it seems like that is a recent addition – which actually makes me feel better as I'd be kicking myself if I had been missing out for the whole past year due to my negligence in filling out the darned subscription renewal notices (they send them out so early I never know when they are real and when they are just faking.)

So, all that just to say that the husband and I will be waiting for the Restoration Hardware column with bated breath. Might even have it framed.
Lately I’ve been FFing through old TV shows I find, looking for things – clues, locations, inadvertent documentaries, horrible old interior design ideas. I don’t actually want to watch the shows, even if there is a certain morbid fascination with the series finale of “Alice.” Life is too short to watch bad TV. But I came across a 1967 “FBI,” which I recall watching as a kid at my Grandpa’s house. For some reason I thought every episode ended with a sermon from Hoover. I guess not. But lo, look at what stands in the opening scenes:
The Victory Drive-in. You don’t have to know it’s a drive-in to know that’s a drive-in. It was essential to the plot, since the agents go back and set up a sniper’s nest:
Gone now. There's no point in putting up a Google streetview map; might as well be another planet.

**One of the first last days** of summer. What would have been glorious warmth on an April morning is now a fearsome chill: 66 at 8 AM? This portends ill. It warmed up enough so I could sit outside and work, and after I'd finished the main work – good Lord, what a lot of running around and talking; I practice my speech in the shower, go to the basement, record it, run upstairs to the second floor studio, do all the video stuff, send it to the office mainframes on the laptop at the kitchen table – I sat in the sun, enjoying the warmth, right up until the wind picked up, rippled the gazebo roof, and dumped a quart of last night's rain on me.

On me and my laptop.

It didn't get too wet. Or so I thought. Then it told me it was disconnecting my USB devices because they were draining too much power. I had no USB
devices connected. I clicked “ACCEPT” to humor the computer. The alert came on again. Click to dismiss. And again. Well, restart! And there it was again. Sigh. Google.

You really, really hate it when your computer problem searches come back with the phrase “logic board failure” prominently listed among the results.

But after a while it dried off, and the problem did not return, which is a relief. Not in a mood to spend money on anything that isn’t immediately digestible. When it comes to Things, I look at everything like it’s 1943 and I’m on my second tire retread. For the duration, brother.

So there was that for the day. As usual, everything was spread all over – the video on startribune.com, the blogging there as well, a piece on Ricochet; have to write another piece tonight for National Review magazine, and snip the music thing I wrote from 21 interminable seconds to 10 snappy seconds. (Tumblr managed to choke on all the posts today; the queue function is useless.) Modern media life is like standing on a rotunda with six microphones; you move from one to the other. There is no 9 to 5. I take my first break at 9. I have a conference call while doing step exercises in the living room at 2 PM. I nap at 4 and finish off something for work at 11 PM. I like it this way.

The angle of the sun, though, has its lessons: as summer wanes, well, pack it on for the coming lean months. The hibernation. I decided today that 111 days of dieting is over, and I can eat again. I made my point; not a slave to appetite, and I can peel it off if I want. So when I dynamited daughter off the computer – she’s been camped out in the hallway, of all places, because grandma has her room and the internet is four-bars strong in the hallway (“I need it to download Gimp,” she said. What? Gimp? You have photoshop. “But not on the PC side.” [The “PC Side” is her term for running Windows on her laptop.] “Yeah, but . . . oh, fine.”) – we went to Target. Sorry, let me clean that up. Around five I said GET OFF THE COMPUTER WE’RE GOING OUT and so we did. School supplies.

But first: Diet Bustin’, Five Guys Style. “Is it fancy?” she asked. No. No, it is not fancy. She was suspicious, since it was something different, but pronounced it excellent. We damn near polished off the entire small order of fries, which consisted of 67 potatoes. Then Target. A laugh riot, I tell you: again she wanted to go to the toy department and make fun of things. We had particular sport with a line of motion activated babies, setting them all off so they bounced up and down. This seemed a rather odd choice of words:
Short life, it seems. Here's a phrase that could have come out of the last act of “There Will Be Blood.” In addition to drinking your milkshake:

She wanted to look for shirts, which is rare. She usually wants nothing to do with clothing, or so my wife says – but she wanted to look for cool T-shirts that might have interesting designs. She expressed blinding fury that there
are cool shirts with wolves on them but they're only for boys. Today was
disappointing; the shirts were, and I quote, “nothing but peace signs and
monkeys.” She has no time for monkeys; I fear I have instilled a distaste for
monkeys, feces-flinging idiots that they are, and she regards the peace signs
as “hippie stuff.” Again, I might have had some influence there. (Wife, rolling
eyes: yeah, maybe.) But really. Forty-five-year old graphics; why? Especially
when you can buy 55 year old graphics, like I did? (Found a T-shirt with a
nice Yoo-hoo logo.) I see her point: all the girl stuff is LOVE PEACE LOVE
HAPPY PINK, and if you’re not little princess twinkletips this may be
annoying. After pawing through the third rack of peace signs she went into
her Valley Girl persona: dadday, I am awesome, buy me a ponay because I am
the awesomest.

At one point I ran over her foot with the cart, and she hopped around in
mock agony; I said “You have a spare” in the most laconic voice I could
muster, which prompted a couple to turn around – the mom looked outraged,
the dad looked amused. Attaboy.

“It wasn’t my foot it was my heel,” she said.

“Even better. The heel is the dumbest part of your body. It can take
anything.”

“Oh rally dadday.”

“Unless you’re Achilles.”

“Oh right!” Out of princess mode, into “Lightning Thief” Mythology-nerd
mode, left over from last summer.

“But otherwise the heel is built to take it.”

“My heel is the awesomest,” said Princess. Oh, these moods.

One of the most interesting items on the school supply list: a 1 GB thumb
drive. The assumptions – and evidence of progress – in that single item is
quite remarkable. At least if you remember buying a computer with 20MB of
storage, and wondering how you’d ever fill it up. It used to be a cargo
container of Saltines; now it’s a Goldfish cracker.

Appearing in the usual places today. As noted before, updates slow for the
fortnight. Fair work spools up in earnest on Thursday and Friday: stay tuned,
and have a grand day.
shesnailie says:
August 26, 2010 at 5:22 am

_@_v – i wonder if their legal team made them put “magically” in quotes?

Patrick McClure says:
August 26, 2010 at 6:18 am

You want rapidly swinging daughter moods? Try a high school senior who got into the fall musical, but didn't get the part she wanted and was sick with a sinus infection the whole time. We went from at death's door, to excited, to ticked-off, to pitiable- in no certain or predictable order- all last weekend.

juanito - John Davey says:
August 26, 2010 at 6:52 am

More alarming, the 9 year old goes from Princess mode, straight into: “Isn't Gilbert *dreamy*?”

I fear that I've missed my opportunity to get her into the convent. Now I'll just have to have firearms out for continual display for cute boys.

Darn.

Rick says:
August 26, 2010 at 7:07 am

Oh good job taking the kidlet to Five Guys. The question is did you share the regular or LARGE fries, and did you snack on the peanuts while you waited?

Mary says:
August 26, 2010 at 7:15 am

why didn't you guys just buy the boy shirts for her?

Mxymaster says:
August 26, 2010 at 7:32 am

Good job with the monkeys and hippie stuff. Keep on her about hating vampires, too. I don't think we're over the leeching corpses yet, and she'll be 13 before you know it.

Is it just me, or does everybody think, “Thursday! Lawson!” only to sigh wistfully?

RPD says:
August 26, 2010 at 7:48 am

It takes an effort of will to limit myself to Five Guys to once every two weeks. Just too tasty.

“Sorry, let me clean that up. Around five I said GET OFF THE COMPUTER WE'RE GOING OUT and so we did. School supplies.”

Uh oh, did Joe Sixpack's complaints annoy some one?
Brisko says:
August 26, 2010 at 7:53 am

I have an old 1 gig flash drive someone gave me many years ago (the package called it a “thumb drive” despite being larger than any thumb possibly could be) and I’ve really never used it because it’s frellin’ HUGE, even though it was ostensibly designed to also be a keychain. It was a nice gift, and probably expensive at the time, but meh.

Last year, I bought an 8 gig drive, which actually IS the size of my thumb and I quickly grew unable to live without it.

And you’re remember, I remember my 20 meg HD and how I never came close to filling it. My new PC has a 350 gig HD, way bigger than I wanted, but there was nothing smaller without giving up features I did want. In addition to that I have a 1 terrabyte external harddrive that I bought cuz it was like $4 more than the 500 gig HD. Why not? Storage is cheap these days, and I love it.

kc says:
August 26, 2010 at 8:03 am

Oh, James, my heart...Lovely Daughter and Handsome Son-in-law start classes at FSC next week, so Daddy was hero and took Lovely Daughter to buy a home computer (evidently using the little netbook would make class time slightly difficult). Then we went to Five Guys for lunch and THEN Target for some school supplies. Isn’t Live wonderful that way?

Yes, even with ‘the children’ in their mid-20’s, we get a kick out of this – we STILL have fun together!

Patrick says:
August 26, 2010 at 8:26 am

I went to a Five Guys once. Wasn’t all that impressed. They really didn’t make a name for themselves until The Greatest President of All Time That Can Do No Wrong came along and said he ate there.

I have a feeling that one of these days we will see an extra page or two in the Gallery, headed up by Natalie, about toys of both the past and the present. Seems like her dad’s wit has rubbed off onto her.

@mxymaster: I almost forgot about Lance Lawson Thursdays. Could it be due to Lefty having turned to a life of crime? Wasn’t being paid enough by the force, and Lawson always made him out to be a dumb rookie cop. I think Lefty had some smarts that Lawson was afraid of.

FreeState says:
August 26, 2010 at 8:36 am

Remember buying a 20Mb hard drive? I remember selling them, when I worked at a few computer stores. A 286 with a 20 meg drive and a monochrome monitor, with a copy of WordPerfect 5.0 wasn’t a bad school setup back then. Color was EGA, until VGA finally made economic sense.

But, nothing made me feel older then finding both my first home computer and my high school calculator on display at the Smithsonian.
FreeState says:
August 26, 2010 at 8:37 am

Oh, and since it's Thursday, quit razzing me about Doris.

Jennifer says:
August 26, 2010 at 8:54 am

I do like their fries--one regular order keeps three people more than happy. The burgers are pretty good--and the option of the “little” hamburger at least keeps the serving size within reason. My son used to trip over his own feet all the time--and yet rarely cried when he fell over (even as a toddler). So I would practically ignore him when he fell. More than once I remember getting dirty looks for not fawning over him.

Uncle Joe says:
August 26, 2010 at 9:04 am

“Nothing but peace signs and monkeys” Wasn't that a Zappa album with a cover by Neon Park?

tseib says:
August 26, 2010 at 9:18 am

Two years ago, our school put 512MB thumb drive on the supplies list. Either the quantity of work being produced and stored is going up, or somebody making the list this year realizes you can't even buy one that “small” anymore.

Either way, the school drive has been in use maybe once since we obtained it, used to bring home a short story begun in the school's “computer lab” (a hold-over term from the days when such hardware was rare, exotic, and evidently somewhat experimental), a story which required perhaps 0.000001% of the drive's storage capacity.

But keep bringing those drives, kids! We're not even sure what we're going to use them for (or--among the older teachers--where to plug them in), but these magic techno-tokens add an ineffable air of futurism to all our pursuits.

@Patrick: I think you meant “Tiny,” not “Lefty.”

Kerry Potenza says:
August 26, 2010 at 9:29 am

Natalie sounds like my kind of girl! Her personality really shines through! She's right -- there really isn't anything out there for girls past toddlerhood that isn't peace signs/hippy crap or pink. Fortunately for me, my girl loves those styles. Still, I'd rather have that than the sexually suggestive T-shirts for tween girls announcing how much they love boys, want to be boy-toys, etc. Who designs this stuff, anyway?

Don't go hog wild now that you've reached your dieting goals! The pounds tend to pack on with a vengeance at a certain age, and it never sits the same when it comes back! Keep up with your exercise routine (but ignore the WiFit BMI nonsense).
hpoulter says:
August 26, 2010 at 9:30 am

20MB hard drive? How about the tape cassette drive I used for storage on my TI99/4A?

I can’t remember how much I paid for the TI. A web site says they retailed for $525, but I couldn’t have afforded to pay more than about $250 for it. You can get one now for about $25. So much for collectible.

Wagner von Drupen-Sachs says:
August 26, 2010 at 9:30 am

I still jealously treasure my 256 MB big-as-a-bratwurst “thumb” drive, because, dammit, I paid seventy bucks for it! And it was a good deal!

Patrick says:
August 26, 2010 at 9:32 am

D’oh! See what several months of being Lanceless (not a good idea back during the Renaissance period) does to one! Can’t even remember the cop’s name. He wasn’t all that important, any way.

He thought he’d teach Lance a lesson, though: He and Doris, who grew tired of Lance’s @$$itude and constant razzing, eloped and are now happily married, and have a new crime drama/comedy in production starring a bumbling, idiotic detective who lacks emotion or facial expressions. They are calling it “Dunce Dorsey” and will be a viewer-interactive program. The clues will be easy to detect to anyone but Dorsey. Airs Thursdays this Fall on NBC.

John Robinson says:
August 26, 2010 at 10:13 am

Apropos of nothing, the FBI screen shot reminded me of the voice-over guy intoning at the beginning of every episode, “A Quinn Martin Production.”

As I recall, Mr. Martin produced a hella lot of 60′s shows, including two of my faves: *The Fugitive* (“No, my name ISN’T Kimble-Hank-Kimble, it’s Richard Kimble! I’m a doctor, dammit, not a county agent!”) and *The Invaders* (“Say, what’s wrong with your little finger? Why’s it bent like that?”). Good times…

swschrad says:
August 26, 2010 at 10:24 am

cassette on the Atari 400. a special cassette recorder with their magic 15 pin plug, meaning you paid $110 for it, instead of using a $30 rat shack unit.

I remember 5 Mb hard disks on the desktop, wasn’t mine, I had no money, but a Lafayette where I moonlighted fixing stuff built an Imsai with a North Star drive. took the owner, a WeCo (d.) guy from the ABM system (d.) support team (d.) forever to get it working, two dead TTL chips.
Will says:
August 26, 2010 at 10:47 am

I still carry a 5-year old 1gb thumb drive around. Never have filled it up. I think I paid $50 or so for it at Sam's. Of course, I remember buying a 1.2gb 3.5-inch drive in the mid-nineties for $400. The advances in storage never cease to amaze me.

JamesS says:
August 26, 2010 at 11:10 am

When it comes to Things, I look at everything like it's 1943 and I'm on my second tire retread. For the duration, brother.

Oh, you are such a liar!
/humor

Whatever New Thing Apple drops into the marketplace James rushes out to buy. If he were so “for the duration” he'd still be running an Apple Lisa or something.

Ed Singel says:
August 26, 2010 at 11:26 am

My third computer (the first with what we called a “Winchester” drive, or hard disc) came with 5 Megabytes. When that drive failed, I replaced it with a whopping 10 MB, which I thought was more than I would need in this lifetime. Now my phone has more than 3,200 times that amount of memory. What a world!

juanito - John Davey says:
August 26, 2010 at 11:40 am

Was sorting through old hardware to send to the scrap pile recently, and came across 16 sticks of 72 pin 1MB RAM. Recalled that EACH 1MB stick cost $100 when obtained back in the halcyon days of cave wall drawings. Heartache. Couldn't bare to throw 1600 (representative) dollars out. Oh well, they don't take up much room in the bottom of the spare hardware bin.

hpoulter says:
August 26, 2010 at 11:42 am

@swschrad: I skipped the Atari 400 and went from the TI to an 800XL, and later a 130XE, with an actual FLOPPY DRIVE (oooh). That sucker cost a fortune. I still have it and it all still works.

That 6502 chip was a wondrous thing.

juanito - John Davey says:
August 26, 2010 at 11:56 am

hpoulter says:
August 26, 2010 at 11:42 am

@swschrad: I skipped the Atari 400 and went from the TI to an 800XL, and later a 130XE, with an actual FLOPPY DRIVE (oooh). That sucker cost a fortune. I still have it and it all still works.
When we built the 1st ‘computer lab’ in my last years of high school, we went with the 800XL – 22 of them. Glorious. You could actually save your code to the floppy at the end of the class! Space Age! We did have to wait until mid year, since the order kept getting delayed. I recall that production was delayed for about six months, which meant that the lab was viewed as a vaporware-esque myth until the boxes finally showed up.

shesnailie says:
August 26, 2010 at 12:16 pm

_@_v - i have an apple 20SC hard drive whose nonfunctional 20 meg hard drive was swapped for the 20 gig hard drive that had gone from internal data drive to external transfer drive to redundant-drive-i'll-probably-never-ever-use-again-but-don't-it-look-nice-in-this-casing in 3 upgrades to the old powermac i've been using the last 10 years

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 26, 2010 at 12:42 pm

I think I am still paying off credit card debt for ram chips that have been pegged to a cork board for several years.

Pete Madsen says:
August 26, 2010 at 1:16 pm

The ancient HP1000 minicomputer I used at work had a reel-to-reel tape drive that would automatically load the tape onto the empty reel by twitching the reels and blowing on the tape end. It was comical as hell to watch and always worked. When the bearings on the drive finally wore out that loader still worked. God only knows how many thousands of dollars that gizbob cost the government.

Emmett Flatus says:
August 26, 2010 at 2:12 pm

Is many-a-no-place really just one big Target store with streets connecting the various departments?

Kevin says:
August 26, 2010 at 3:12 pm

Not one comment about the Victory Drive-In? Am I the only one of the readers that actually went there to watch a movie? Can’t remember now what it was, but it was with my family, probably in the 1950s. My junior high school was not far from there, nor my Little League field!

As for our host using an Apple Lisa, another story from the Lab where I work: several years ago, the Laboratory did a “wall-to-wall” search to to try to locate every single piece of equipment that had received a special inventory tag. Among the items on the list, I noticed an Apple II3 computer, listed at something like $4700, even though by then it was some 20 years old and was more or less an electric paperweight. Yet– and here's the government's thinking, and why there should be scepticism when reading these media stories--if we were not able to find it, then we would have to report that a $4700 computer could not be located, and this information would look like typical government waste and abuse.

And now our latest crusade is: Safety. The Ace of Trumps. Because
you can never be too safe. It always reminds me of the hyper-wail from one of “The Simpsons” episodes, “Won’t somebody PLEASE think of the children??”

ArganikMark says:
August 26, 2010 at 3:23 pm

@Uncle Joe: Of course that would be “Weasels Ripped My Flesh” but you knew that. And it’s looking at me in a rack four feet to my left...

boblipton says:
August 26, 2010 at 3:25 pm

FDR ate at Five Guys?

Bob

John Robinson says:
August 26, 2010 at 3:39 pm

Actually, Bob, that was William Howard Taft, the Nation’s Most Food-rootin’ Prez. Story goes the restaurant’s original name was Six Guys, until one evening Taft ate the smallest entrepreneur as an appetizer.

Seattle Dave says:
August 26, 2010 at 4:22 pm

I remember the three-store retail chain where I worked in the mid-’80s being closed one Sunday so the central mainframe which served all of our (aptly-named) POS terminals could be upgraded to — gasp — A GIGABYTE. I don’t recall how much this upgrade cost the company, but I do recall it made a HUGE difference in speed at the sales counter.

Rubo says:
August 26, 2010 at 11:21 pm

I guess I’ll try to top all the computer geeks. In high school our computer class used punch cards, to make small programs for the main frame at the local university. We celebrated when we got our own terminal hooked up to the main frame, so at least you knew right away if your program worked.

Now get off of my lawn, you kids!

jamcool says:
August 27, 2010 at 12:50 am

Back in college circa 1982-83...Sperry Univacs with teeny-weeny screens and noisy DEC VAX-11s.

DensityDuck says:
August 27, 2010 at 1:59 pm

Oh hey, another “class of 2014” thing: None of them know what “tire retread” means or why you’d do something like that.

*****
I remember when twenty megabytes was huge, and web-hosting companies (remember those?) would advertise how many megabytes they gave you for only ten bucks a month.

I *also* remember when I could be pretty certain that the storage unit I purchased wouldn't have a virus pre-installed by the factory.

Two steps forward, 1.999… steps back.

**DensityDuck** says:
August 27, 2010 at 2:02 pm

PS as for the shirts: It's kind of ironic that she was upset that boys got wolves and girls got the color pink, but she didn't just buy a boy shirt. Simultaneous disdain for and acceptance of gender identities!

**Ben** says:
August 27, 2010 at 3:22 pm

I remember when 512kb was enough for just about anything. And when those 1.2MB 3.5″ floppies came out, we thought we had arrived at the future.

A few weeks ago, I got my first terabyte hard drive. And my second, at the same time. Bought both to function as a file server for all our images, videos, and music. One as the main server drive, and the other as a mirrored back-up. I fear it won't last. Years of upgrading has taught me: you WILL need more, some day. Especially since I now have a digital video camera, and if I want to maintain any semblance of quality in the output, I need to export in a format that takes something like a gig per second of footage. I need to get into the habit of taking short, concise videos, not like when I left the camera on the tripod looking out the window to try to catch Mother Robin feeding her babies in the tree. 40 minutes of footage for 6 seconds of actual feeding. But at least I can bring myself to delete the rest of the footage, which is unusual for me because I normally won't delete ANYTHING, “just in case I might need it some day.” If anybody ever needs 30 minutes of 8x-zoom footage of the inside of a spruce tree, I've got that covered.

**Ben** says:
August 27, 2010 at 3:36 pm

*I guess I'll try to top all the computer geeks. In high school our computer class used punch cards*

I'm too young to ever have used punch cards for anything other than building elaborate card houses… Actually, we built card cities out of those things, with elevated 3-lane Hotwheel highways, and massive Chinese-looking temples. The joys of having a dad who was a programmer in the 70s… Boxes and boxes of useless punch cards. One night he was at the office late and us kids had to come along because there wasn't anybody to watch us, so we built a punch-card-highway all the way down the hall across the building. Those cards were excellent for building card structures, 2 cards on their sides propped against eachother for support legs, then 3 cards lengthwise bridging the gap to the next support leg. Working as a team, one kid propping the legs and another placing the road deck, and you could build a monstrous highway in no time. Kinda makes me want to go find a big box of punch cards to see how big of a card city I can build now…
Fred says:
September 9, 2010 at 8:50 am

I must be missing something with ‘Five Guys’ and the local semi-imitator here called ‘Mighty Fine Burgers’ because I find the fries to be overcooked and tasteless. And I’m sorry but I just don’t want the skin left on. And I LIKE fries cooked with beef tallow…

Now I have had the fries and ‘In and Out’ and they passed muster.
Sorry, I'm spent, and in a very bad mood continued over from last night by popular demand. I was watching “Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf,” thinking “amateurs.” But it's off to the Fair again. Here's another crappy pseudo-tilt-shift picture from yesterday:
More Fair stuff throughout the day – just check Twitter. Back Monday with a much better mood.

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37 RESPONSES TO *friday: big nothing*

Moishe3rd says:
August 27, 2010 at 9:36 am

I could tell that you must have been a bit out of sorts yesterday when you called up Prager to ask some obtuse point on his guest's book on Thatcher. Even they couldn't quite figure out what you were asking.
I laughed thinking – “James is trying to escape from whatever is going on in his duties at the Fair…”

Uncle Joe says:
August 27, 2010 at 9:36 am

The little rooksies could sense that I was in a bad mood myself when I picked them up from camp yesterday. So, what does the 10 year old start singing from the back seat? “Mommy's alright, Daddy's alright,
they just seem a little weird ...” Cracked me up. Cloud removed.

**Phoebe** says:
August 27, 2010 at 9:48 am

Woke up on the wrong side of the bed, did we?

**juanito - John Davey** says:
August 27, 2010 at 9:51 am

**Uncle Joe says:**
*August 27, 2010 at 9:36 am*

The little rooksies could sense that I was in a bad mood myself when I picked them up from camp yesterday. So, what does the 10 year old start singing from the back seat? “Mommy's alright, Daddy's alright, they just seem a little weird ...” Cracked me up. Cloud removed.

That's funny, because we used to warm up with *Surrender*. In our old brick house with the attached garage, it shook the windows in every room. My parents never really bothered to listen to the lyrics (mostly because they were delivered in the di rigueur sneer of most teen garage bands). Had they bothered to really listen (some *Indonesian junk that's going 'round*), I believe that my mother may have commented “oh, my!”

As to our host's mood, let me just ask: What did I do?!!!

I'll try harder.

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
August 27, 2010 at 10:00 am

Does that have the good Richard Burton or the bad one?

**rbj** says:
August 27, 2010 at 10:17 am

What, did the Fair run out of deep-fried food on a stick?

**Lars Walker** says:
August 27, 2010 at 10:21 am

It will be entertaining to see Our Host putting a hammer lock on Hugh Hewitt and jamming a Scotch Egg down his throat. I need to get to the fair.

**MikeH** says:
August 27, 2010 at 10:33 am

If you were watching Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf, don't blame you for being in a crappy mood. I saw it in a film class during my college years. I don't care if it's a classic, I did not like anything about the movie. The characters were nasty sh**s, dialogue had me yelling at everyone to SHUT UP!! And I plain ol don't like Elizabeth Taylor. Put me in the same room with the characters and I'd have them shot dead. And when the film was over I was in a major sh** mood 2-3 days (not kidding)
By Monday you'll be fine James, just stay away from that movie.

Bill Peschel says:
August 27, 2010 at 10:45 am

Can't remember much about it now except that it might have been on TV when I was a kid. Seem to remember it pretty much as MikeH says, but what would I know? It'll be interesting to hear James' take on it.

It seems to me a lotta angst in theater and books are created by people who don't know what the real stuff looks like. I see enough of it in my own life; why do I need to pay money to see it?

swschrad says:
August 27, 2010 at 10:46 am

must have been the sky ride up from the non-powered launching pad over by the main gate on Snelling.

enjoy that one this afternoon and weekend, folks, with cross winds 15 to 30 mph.

that would put me in a foul mood even worse than that awful piece of celluloid sludge would. I get my fix of dysfunctional cells of self-centeredness yelling past each other on tv Thursday nights.

recommended cure: strawberry shake at the Kiwanis booth, then head over to Hamline Church for a complete home-cooking meal.

un-recommended cure: building pavilion and 35 booths of window sellers.

Brisko says:
August 27, 2010 at 10:55 am

@ MikeH

I don't like her, either. I've always wondered why people do.

Will says:
August 27, 2010 at 10:56 am

“Woke up on the wrong side of the bed, did we?”
Some days, there is no right side.

Mr_Hat says:
August 27, 2010 at 10:57 am

We're doomed. Because it's the fair, our host can't have pizza night. Without pizza night on Friday, the week is just a long succession of indistinct Tuesdays and not that smokin' Tuesday Weld either. Besides that, the days are getting noticeably shorter so it's nearly farkin' winter out already.

Then again, there's the fair and an old dog and a young daughter and a lovely if reclusive spouse and friends and work and a road that goes ever on.
James says:
August 27, 2010 at 11:02 am

When someone watches Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf and sneers “amateurs,” I have to wonder if all is well on the home front.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 27, 2010 at 11:04 am

Wait, are you guys saying that Elizabeth Taylor was once in a movie?

The things you learn on the internet.

swschrad says:
August 27, 2010 at 12:50 pm

@Mr Hat: NostrilDrippus Predicts! ™ says: “Things suck, and then you die.”

he’s a crank.

it’s a nice fresh sunny morning out, the grass is not burned up from summer, might get a little humid and hot, but in a month we’ll start whimpering for that. and in four, we’ll be crying for that.

swschrad says: “The other end of a gift horse is full of (poop.) get over it.”

jglor says:
August 27, 2010 at 1:10 pm

Actually, I think it’s a pretty good tilt-shift picture, if you happen to like them. Which I do.
The Jasper one didn’t quite work (as a tilt-shift). Way too close to the subject, if you ask me.
Otherwise, Jasper pictures are always good.

Cory says:
August 27, 2010 at 1:17 pm

Why do some people like Elizabeth Taylor?
Because when she was young she might have been the most beautiful actress in movies and when she did her best acting she was quite a good actress (two Academy Awards). On top of which she happens to be an extremely charitable and loyal lady (see Clift, Montgomery or Jackson, Michael).

Yeah, if you are going to judge her by some of her poorer performances or her sometimes over the top persona or all the marriages, and you don’t know about her earlier career, you can be snide.
But it’s hard to name a single actress today who combines her beauty, acting ability and character from the 1940’s -1970’s.
I’ll listen for who compares today.

boblipton says:
August 27, 2010 at 1:39 pm

James, I am sorry to hear you’re in a poor mood. I hope you feel better soon. Have some deep-fried lard on a stick.

Nob
swschrad says:
August 27, 2010 at 1:43 pm

@boblipton: **double** deep-fried lard balls on a stick. dip sauce based on uncooked bear fat is a quarter extra.

Brisko says:
August 27, 2010 at 1:56 pm

@ Cory

Great, she was loyal to a child-molestor. Way to be, Lizzy.

Glad I have your permission to be snide.

shesnailie says:
August 27, 2010 at 1:58 pm

_@_v – if you like tilt-shift pix… [http://tiltshiftmaker.com](http://tiltshiftmaker.com) does all the work for you…

shesnailie says:
August 27, 2010 at 1:59 pm

_@_v – what you get for your money…

[http://citynoise.org/upload/39198.jpg](http://citynoise.org/upload/39198.jpg)

fizzbin says:
August 27, 2010 at 2:14 pm

My two least favorite “family-in-crisis” movies are Who's Afraid, etc, and War of the Roses. I thought the latter was a comedy and, of course, it was a piece of poop. It did not help that I had gone through a similar divorce several years before. I know, I know, waaa boo-hoo, mommy Pelosi protect me!! Ish, that last sentence almost made me ralph 😛

Restoration Hardware and its prices are good for a laugh. Stupid, pretentious people are never in short supply.

Sir James; whatever poop sandwich your now eating will not last forever. Don't dwell on it. Remember what happened when my favorite Uncle got into an extended funk – Poland and Europe surrendered. In Frances' case, this was unremarkable.

Cory says:
August 27, 2010 at 2:14 pm

Brisko:
Re your comments on the child molester and being snide:
res ipsa loquitur

Erica says:
August 27, 2010 at 2:29 pm

Feel better James. Screw all the fair food. Get tanked.
bgbear (roger h) says:  
August 27, 2010 at 3:04 pm

My Liz comments were aimed at the last few decades where she is known mostly as a celebrity.

I do love the awful little princess she plays in “Father of the Bride”. Poor Buckley.

swschrad says:  
August 27, 2010 at 4:00 pm

@fizzbin: speaking of surrender, was reminded a couple weeks ago of one of life's most satisfying answers. approximately quoted from slashdot,

“the French have reason to be excellent at languages. They never know who they will have to surrender to.”

Al Federber says:  
August 27, 2010 at 5:01 pm

Trouble in Tangletown©

swschrad says:  
August 27, 2010 at 8:11 pm

sprain in the left ankle tonight, ten steps from the bus stop. we're on ice and wrapped up in elastic bandages. maybe the fair on Sunday, maybe next weekend. shame to waste two advance tickets and two coupon books, so I'll fake through it somehow.

it's always somethin'.

BeckoningChasm says:  
August 28, 2010 at 12:27 am

I understand the mood. It's pretty much all week long with me, but that's me, and no one's really interested and [wrestled away from keyboard] mmph!

I'm sure I join many, many intelligent units in hoping that you have a great weekend, and a wonderful Monday to cap it.

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs says:  
August 28, 2010 at 9:16 am

Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra! Homina, homina, homina, woot, woot!

Cory says:  
August 28, 2010 at 1:31 pm

Wagner:
I’m with you. So far no modern candidates to match Liz.

Soozcat says:  
August 28, 2010 at 3:34 pm
A mood as black as jjajangmyeon, and not nearly as savory. But perhaps the weekend will lift spirits around Jasperwood.

GardenStater says:
August 29, 2010 at 5:18 am

Wagner: I second that. Rrrowrrr…

crossdotcurve says:
August 29, 2010 at 11:13 am

“Nostalgia is a symptom of fear”


FuzzyChef says:
August 29, 2010 at 11:59 pm

Off-topic, the link to the Dorcus Collection from the Institute home page is missing. The Dorcus collection is listed, but it's missing a clickable link.
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
It's a warm night. Could be June; could be July. Except of course it isn’t, and that makes all the difference in the world.

“Summer’s over,” daughter sighed. She was sitting outside with her chin on her forearm, staring into the distance.

“No, it’s not,” I said. Cheerfully. “Summer doesn’t end until after Labor Day. There’s more left! Autumn doesn’t start, technically, for a few weeks.”

“But school starts tomorrow.”

I thought a moment, and nodded. “You’re right. Summer’s over.”

Can’t quite agree completely, though. As noted, Labor Day, and a three-day weekend: whoo, hoo, etcetera. And the Fair’s still going on. Have I mentioned there’s a Fair?
Because there is, and I'm going back on Monday for a big two-video shoot and three hours of radio. Went Friday, and did my “personal appearance.” Always a joy to meet the readers – thanks to all who came out! When not talking to readers I was fielding the main question of the day: “do you have that thing?”

So a lady asked. “That thing.”

“No,” I said. “We're out. But we have a few whatsis left.”

“I want the thing,” she said, playing along.

“I actually know what you mean by thing,” I said. “You mean the lip balm.” Every year at the Strib booth we give away lip balm. Last year it was Bacon flavored. “You mean this.” I mimed smearing a stick over my mouth.

“That's it.”

I said we were out, but a new shipment was coming at 3:30. “And you know what the flavor is this year? It's Corn on the Cob.”

Some people seemed more thrilled by that idea than others. I think it smelled
like dog paws. This is not a criticism; everyone who has a dog likes the smell of dog paws. You just don’t want to tell people it smells like dog paws, because they might get the wrong idea. Let them figure it out for themselves. I also gave out many free bags; people love those bags. We sold subscriptions, and told people where they could get deep-fried pickles.

I love working the booth. Brings back the old days of waitering, where every customer interaction has the possibility for fun and sport, if they’re willing to play. You also get the opportunity to talk to Completely Random Minnesotans with whom you would otherwise never chat, and quite a few came up to talk about my shirt. It had the Red Owl logo. People love the Owl. He either reminds them of being a kid, going grocery shopping with Mom, or being Mom, grocery shopping with the kid. One fellow pointed and me and walked up and said “Red Owl” in an astonished voice, as I was wearing the picture of a twin sibling who’d been kidnapped in ’67. “I was a baker there for 25 years,” he said. He stared at the Owl. “Where did you get that?”

I told him, and he was surprised to learn it was a new shirt, not something I’d found in a thrift store. At a record store? Really? So the kids today, they like the Owl?

The kids like the Owl. Well, some of them. Some people think he looks angry, or at least intent on something that seems quite personal.

Ran to the office, filed a column I’d written in the back of the Fair booth, then went home to get ready for a wedding at the Mill City Museum.
Lovely venue, although you had to think of the guys toiling in this brick house in 1877, sweaty, covered with dust, and you wonder what they'd think of a couple getting hitched in their finery in the ruins of the structure, in the impossible year of 2010. Afterwards I found myself talking to a couple, the way you end up just talking to strangers at a wedding – somehow you're all connected, so it's not like you're all total strangers – and then dinner. Fish. While we ate the bridal party stood up and told stories designed to embarrass the couple and express their eternal affection. Then I went home and watched “Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.”

Now that I think of it, I hope I didn't jinx anything.

Saturday . . . what? Oh. Right. Had some people over, since Hugh Hewitt was in town, and we always have a shindig here at Jasperwood. Since my wife was going to a BBQ for the newlyweds, I had to prepare the food and fixing on my own. She just about had a stroke when she looked in the fridge and saw some Target lunchmeats, but I explained that was for daughter's school lunch. I bought proper cold cuts, rolled them into attractive cylinders, and...
put out those cheesy little multicolored plastic swords. And also some cheese. So that was six hours of palaver in the gazebo with a fine crowd, as good as it gets. Everyone left at 2 and I spent a half an hour cleaning up, then sat outside and listened to music on my iPod until 3 AM. Some days you hate to let go. Morpheus has to gently take it out of your hands.

Now the crickets are telling the temp; the planes have stopped, and the water splashes in the fountain. Summer still seems content and secure. It's not over yet. But I hate to drive past the beach tomorrow, and find it empty. Or pass the playground and see the fountain's turned off at the wading pool. One by one, the signs appear. Summer never really ends – it wanders off, no longer interested in us, and sober fall walks us down the path to the place where everything nothing grows or blooms.

Then we turn around and Fall is gone, too.

Mill District, sunset, Summer 2010:
43 RESPONSES TO everyone loves the owl

Dan Holway says:
August 30, 2010 at 12:50 am

Even crappy pseudo-tilt-shift pictures can come out looking cool when they are done just right.

GardenStater says:
August 30, 2010 at 5:19 am

That Fair photo looks like an HO Railroad set. Weird.

hpoulter says:
August 30, 2010 at 6:01 am

@GardenStater – that's what the intent of tilt-shift photography is (I didn't know the name until Lileks mentioned it). It's done by restricting the depth of field to a narrow range. It's weird, because it seems to me it is more an artifact of photography than normal vision, that miniature sets appear to us with that restricted depth of field, but the illusion is compelling.

Too see a really extraordinary example of tilt-shift video, check this out:
http://vimeo.com/9679622
NYC as a miniature. Love the little helicopters.

Kerry Potenza says:
August 30, 2010 at 6:01 am

I thought my dog was the only one that had good smelling paws! I never admitted to anyone that I liked that smell. Seems weird to me. But that's not to be confused with wet dog smell. I defy ANYONE to admit to liking that noxious odor!

“Whose Afraid of Virginia Wolfe” was an awful movie to watch. Made me very uncomfortable. Not entertaining. I suppose it was well acted. But then again, how much of a stretch was it for Burton and Taylor to play dysfunctional whackadoodle alcoholics?

juanito - John Davey says:
August 30, 2010 at 8:10 am

I have to remind the disillusioned and heartbroken 5 year old that summer *technically* doesn't end until a week after her birthday in September.

And then I'll have to inform her that she'll be having a tonsillectomy a week after fall begins....

For the past two years my girls have taken to belting out the following lines from the theme song of one of their favorite cartoons:

There's a hundred and four days of summer vacation, until
school comes along just to end it.

And the annual problem of our generation is finding a good way to spend it

And that really is their new philosophy on life. I think that they are working on starting a church....

The California State Fair was moved this year to mid July and was over by August 1st. It seems that so many schools now start their year in Mid August that it was restricting Gate receipts. Sad. State fairs are meant to end on Labor Day, so that youth may assuage the ending of freedom and liberty with a bit of merriment.

Whose Afraid of Virginia Wolfe: Wonderful for the creep factor, low on the enjoyment scale. I believe that Survival Escape Resistance And Evasion training instructs one to bite the inside of their cheek if captured and forced to watch it. Or something.

Siberian Khatru says:
August 30, 2010 at 8:17 am

Dog paws smell like Fritos. I tell my dog she has “Frito feet.”

r bj says:
August 30, 2010 at 8:41 am

A fair? Where? At least give us the name of the state where the fair is.

Summer's kind of over. I am wearing my white linen pants, as it's the last week to wear white pants, so summer isn't over. But school's in session and last Friday was the start of high school football (not that I care about it) so summer is over.

It's the betwixt & between time.

Brisko says:
August 30, 2010 at 8:39 am

Fried fruit? This is a mystery to me. I assume it is deep fried?

I've had fried bananas plenty of times, but frying other fruits has never occurred to me.

Matt says:
August 30, 2010 at 9:14 am

Getting married in an old mill sounds fantastic. My wedding was at a museum of old Americana in eastern Pennsylvania; one of my favorite photos is of my bride and I standing next to a late 18th-century wheat thresher-type contraption; I wondered at the time what the farmer who used it would have thought about it being used as a prop.

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 30, 2010 at 9:26 am

Palaver. Love that word. I don't think I've ever seen it used other than James Fenimore Cooper's books about the frontier, though.
@juanito re: Virgina Woolf; I couldn't agree more. Loathsome interactions there. It ranks right up there with the dentistry sequence in “Marathon Man” for me.

GardenStater says:
August 30, 2010 at 9:26 am

@hpoulter: Thanks for the explanation. Never heard of it before. Of course, I'm an old geezer, as well as the village idiot, when it comes to technology.

Jennifer says:
August 30, 2010 at 9:37 am

Thanks, Brisko. I'm also curious. Can you explain “fried fruit”, please? Why would you do that to fruit? Is it like a pastry that's filled and fried? So confused.

I've heard the “dogs paws smell like corn chips/Frito's” comment before—so I guess it must be true. I don't have a dog, so I can't confirm.

Mr_Hat says:
August 30, 2010 at 9:54 am

This is an odd time of year. Too hot to do much of anything outside, but the daylight is dwindling away at both ends. The French were right in giving this month the name Aout (ah-oh) as there's too little energy to say something more demanding.

swschrad says:
August 30, 2010 at 10:07 am

@Jennifer: there is a sub-species of Homo sapiens that thinks it can't be food unless it's fried. and deep-fried, well, wonders!

thus we have such fair fare as deep-fried Snickers bars, cheese curds, fruit, multitudes of variations of ( ) on a stick (the pork chop works well,) and probably the odd squirrel that managed to get past the crowds and end up behind a food cart. negative points if the fur is still on.

many of these oddities are caked in batter first.

if you don't do well at your first job selling five-bladed whatsit in the Mercantile Building, you could end up as schtick on a stick.

-0-

wife and I will have to go over the Labor Day weekend, I blew out my ankle ten steps from the bus stop Friday, and although it's coming along swimmingly, it ain't ready for the average 8-15 miles of walking along the fair grounds.

still got a couple areas as big as a trackball that are bruised like cheap meat in a Rocky movie.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 30, 2010 at 10:39 am

That movie is hard to watch and, it reminds me that true torture is reading Virginia Woolf. I had to read “Orlando” in college and yes, I
was afraid.

swschrad says:
August 30, 2010 at 10:43 am

at least it wasn't Virginia Vampire.

GardenStater says:
August 30, 2010 at 10:49 am

Regarding the smell of dog's feet:
http://www.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/58595

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 30, 2010 at 10:53 am

Have you ever seen a photo of MS. Woolf? Aaaoooooo! The same could be said for the entire Bloomsbury Group in terms of looks and readability.

RobertB says:
August 30, 2010 at 11:10 am

The business about summer “technically” ending on September 21 is bogus, despite widespread belief. There are many definitions of summer, but the meteorological definition (which corresponds pretty well to common sense) is “June, July, and August.”

Which means we've got a day and a half left. Enjoy.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 30, 2010 at 11:13 am

I am sure I said the last time Frito toes came up that ferrets also smell like Fritos/popcorn/dog paws when they are sleeping or first wake up.

swschrad says:
August 30, 2010 at 11:14 am

@RobertB: which means only a day and a half left to get your tornados, HEY! – getcha tornados here. Minnnnn-esota Tornadoes! Hell on a stick! double-deep-fried tornadoes here.

http://www.startribune.com/weather/blogs/Paul_Douglas_on_Weather.html?elr=KArksLckD8EQDuoaEynyP4O%3ADW3ckUId3aPc%3A_Yyc%3AULDEhDy_7P%3AIlM

twice as many this year as Oklahoma. hey, if we rename the Goldarn Goofers as Boomer Sooners, they might win some games.

jwilson says:
August 30, 2010 at 11:29 am

We have five lovely home grown maters left.The last of the crop.Good-bye summer.Pears are ripe and the muscadines look good this year so theirs the autuum crop to look forward to.
Spud says:
August 30, 2010 at 11:49 am

@juanito:
My almost 8 y.o. has a birthday in mid-Sept., just about the same time as your daughter. I can’t imagine scheduling a tonsillectomy so far into the future, but if it's gotta go, then it's gotta go.

State fairs were (should be) intended for harvest time, when the crops come in and you celebrate the providence of bounty. Judging who has the largest melons, purtiest hens, shapeliest beets and tastiest cakes is all part of the fun. Well, eating yummy (but bad for you) food and people-watching should be included too.

GardenStater says:
August 30, 2010 at 12:04 pm

I missed the NJ State Fair this year. Shame—it's always good, including lots of animal judging, deep-fried food, a beer tent, and a demolition derby.

What more could a man ask for?

Patrick says:
August 30, 2010 at 12:05 pm

One year I’m going to come up with the money to fly to Mpls. and peruse the State Fair.

As for fried fruits: The restaurant chain Cracker Barrel offers fried apples as one of their side items. They are delicious. The BBQ place near me offers three fried novelties: Fried Snickers Bar, Fried Oreos (to die for, especially when the creme filling oozes out from that first bite), and fried Brownie Bites. They also offer up funnel cakes for those wishing to die quickly.

Jimmy H says:
August 30, 2010 at 12:24 pm

I don't think I'm eating Frito's anymore.

Writeaway says:
August 30, 2010 at 12:39 pm

@hpoulter: that was a very cool video. Thanks for sharing.

RKN says:
August 30, 2010 at 12:43 pm

@Siberian

Or is it that Fritos smell like dog paws, given dog paws came first? FWIW, every Frito I've eaten smelled like our dogs' paws.

swschrad says:
August 30, 2010 at 2:09 pm

@JWilson: we are awash in tomatoes. was going to bring a bag full to work, and forgot 'em, have to do it tomorrow. there are as many ripe on the vine and three times as many green ones.
and that does NOT include the volunteer Romas from last year that we tilled in after the freeze.

I think I'm going to save the bug-eaten jobs and till 'em down for next year's crop 😊

**GardenStater** says:
August 30, 2010 at 3:02 pm

FWIW, I try to avoid smelling my dog's feet.

**John Robinson** says:
August 30, 2010 at 3:33 pm

Years ago when we lived in the sticks we grew our own veggies, including okra. While it's admittedly an acquired taste, if you let the pods get no bigger than the first joint of your thumb they can add a tasty texture to soups and stews.

One summer around mid-July we had a bumper crop of them, and I mentioned to our two young sons that an okra pod will get longer and more woodlike as the summer goes on, soon reaching the point they become inedible.

At that my boys both got the idea of letting one pod go, just to see how long it would get.

Summer waxed and waned, and we harvested everything in that garden... except for that mutant hell-pod. Each day it became more distended and grotesque, until one morning I half-expected Kevin McCarthy screaming and pounding on our car windows, “You're next!!”

Came October, a couple days before a predicted killing frost, and we cut the thing at last: two feet long, as thick as a bratwurst, and covered with spines and knots.

We dried it, and the kids used it as a sword.

**fizzbin** says:
August 30, 2010 at 4:59 pm

PEOPLE, PEOPLE....what IS it with this dog paw thingie?? It's positively fetatis...fetistic...aahh, feta cheese, you know what I mean. And by NO MEANS do not tell Irritable Bear about this! He/She/It has enough trouble with the high heels 😄

@hpoulter; thanks for the video. I am amazed. I hope there is more like it on the intertubual nets.

**DryOwlTacos** says:
August 30, 2010 at 5:17 pm

The State Fair of Texas starts in late September. Come and try the fried beer. Not kidding.

**Mal** says:
August 30, 2010 at 5:28 pm

Dog paws smell like Peek Frean's “Digestive Biscuits”. Everybody knows that!
swschrad says:
August 30, 2010 at 5:56 pm

@DryOwlTacos: I've heard of fried beer drinkers, but not fried beer.
I'm thinking that's a little hard to batter up before your fry it.

Dan Holway says:
August 30, 2010 at 6:47 pm

Regarding fried beer at state fairs:

wawona says:
August 30, 2010 at 9:26 pm

AHEM.

Also:

...for the very final word on Fried Beer.

swschrad says:
August 30, 2010 at 9:43 pm

how about, in this land of medical apparatus millionaires, we
crank out not deep-fried bolts... but deep-fried STENTS!

hey, think about it. we're already coating these little artery sewer-
liners with plastic full of cancer drugs, and charging triple rate
because they don't plug up the next day.

deep-fry the buggers, too! they'll go in the right place automatically,
unlike the doctors and radiological suites and freakin' cold tables
with blanket warmers that are the current state of the art. jab 'em
right up your femoral, yeah!

everybody knows fried food goes right to the arteries.

hmmm... http://www.uspto.gov, I better get this filed before bedtime
tonight.

Honey, order the Ferraris, we're gonna be rich! RICH!

MJBirch says:
August 30, 2010 at 10:51 pm

The best thing about the movie “Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”
was the Mort Drucker parody in Mad Magazine.

chrisbcritter says:
August 30, 2010 at 11:52 pm

Hope to make it to the L.A. County Fair in Pomona this year; love
seeing each year's changes to the gigantic outdoor model railroad as
well as watching the pitchmen in the mercantile buildings, then
taking a break to watch the Chinese acrobats. There are usually
about three Vitamix blender vendors, which means I can scarf
enough free samples of peanut butter, tortilla soup, ice cream (with
cabbage ground up in it so you still get your veggies) and cole slaw
to not be so tempted by the expensive deep-fried stuff…

jamcool says:
August 30, 2010 at 11:53 pm

On the Red Owl shirt, maybe someone could bring out a line of Ts
eblazoned with defunct supermarket chains (I would like a shirt
with the Alpha Beta “Alphy” logo)

juanito - John Davey says:
August 31, 2010 at 12:25 am

jamcool says:
August 30, 2010 at 11:53 pm

On the Red Owl shirt, maybe someone could bring out a line of Ts
eblazoned with defunct supermarket chains (I would like a shirt
with the Alpha Beta “Alphy” logo)

Alan Hamel: “Tell a friend!”

Paul Duca says:
August 31, 2010 at 5:51 am

Robert B–all concepts of time and season, beyond light and dark,
warmth and cold, are purely man-made conceits.

And I do wonder about Mrs. Lilek’s take that Target lunch meats are
good enough for her daughter but not for company.
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?
Holy smoking crow, that was a day. But which one? I don’t know what day it is. Seriously: today I thought, what, Tuesday? Wednesday? The Fair planes smooth all our usual temporal benchmarks. It’s just Fair time. And that means, as I’ve warned, this is short. Everything has been placed in temporary hiatus until the Fair’s done – I’m only doing this because the computer’s chewing on the daily video, and I have some time before I have to edit shots of large statues of cows.

Today I got there in the early afternoon, went over to the radio booth to bother Dennis Prager, then shot a parade that happened by – oh thank you, minor gods who roll out photogenic events just as you wonder what you’re going to do. When that was done I headed over to the Strib booth to transfer the video, and while the laptop cogitated I went to the counter for some retail-level grip-and-grin, helping out with The Public. As I said, I love this stuff, and I got an hour and a half of it. Then! 17 minutes to make it back to the radio booth; shot into the Food Building for a hot dog with sport peppers. I love that: it sounds so jaunty, yet possibly threatening. A wiseguy in a good mood who’d buy the house a round would call you Sport. A wiseguy who wanted to taunt you before he put your hand in a vise would call you Sport. Harvey Keitel’s character in “Taxi Driver” was nicknamed Sport. So you see what I mean.

Then three hours of the Hewitt show. Grand fun. Did the last hour with Duane, aka Generalissimo, the best producer in radio – inasmuch as he’s
equally adept at actually doing radio, too. He was kind enough to let me take a few segment openings, which was fun; it’s one thing to be a guest, and another to be a host. Completely different instincts. Slam that intro! Set the stage! Sail into the segment! And then –

A woman – nicely dressed, well-groomed – came out of the bar next door and stood in front of the booth and shouted REDNECKS.

Uh huh. One of the people sitting on a bench, listening to the show, said “Come back and let’s talk!” The woman kissed her fingers and placed them on her rear. Well, that’ll learn us to discuss the deficit in terms of its proportion of the GDP.

I left a few minutes early to run, and I do mean run, to the Midway to shoot the lights of the ride at twilight. The murderous heat of the day was gone; the breeze was light, the evening now dead simple perfect for summer eternal, and I got it all.
One 20-minute swing around the Midway and it was dark. Done. Fought my way through the crowds, ran across the street – last man on the bus home. One empty seat. An old, old man in a plaid shirt, alone, wearing a button that something about farming. Seat taken? He gestured to it without a word. The bus chuffed and headed off.

The old man put his head back and went to sleep.

It was a five minute ride. Take it where you can get it, I guess.

Back in the car, racing home down the highway, windows down, music loud: the summer requirement.

Now I’m finishing up the edit on the video, drinking a late-night cup of coffee: haven’t had one since 2:00, when I went to a church diner to sit with the Lutherans and sip the ichor of life from a thick ceramic cup. Oh: after the coffee I went to the arcade to play some pinball, and was delighted to see an old friend, Black Knight. He took my quarters and did not give me a game. Sigh. Found a manager, got my coins, put them in another machine – and I slapped the ball so hard it got stuck between a bumper and the glass. Sigh.

Pinball at the Fair never seems right anyway. You have your back to the world. The Fair you have to take face forward.

That’s how it’s coming at you, anyway.

Tumblr is ready to roll with six posts starting around ten, unless the automatic post function screws up, which is likely. Watch the Twitter feed for an update on the Fair video. Trust me: it has an absolutely perfect moment. I
guarantee you will laugh, and I don’t say that ever. See you tomorrow.

75 RESPONSES TO the long dog

Pots and Kettles says:
August 31, 2010 at 4:28 pm

Amen swschrad. Always a becon of light in a very dark place.

fizzbin says:
August 31, 2010 at 4:40 pm

@AnnaN, MarkH, bg, hp, etc. Boffo back-n-forth! I seldom get into such discussions because:

1. I am an Equal Opportunity Bigot – I hate everybody.

2. My two most favorite forms of execution are Crucifixion and Impalement – Oooo, a new tasty treat for the fair – people on a stick 😈

3. The third reason I’ve forgotten – all the people in my head are yelling at me right now 😈

Ta.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 31, 2010 at 4:41 pm

@swschrad, that is nothing, I have been following this all day and I don’t even know what the disagreement is about if it is anything.

BBC personality in jungle: We now watch as the red-necked flyover defends its territory from the taunting song and dance of the blue-bellied money sucker.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 31, 2010 at 4:46 pm

@fizzbin, its Tuesday, you can’t turn up your second card, might explain your lapse 😈

madCanada says:
August 31, 2010 at 4:46 pm

@ bg bear.

😊

fizzbin says:
August 31, 2010 at 4:47 pm

@madCanada...re: “heckler woman was boorish”, I couldn’t agree with you more. This trend is becoming worrisome to me. Does this mean I’m turning Canadian? Is this something like zombie-ism??

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=7891
Mark E. Hurling says:
August 31, 2010 at 4:51 pm

Good to hear from you fizzbin. Just like Dirty Harry, “He hates everybody, irregardless of race, creed, or color.” You left out one form of execution out used by the Sumerians. Hanging in a net of chains over a bed of coals. Amazing what you learn in college in the course, A History of Corporal and Capital Punishment.

OK, swschrad, I'll try to behave now. I have vented more than enough spleen already today.

fizzbin says:
August 31, 2010 at 4:52 pm

@bgbear, I'm keepin' my eye on the pile.

fizzbin says:
August 31, 2010 at 5:02 pm

@Mark E, Dirty Harry is my personal hero, heh. For reasons I won't get into, when I got back to the World, I picked up a textbook on the history of torture. The stuff of nightmares. I had the presence of mind to get rid of it before my future wife, the Valkyrie, shacked-up, er, I mean moved in with me. See, I ain't so toopid 😁

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 31, 2010 at 5:02 pm

The “brazen bull” is a classic execution device and would make a great Fair BBQer.

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 31, 2010 at 5:07 pm

@Fizzbin, I heard this sad news story yesterday but, could not help but think “Callahan, this time you have gone too far!!”

http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/08/30/BAPT1F5EHG.DTL

bgbear (roger h) says:
August 31, 2010 at 5:11 pm

Dirty Harry reference photo:

http://www.moviestore.com/Photos/C332164_B77539.html

hpoulter says:
August 31, 2010 at 5:30 pm

“that is nothing, I have been following this all day and I don't even know what the disagreement is about if it is anything.”

- who cares? Just tap-dancing on the volcano rim. To quote Mr Natural: “don't mean shee-it”.

Dirty Harry? Gives me a chance to share this. In Terry Pratchett's wonderful Discworld series, the following is engraved over City Guard headquarters:
FABRICATI DIEM, PVNC

Dog Latin for “Make my day, punk”

Some version of the “do you feel lucky?” speech occurs in several of the novels.

lanczos says:
August 31, 2010 at 5:34 pm

@swschrad: An em-dash?!?! What about the en-dash?

So easy in TeX. Currently TeX-xing in my class notes: pchem.

And every evening, I pray on my knees for The Deliverance of Those Poor Misguided Slackers Who Use LaTeX.

crossdotcurve says:
August 31, 2010 at 5:56 pm

There is no question that Hewitt trafficks in demagoguery. It is his go-to strategy. He is famous for it:

http://andrewsullivan.theatlantic.com/the_daily_dish/awards.html

He also openly supports discrimination against gay people, and has young-Earth creationists on his show agitating for allowing religious expression (read: fundamentalist Christian religious expression) on public property and in public schools. Did Jesus ride on dinosaurs? Well, let's let the kids decide...

Further, his rabid support of torture and the suspension of habeas corpus cements him in the company of the ignorant masses who make up vast majority of his audience.

He is a cancer on the body politic.

Also, he can't argue his way out of a wet paper bag. He routinely gets slayed when he (rarely) has an ideological foe on his utterly predictable show.

His latest jihad against the non-ground-zero non-mosque is utterly hypocritical. “Secular sacred space”? No one should be allowed denomination-specific religious expression there? Um…where was his outrage years ago when they raised the ground-zero cross?:

http://www.seankreynolds.com/fortheeyes/vacations/nyc2003/ground_zero_cross.jpg

Pathetic.

Mark E. Hurling says:
August 31, 2010 at 6:06 pm

My personal favorite Harryism, “A man's got to know his limitations.” from Magnum Force.

fizzbin says:
August 31, 2010 at 6:36 pm

@bgbear,”brazen bull…Fair BBQer”, it's all your fault I fell off my diet and scarfed up left-over BBQ chicken and TWO helpings of rice with clarified butter! Templeton is full 😄

Indeed, that is a sad story near the stadium. When I first saw the
movie I yelled to myself YES, MORE!
The exchange that ends in “The man has a point” is precious, heh,
girl scouts!

@hpoulter, I missed that inscription over City Watch HQ. I'd look for
it but on a Kindle it ain't easy. Oh, wait, Kindles have a search
function – never mind.

On a completely different subject, I had some pithy snarks regarding
Jimmy Carter,Jr. but I see Comrade Dumbo is getting more face time
on TV tonight so I'll restrain myself, for the moment.

hpoulter says:
August 31, 2010 at 7:31 pm

@fizzbin:

It's subtle. In “Guards, Guards”:

Over the door a motto in the ancient tongue of the city was now
almost eroded by time and grime and lichen, but could just be
made out:
FABRICATI DIEM, PVNC
It translated – according to Sergeant Colon, who had served in
foreign parts and considered himself an expert on languages –
as 'To Protect and to Serve'.
Yes. Being a guard must have meant something, once.

Cory says:
August 31, 2010 at 8:04 pm

RE: Dirty Harry
Nobody is better than Clint Eastwood and Andy Robinson in that
movie. Watch this little-known gem made almost a decade before
with a young Ross Martin (Underrated) as the bad guy (not as much
of a wackjob but nearly as good as Andy Robinson) and you will see
the influence it had on Dirty Harry including an SF stadium scene.
It was one of Blake Edwards's first movies -Experiment in Terror
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0055972/

shesnailie says:
August 31, 2010 at 9:57 pm

@_v – my favourite torture? no arms… no legs… a belly full of
'meat'…

Lileks says:
August 31, 2010 at 11:39 pm

Yes, indeed: Andrew Sullivan. Say no more. Of all your specious
points, the only one I care to gainsay is the assertion he never has
an ideological foe on his show. Tells me everything I need to know
about where you're coming from, which is a position of flaming
ignorance. Thank you for visiting my site and calling my friend a
cancer; there's the door. Have a nice day.

InkyDink says:
September 1, 2010 at 2:29 am
Um, can I just say that I love that hot dog stand? Bright lights, flashing lights, colored lights in patterns, colored patterns, patterns in color—all enough to make the rational mind scream and run, and yet my inner 8-year-old says “Wow”, with a reverent sigh.

Could we talk about the whole “fried beer” thing now? The possible physics involved there are puzzling me. I heard a rumor on the road that the beer is frozen first.....so it’s a fried, flat beer thing?? (Apologies if it’s already a dead horse—I’ve been away too long).

crossdotcurve says:
September 1, 2010 at 5:17 am

Uh, I wasn't aware that “rarely” means “never”. And I'll stand by that comment.

And clearly the context of my comments was that his political positions and rhetoric are a “cancer” on our national discourse, not the man himself.

Thank you for willfully misreading my comments so they conform to your own out-of-hand dismissal of someone – Sullivan – at the mere mention of his name. Sullivan b.t.w. is an example of someone who routinely engages his opponents in a thoughtful way instead of demagoguing them. Have a nice day at the fair.

RJ says:
September 1, 2010 at 9:55 am

“Sullivan b.t.w. is an example of someone who routinely engages his opponents in a thoughtful way…”

Yes, he's especially classy when discussing the Palin family.

Much like crossdotcurve postings.

steveH says:
September 1, 2010 at 6:32 pm

@hpoulter;

“He also used to say “nuh-ku-lar”, although at that time it was not considered a sign of idiocy to do so.”

A long time ago I was a physics major. Two of the department professors spent most of the ’40s working at Oak Ridge, TN, doing physics-y kinds of stuff.

One of them regularly pronounced “nuclear” as “nucular”. It's a regional southern pronunciation.
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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