



ABOUT

100 Mysteries: Marcus Welby May Be Nuts

Monday Matchbook: Car Month continues

MONDAY, JUNE FIRST

on JUNE 1, 2009 · [54 COMMENTS](#) · in [ADVERTISING](#), [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

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“**Tub**” is one of those venerable words that always sounded fat, and that might explain its decline. “Tub o’ Chicken” drips with grease. I saw this at Hunt & Gather today, and I didn’t buy it – no, I saved my money for a small box of Bing Crosby Ice Cream. I’m not that crazy about Der Bingle, but you can’t pass up ancient pints of celebrity-flavored dessert. I did take many pictures, and they’ll be coming to you

this afternoon.

A BOOK I RECOMMEND



A good weekend that breaks the mold reminds you that the mold needs breaking. Also, where's the DAMN GLUE? I want my mold back. Everything was off this weekend, according to the usual iron-clad parameters of the Way Things Are: no piano on Friday, Natalie off at a night at the movies, so no pizza. Compensation: some dry particle-board-crust "artisanal" frozen 'za that tasted like ketchup slathered on zweiback.



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Oh, but the paradigm-cracking just kept coming. Friday night's movie was supposed to be sci-fi, as part of the new "Countdown" addition to Black and White World – summer will be spent on old space / creature-feature movies – but it turned out to be neither noir nor sci-fi. Two-thirds of the movie consisted of stock war footage, and as I took screen grabs and captured clips I kept thinking, well, where will this one go? How should I tag this film?

Tags are the curse of modern life. Aside from war and plague.

I think I mentioned this before – the granularity of taggable concepts is an anal-retentive's dream, and a curse. I wept with despair when I saw that iPhoto allows you to pin particular pictures to specific locations using Google Maps. NOW I HAVE TO GO DO THAT. I will, and some day I'll be glad; given the quantity of stuff I have scanned and sorted, an easier way to sift through the blizzard of bits is welcome. But I'll give you an example of how this works.

In preparation for the big disk swap, I was going through the main drive, weeding out programs. Found a demo of a novel-writing app I really liked, but it had expired. Checked its update page: fifty bucks. Well, no. Found a program that helped me sort and organize loose data, and I liked the interface. Upon launching it I was prompted to upgrade – of course. Updates are the other bane of computer life. It's like buying a vacuum cleaner, and every week when you plug it in and turn it on there's a knock on the door and a salesman who says "we've made incremental changes at the molecular composition of the bag, would you like to UPGRADE?"

But this upgrade said I could get three new apps for a low low price; I took a look. One was a PDF manager, which didn't appeal because I've never been shoved into a corner by an angry horde of unmanageable PDFs. But it had a scan function. I could scan in tax returns and receipts. Hmm. Another program tagged my images by color, which just seemed super-cool, and another managed things you'd been working on lately. Sort of. I think. What counted was the look of the apps: they were bitchin'. I entered my special code, and got all the apps for a double-sawbuck or so, including a program that lets me tag EVERYTHING.

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Then I opened the upgraded version of the app that had started the whole process, looked at it, and realized I had no idea what it did.

But it's cool! And *taggable!*

Tags are like those embossed sticky labels. When we got consumer access to those machines we went crazy, embossing words and tagging everything. Computers have made it much easier. Computers have a backspace key. You screwed up on an embossed label, there was no do-overs.

Anyway. I plowed through all the apps, and eventually discovered that I'd purchased a license key the cool novel-writing app, last year, during one of those Bundles. This would be an excellent opportunity to pile together all the files from the new novel.

Alas: I've been writing the novel on two different machines, and backing it up on two different remote servers and 3 removable media, which not only means many flavors of some chapters, it means overwritten files. I discovered that I'd lost a chapter somewhere.

I have about 37 copies of "Tiptoe through the Tulips," a song I can't stand, on various drives and DVDs. The sole copy of a crucial novel chapter I lose.

That was Friday. An utter failure! To compound the weekend's disappointments, I went to bed at 3 AM and woke at 9 AM, because my daughter had a sleepover and they went into giggly-screech mode as expected. Well, that's what naps are for. But when I laid down at 5 after a long day of errands, working, Oak Island Water Feature Repair and other duties, I could not sleep. Every time I drifted off I thought hey, what do you know, I'm napping. After half an hour I gave up, and since the wife and daughter and the other sleep-over friend were at the movies, I tried to make another frozen pizza. Hope against hope. This one was like eating a fried copy of the Italian version of Time magazine.

The good news: the Oak Island Water Feature has been running all day, with no problems. The murky water is gone, the lights shine into the trees, and the gentle plosh of water lulls the neighbors to sleep. My wife planted about 89435 flowers, so Jasperwood is in bloom. Sunday was perfect. Life is good. Surely nothing can bother me now.

Well.

It's called the "shrink ray" – companies make the contents of a package smaller without dropping the price, thereby raising the price. I don't get too exercised over it, because the information is on the front of the box or the pack or the scround. Sneaky? Sure. A lie? No.

But in every consumer war there is an expectation that standards will be adhered to, ideals upheld, and rules followed even in the worst of times. Those expectations have been met. Until now.

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HOST WITH THE MOST



I love these little mints; I could pop them all day. Unlike their larger siblings, they're incuriously strong; once you accept the strength of the full-size version, you have no trouble accepting the potency of these little tablets. The difference between the two is quantitative – 50 mints in one, 60 in the other – but the redesign made a big mistake I can't imagine they didn't expect. Think of it. Look at the two packs. The new one is hinged. The old one has a sliding top. What's the difference in utility?

That's right: you can open the old one with one hand. Try opening the new one with one hand, and you're playing 50-Mint Pickup.

Idiots.

Since I have a few of the old ones around, I now refill them and husband them against the inevitable future when one-handed mint-tin opening will be just a reminder of a glorious past. Then again, at some point you realize that almost everything you like will be cancelled. Your favorite ice cream, a candy bar that slipped into obscurity. (I can't remember what a Zero tasted like, but I want one.) (Hold on: research indicates that it's still a going brand, and what's more, it originated in Minneapolis. From the looks of it, we had quite a few candy companies in the early years of the 20th century – the Pendergrast Candy Company, Pratt and Langhoff, Martoccio, and of course the Collins Candy Company, maker of Walnettos.

I get this all the time: Walnettos? What are those? They're these. Mr. Collins built the house in which I live. Jasperwood is the house Walnettos built. Have some today!

–

[Buzz.mn](#) up; Matchbook up at noon, and the Antique Store Roundup due at 1 PM. See you soon.

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54 RESPONSES TO *monday, june first*



Bob W. says:

June 1, 2009 at 10:47 pm

Swschrad,
I don't mean to be picky, but actually Brown Eyed Girl was a Van Morrison song. Wouldn't have said anything, but I'm a fan of Van's music.



Ross says:

June 2, 2009 at 2:19 am

teach5: are you saying you don't know what a "hurdy-gurdy man" was? They were also called organ grinders(from the meat grinder-like crank that operated their music boxes), which would just get snickers nowadays from Beavis & Butthead. That song isn't all that mysterious: it's the usual '60s twaddle of "oh, man, I was bumming on all these heavy thoughts, man, until this cool old guy started playing outside on the street—he reminded me that, like, *_love_* is the answer, man".

I, too, thought of Arte Johnson's dirty old man. The routine started with "Wanta piece of candy, little girl?", so they would come back to that theme occasionally to try a variation(like Walnettos). Of course, that also reminds me of the bizarre radio commercials for Buck Henry's 1968 movie of the Terry Southern novel, the tag line for which was "Have a piece of...Candy."



Ross says:

June 2, 2009 at 2:25 am

Almost forgot what I was gonna say, originally: my mom worked in a restaurant that used the "tub o' chicken" buckets that restaurant supply places offered for dives that couldn't afford a custom printing job, so needless to say, one of my favorite "Night Court" lines was [Harry Anderson to Richard Moll, carrying a squirming litter in a round trash bin] "Hey, Bull! Where'dja get the tub o' puppies?"



Tom Beiter says:

June 2, 2009 at 7:47 am

When I was a kid, getting a candy bar was a very special treat. We typically only got them when we went on our annual summer vacation trip. So I was very cautious about what I chose. Once when I was around 7 on one these trips, I spied the Zero bar. I could not resist the allure of the packaging and I chose that as my once-a-year candy treat. It was awful. White chocolate and nougat. To this day I hate white chocolate.

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ABOUT

Monday Matchbook: Car Month continues

Hunt & Gather

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TUESDAY, JUNE 02 – SPOILER FREE, OF COURSE

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polymathamy on [06.14.12 Bleat](#)

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Oh my. This day.

First: I didn't get to the Antique Store Recap because life got really interesting all of a sudden, and I can't say any more. Except this: I have been given A Task, hereafter referred to as The Task Supreme. or TTS. It will occupy a fortnight and the fruits may not be visible for a year, but it's big.

Everything else gets pushed off to the side, so it's a good thing the site's weekly updates are already laid out and written.

Second: After I picked up Natalie from Spanish-Language Graduation Class, I hit the hay for a fast nap – had gone to bed late and gotten up early, and needed some time in regeneration mode. Woke, did a fast check of the week ahead, and realized there was no time better than now to do something Natalie had wanted to do: return her defective Action Replay Cheat-Code Device to Target. I had something else in mind, though.

“Can we see ‘Up?’” she asked.

140 OR SO

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An advertisement for Merit Gold & Silver. It features a 10oz Silver Bar and two Gairsoppa Britannias coins. The text says "OCTOBER SPECIAL Get a 10oz Silver Bar at Spot With purchase of Gairsoppa Britannias* MeritGold.com".

A BOOK I RECOMMEND

“Yes, we can do that too.”

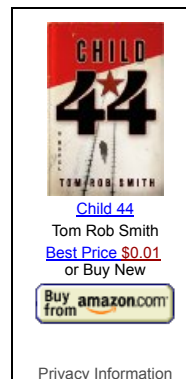
SCREECHES of joy. It’s our annual ritual: seeing the Pixar movie. Pixar films are held in the highest esteem around here, and Natalie regards them as Disney Extra Plus Super Good stuff. (The Disney identification is strong in this one.) You may recall I gushed like the oil-well in “Giant” over “Wall-E,” even though some griped & chafed about The Message, or the bifurcated story. I had no problem with any of that. I thought the earth-bound sequences were brilliant, and Chaplinesque pathos of the robot all the more remarkable for the fact that he didn’t actually, you know, exist. Given the unexpected context of the movie’s release, I think they’ll be writing all sorts of theses, ridiculous and otherwise, about “Wall-E” in 20 years.

I hadn’t really been looking forward to “Up” with tingling anticipation. A grumpy old crank in a floating house – well, no doubt misadventures will ensue. A bumbling sidekick kid: fine, target market and all that. I saw the trailers, read the preview stories, rode the chair with the helium balloons, but I wasn’t leaning into it. I think I expected half an hour of the old man setting up his house to escape urban renewal; after that, what? Picaresque tales strung together with occasional humor provided by guest-starring dogs who spoke. I didn’t doubt it would be fun, but unlike “Ratatouille” and “Wall-E” it didn’t look incredible. The attraction seemed rooted in the premise, and the premise seemed like a pretext for making a movie.

Now I suspect that everyone at Pixar smiled to themselves when they read reviews of “Wall-E” and its Surprising Emotional Connections, because they knew what was coming next, and thought: nothing, you ain’t seen it yet. My two-by-four to the heart, let me show it to you. The first 15 minutes of the film are just achingly wonderful, and anchor every subsequent moment of fantastical whimsy in a story you cannot guess from the previews. It hurts, it’s so good. There weren’t many people in the theater – it was a six o’clock showing – but a block of cement could feel the emotional reaction people had to the movie. I’ve said it before: I can sit stone-faced through almost anything, but almost a decade after the fact get verklempt thinking about that song Jesse sings in “Toy Story 2.” Perhaps the fact that it’s animated kicks out the chocks and lets you react as you might not react to something Real, but the trick of infusing the Artificial with the Real has always been Pixar’s skill – as evidenced in the company’s logo, which gives a *desk lamp* personality.

Anyway. It might sound like a stretch to say it’s a love story, but it is – and it’s the heart of an old man that drives the story. And just when you get comfortable with the central metaphor of the tale, the story changes, redefines the metaphor in a way that upends everything, and sets up one last visual kicker that ends the film not with a punchline, but a benediction. Plus, a goony bird and a talking dog.

Not sure I’d call it Pixar’s best animation – the dogs seemed wrong. “Wall-E” had two consistent visual styles – the dead planet, the shiny white future – and everything looked as if it belonged. The dogs and the bird were off – they were, oh, 27% more realistic than the humans, except for Dug, whose



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stylization seemed to call attention to the fact that he wasn't entirely realistic. Hard to describe, but you'll see what I mean, and see how it doesn't matter. Story and character carry Pixar more than anything, and the genius of the animation is almost frosting. Almost.

I always feel the same things when the credits roll – amazement, satisfaction, amusement, admiration. When I leave the theater. there's one emotion that stands out:

Gratitude!

–

The Antique Round-up will be posted around 10:30; Black and White World around 2 or so. See you then!

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55 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, june 02 – spoiler free, of course*



Kimberly says:
June 2, 2009 at 6:54 pm

Thanks, Spud. I appreciate your recommendation. 😊



Karen says:
June 2, 2009 at 7:21 pm

I did like this movie. IF you stay through the credits you will see this guy in the credits <http://nickpitera.blogspot.com/>



Mark says:
June 3, 2009 at 11:44 am

“I can sit stone-faced through almost anything, but almost a decade after the fact get verklempt thinking about that song Jesse sings in “Toy Story 2.” My wife, who is legally blind, had a very special doll, a Chatty Cathy, when she was young. She was a little isolated, not being able to play with the rest of the children, and Chatty was a friend. Anyway, we collect the Pixar films so she can see them at home. We always skip past that scene, it hurts a little too much for my wife, also named Kathy, to watch. The Incredibles is brilliant. I love the mid century look colliding with some extremely advanced technology. Perfect movie to watch in our atomic ranch.



Whitney says:
June 5, 2009 at 12:33 pm

HOST WITH THE MOST

The soundtrack killed me — in particular “Stuff We Did” I can’t even type that title without losing it. So, so touching.



Wiz says:

June 6, 2009 at 10:05 pm

@D. Palmer: I think it's mothers he didn't like. Are there ANY Disney movies with a positive mother role? Lots of dads and father-figures, lots of evil step-moms. Go down the list - it's pretty striking.... (Yes, “The Incredibles” is an exception. Any others?)

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**developers! I'm just
adding this, and will add
something more, later.
Who cares? You're
reading this? Really?**





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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 03

on JUNE 3, 2009 · [63 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

Augh - iTunes just kicked up “Love Will Find a Way” by Pablo Cruise. I know where I was when that song infested the jukebox: working at a Pizza Hut by West Acres shopping center as a summer job. The cook, who fancied himself a musician, praised the production – so clean! So tasteful!

Tying a particular song to a particular place must be an aspect of the modern era; can’t believe that someone in the middle ages heard a madrigal, heard it again 20 years later and thought I was standing in a field up to my shins in pig offal when first those notes revealed themselves to me. Of course, that goes for most songs, except “Prithee Now We Come To Merrie Tymes,” which I heard somewhere else. Right: the privee. Hah! What a jape we had with that.

Ah, Pablo Cruise. The thinking man’s K.C. and the Sunshine Band.

I wonder if I my dad had the same sort of place-song identification. Not from his teen years; they were too poor and rural, and then he was in the War. Afterwards, perhaps. He had a fine selection of early rock 45s, but there was a strain of country that would take over in the early 60s. When the Beatles came along he took a look and said No sir, I don’t like it. And that was it for rock.

No 80s tunes on the way to work today; finished a five-part Johnny Dollar old-time radio show. They might be my favorites of the entire genre. I barked a laugh out loud when I first heard the show’s tagline – it was many years ago

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

in Washington DC, and I was receiving my weekly instruction in old radio on the public radio station. “America’s Fabulous Free-lance Insurance Investigator, the Man with the Action-Packed Expense Account!” Somehow a guy who came around to see if you really had shingle damage from the hail didn’t seem too dramatic. When I discovered [the five-part show](#), I knew how wrong I’d been.

Day Two of the Top Secret Thing, which I’ve now retitled to Top Secret Thing, or TST. For some reason – well, no, for obvious reasons – the TST reminded me of the long-forgotten acronym SST, which was a controversial project when I was a young lad reading science magazines. Off the top of my head, it was a government-funded scheme to build a competitor to the Concorde. SuperSonicTransport. The name sounded cool; the acronym sounded fast. The pictures in the magazines looked like silvery visitors from the future. I seem to recall it was cancelled because A) they didn’t want to spend government money on it, O Halcyon Days of Yore, and B) there were concerns it would pollute. This was back when the future was assumed by all to be overly polluted, Woodsy Owl falling from the sky asphyxiated, everyone wearing face-masks to protect them from the choking miasma belched out from factories in stock footage. Let’s do some research . . .

Yes. Not just ozone-destroying pollution, but noise pollution. Congress killed funding in 1971, and banned the plane from coming into New York. They’re still working on SST engines – the wikipedia article names two cool-sounding programs, the “pulse detonation engine” and the “Reaction Engines Skylon,” the latter being some unholy offspring of the Terminator and Battlestar: Galactica storylines. Then the Skylons would fight the Transformers! Awesome!

Anyway, the TST occupied the file of the workday. It began with a conference call, moved on to brainstorming, and will eventually result in a Powerpoint presentation. As I said on Twitter, the sudden appearance of Powerpoint in a job where no Powerpoint previously existed is a sign your career has taken a sudden, unexpected, and possibly horrible turn. Not in this case – the TST is much fun, and continues the curious trajectory of my life at the paper. The more trouble the paper’s in, the more I enjoy my job. Crises keep opening up one opportunity after the other. I’m sure the fellow who took the wheel from Captain Smith thought the same, but it’s not that dire.

Speaking of Captain Smith – there’s another Titanic exhibit coming to down, and this one is called Majestic Titanic. Or so the signs seem to indicate. It’s a bit confusing, since the Majestic was a ship of its own, one of the “Big Three” according to this brochure. The others were the Olympic and the Homeric. The last one was news to me. Obviously a White Star line, since they all ended with “-ic,” including the ill-fated SS Sporadic, which never had a set route or destination. The Britannic and Olympic were sister ships of the Titanic, the latter [sinking](#) four years after the Titanic went down. (There’s the sequel they could have made, but didn’t. Why not? The sinking of the Titanic’s duplicate, refitted as a hospital ship, sunk in wartime – that’s a



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better story than the original, in many ways, and certainly fresher.)

Ah, the things a little research reveals: there's a [book](#) about the theory that the Titanic found on the bottom of the ocean was not the Titanic, but was actually the Olympic, which had suffered a collision with another vessel and was too costly to repair. So they switched the identities – change the nameplates, the china, the towels, the stationery – and deliberately sunk the “Titanic” for the insurance money.

The author of the book also notes that some people believed the Titanic was sunk as part of a Jesuit plot to enable the creation of the Federal Reserve, but he finds those theories *absurd*.

Anyway. I hope I get to do the Powerpoint, because I'll do it in Keynote. The TST will occupy a fortnight, as noted, so it will soak up much time, but the project is huge, and it's something I've been dreaming about for quite a while.

Some day I'll be able to point to something and say: this was the TST. A year, perhaps.

Yes, it's amazing what private industry can do when the all-consuming Fire of Doom is lit underneath it. Even when you have debt, bankruptcy, and union problems. But enough about General Motors – unless you want to talk about that P. J. O'Rourke article about how we fell out of love with cars. I grew up in the era of craptacular cars, so there wasn't much to love in the first place. Then again:



And I *loved that car*. Closest thing to a Jetson bubble ever made. Remember, everything else was bricky and boxy and thin and apologetic, timid little rattletaps that had the bravado of someone who had been dealt a very swift kick in the groin. Not everything was a tailfinned beauty, though; just a few weeks ago, I saw my friend Wes, and he was driving his '57 Country Squire.

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BLEAT PREMIUM

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



It's not a lovable machine – it has that Practical Sensible vibe that made so many 50s cars look like something made for sensible thrifty kill-joys who spend their weekends making HeathKit radios, because they weren't going to pay Mr. Westinghouse one dime, nossir. But compare that car to [the later version](#) – my God, Clark Griswold would be happy, but the these machines just sucked the happiness out of the streets.

I even prefer the [transitional model](#) – the '59 looks totally stoned, in an odd way, and fins look like vestigial arms it's about to lose after another few go-rounds with evolution, but yes, I'd drive it.

I love my Element, but it's not my favorite car of all time – that would be [this one](#). Used to drive home from the radio station after midnight on the highway, doing unwise speeds; it was a joy to drive. Behind that, the unfortunately named Probe – it had manual transmission and “Turbo.” Wind that baby up, drop it into fourth, and POW. Now I drive a sensible machine, but I do love it; there's not a day I don't go out to the street or the lot, see it all shiny, and think “Hello, sweetheart.”

It responds in the voice of the dog from “UP,” but that's okay.

As for the future? Well, the auto industry is in [the most capable hands you can imagine](#). I wonder what he drives. I wonder what he says he'd like to drive, and what he dreams of driving when no one else is around.

Later today: Out of Context Ad Contest, and a fine, fine Minneapolis update you will enjoy. See you soon. (Also, Miscreant Roundup at [buzz.mn](#) if I have time between NewsBreak and the TST.)

Pass it along, if you wish



63 RESPONSES TO *wednesday, june 03*



Warren says:

June 3, 2009 at 3:02 pm

There's the sequel they could have made, but didn't. Why not? The sinking of the Titanic's duplicate, refitted as a hospital ship, sunk in wartime – that's a better story than the original, in many ways, and certainly fresher.

Gaah, no. They'd turn it into *The English Patient* at sea.

The first car I ever owned was a 1976 Pacer. Got it used for \$400. Weird little thing but I liked it — just because it was so weird. The passenger side door was about 6" longer than the one on the driver side, to make it easier for people to get into the back seat.

My friends and I used to call it the Cousteau Mini-Sub.



Ed Singel says:

June 3, 2009 at 3:22 pm

My first car was a '66 Ford Custom, with a manual shifter on the steering column. It had the advantage that if the engine needed work, you could climb into the engine compartment and stand next

to it while you worked on it.

I have a fondness for the old VW beetles. I never owned one, but a good friend did, and I spent a lot of time in it. The heater controls were broken, so the only way to turn the heat on/off was to jack the car up and turn a valve under the car. So, this became an annual event, like changing to daylight time.

I do remember once climbing an icy snowy steep western Pennsylvania hill in it, passing all the stuck cars and semis. It always got us there.



Patrick says:

June 3, 2009 at 4:34 pm

My first car was a 1976 Mercury Grand Marquis. It was yellow with brown interior, so my friends called it the replacement school bus. It drank power steering fluid like it was going out of style.

I sold it, and bought a 1981 Ford Fairmont sedan from a friend's dad. It was white with blue interior, and I called it Moby Dick. Had a few problems with it, and hardly drove it.

When my parents and I moved to my great-granddad's old farm after I graduated high school, I took on a 1977 Oldsmobile Ninety-Eight, Regency Class. It had red paint, red interior, PLUSH interior, power windows, power doors, power seats, faux wood panels on the door handles, but no antenna (broke off in a car wash), and had a leak in the radiator. Never bothered to replace the antenna, and it cost me over \$600 to replace the alternator. I'd had it overheat on me twice. Due to its redness, size, and luxury-ness, I called it The Big Red Boat.

After I sunk (read: crashed) the boat, I drove a small red Toyota pickup. My dad took that one, and gave me a Nissan pickup, also red. I wrecked it (about five months after I wrecked the Olds), and he gave me a large, yellow 1978 Chevy Scottsdale pickup. Had tan interior, which I covered with a Southwestern-style seat cover. Had two gas tanks that were meant for diesel, but the truck took Regular. This was because the original engine had been taken out, and replaced with a 1976 Oldsmobile Cutlass engine.

I traded trucks with my dad, and I ended up with a large, white, Ford F-250. I hated that truck. I missed the yellow Chevy, which I called Yellow Submarine.

Last vehicle I traded my dad for was a small, green Nissan XE pickup. It was a great little truck, got decent gas mileage, everything. I traded it for a white Nissan Sentra my grandma had after she passed away, and I regretted it ever since. The truck ran better than the car, but I thought the car would get better gas mileage. I was wrong. It had more problems than I could afford to fix. Had to replace the alternator twice. It had more oil leaks than the Exxon Valdez. Finally traded it in for the car I have now, a 2005 Ford Focus ZX4. I think once everything picks back up I may trade it in for something in a hybrid. I drive 70-some miles one-way to and from work, so I could use something with very good gas mileage.



Aleta says:

June 3, 2009 at 6:12 pm

Research continues into supersonic airplanes. The noise footprint can be configured to just about zero, and tests are underway at Edwards AFB, just down the road from here. But the use of pulse-

detonation engines is probably Right Out. An experimental PDE was operating here on the Mojave Air and Space Port a few years ago. When it started, three miles away, I could see the windows in our hangar pulsing in and out. The overpressure was astonishing and the noise deaf-making. The cat hid under the desk. Even our rocket engines are not as loud as the PDE.



Shelley says:

June 3, 2009 at 6:18 pm

James, you just took me to car hell. That looks like a Pacer, but also could be an unholy spawn of a Pinto and a Gremlin.

My aunt had a huge 1970s station wagon. We used to lay in the back with our feet sticking out the window ... that or us hanging out the back window going down the freeway.

My first car was a Ford Gran Torino. it would have been cool except for the 1970s bird shit brown color and vinyl top. I wanted a 1969 Camaro, but my dad said the Camaro was too much car for me.

Yeah, right a 351 is just tame, right dad?



cnyguy says:

June 3, 2009 at 7:41 pm

Love the two-tone color combination on our host's beloved old Pacer! I remember one of the car magazines described the Pacer as looking like a "pregnant egg." Its styling was rather- uh- unique in its time. I suppose it still is.

My own all-time favorite car is the '83 Firebird L/E I had for a few years. Just touch the accelerator and it took off like a rocket. Lots of fun to drive, and loaded with luxury features. My least favorite car? No question: the '77 Subaru station wagon that started disintegrating the minute I drove it off the dealer's lot. It had a long list of annoying quirks, and was remarkably unreliable- not to mention homely.



Jan says:

June 3, 2009 at 8:17 pm

First and favorite car: 1972 Ford Maverick - I have no recollection of the car's performance but I know I liked the little upturned tail and was grateful just to have a vehicle. It being bright red didn't hurt either. <http://freerevs.com/pictures/348378.jpg>

And on radio detectives, "Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar" is a favorite for fabulously cheesy lines that were certainly delivered with a wink. It's funny how the writers of shows like CSI (insert whatever city) or Law & Order try to mimic the the style in their opening sequences and fail completely.

For hard-boiled cop humor, you can't beat Jack Webb in "Pat Novak for Hire," a series that had too short of a run. The insults exchanged by the police and Novak are terrific. Some episodes are available at Old Time Radio Network archives, <http://www.otr.net>, where you can also find lots of Johnny Dollar episodes.



steveH says:

June 3, 2009 at 8:40 pm

The Boeing B2707 fuselage mockup lives just up the road from here

at the Hiller Aviation Museum in San Carlos, just south of San Francisco airport. Full size, but no wings.

My first car was a '72 Super Beetle with a sunroof. Pumpkin orange. Shoulda kept it and skipped the two Fiats that followed. Also a better car than the Rambler American we had when it was time to go to the hospital to deliver our first child. Ran out of gas in the driveway. Fortunately, I always carried a can of gas in its trunk. Nowadays it's a '97 Ford Ranger for me. Pickups are just too useful.

Never too fond of cars, perhaps because as a 5-year old pedestrian I was hit by a drunk driver who ran a red light. I think it was a late-40s Plymouth.

On the other hand, when I was around 4, we had a '49 or '50 Ford. I was fascinated by a chrome switch installed low on the middle of the dash. Asked my Dad what it was for, and he said it would blow up the car. Talk about mixed feelings; "...don't touch the switch ... I *really* want to flip that switch". Never did, still don't know what it was for.

The car we had longest was a '56 Chevy 4-door station wagon, maroon and white, with the 235 c.i.d. "Blue Flame" straight 6 engine. Put in gas, check the oil, it just ran for 18 years. Traded in for a '67 VW bug. (But what my Dad really wanted was a '67 Chevelle Malibu SS 396. Which he told us about many years later.)



Lileks says:

June 3, 2009 at 9:05 pm

Pat Novak is hilarious, really – from what I understand it was intentionally over the top, but not so much that it sounded like parody. Every single episode is the same; every single episode is almost impossible to figure out. They all have the rummy doc who concludes his segment with the same mocking line: "Good Night, Lover." And yes, the banter between Webb and the cop is sharp and nasty – all the more amusing when you realize who the cop is. (Hint: friends called him Bunny. Later made a name for himself as some lawyer named Mason.)



Loge says:

June 3, 2009 at 9:11 pm

I guess I thought the article about Hunt and Gather for the in-flight magazine was the TST. When I read "SST" I thought immediately of SSP racers, remember those?

<http://www.feelingretro.com/toys/Boy-Toys/ssp-racers.php>

I had the Smash-Up Derby Bicentennial Edition.

My worst car was a '71 Dodge Polara. Everything that could go wrong with the cooling system did, one thing after another. It overheated so many times that the outflow tube from the radiator partially melted and made a sound like a bagpipe whenever the engine got hot.



Carter says:

June 3, 2009 at 10:58 pm

WAMU and Ed Walker, still playing five-part Johnny Dollars 20 years after you left, Lileks. Just finished the Indestructible Mike series, with Howard McNeer as the happy Bowery drunk.

<http://wamu.org/programs/bb/09/05/#2009-05-31>



Lileks says:
June 4, 2009 at 12:15 am

Bless ‘em – that was my introduction to OTR. Lum ‘n’ Abner, X-Minus One, and Gunsmoke. I loved Sunday nights.



Neil Russell says:
June 8, 2009 at 10:50 am

AMC’s advertising for the 1975 introduction of the Pacer was; “Suddenly it’s 1980!”
And they were right, if you shave the hood down and put on square headlights, stretch it out to 4 doors, and of course get rid of the real metal and make it plastic, you have a Ford Taurus. Oh that’s right, it took Ford an extra five years to make it to the future AMC already had brought to market.

I’m an unashamed AMC apologist, I think anything that bears the mark of Richard Teague is a rolling work of art, and considering what their style department did with less than 60 people and no budget, it was worthy of any valiant effort of the DuMont network.

For anyone that grouses about the quality of cars from the 70s, don’t forget that most of the problems are related to all that federally mandated plumbing that just about put the Big 4 out of business back then.
And those stupid trolley bumpers that appeared in 1973 too.

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[Out of Context Ad Challenge: Solution](#) [Curious Lucre Concludes: Best Saved For Last](#)

THURSDAY, JUNE 04: JENKS' DREAM

on JUNE 4, 2009 · [39 COMMENTS](#) · in [ADVERTISING](#), [EPHEMERA](#), [MPLS: HISTORY](#)

Another day before the mast: NewsBreak in the morning, where I had to talk about a sex offender named Willie Johnson (known alias, Whizzer O'Dongle) with a straight face. Then meetings about the Top Secret Thing. A full day followed by a full night ahead, it being column night – and tomorrow's the same damned thing all over again.

But.

I did have some time at the office to scan some stuff. There are two volumes of the 1899 edition of one of the paper's predecessors, and the pages crumble to the touch. They're beyond saving, unfortunately. Someone opened the front cover, gripped 20 pages, turned – and they ripped in half. Once the page is torn, it seems to lose all molecular cohesion; try to turn it as gently as you can, and it flakes away to nothingness. The only way to save what's left is to destroy it carefully. Working from the back, I took out six pages and carefully, carefully scanned them. They're not from this century. They're not from the previous century. They're from the century before that. The century before these ads ran, the Revolutionary War was fought. All that potent history sitting on a shelf for years, forgotten. Well. Nevermind the stories; I was interested in the ads. There's a cool kicker to this one, so stay with me.

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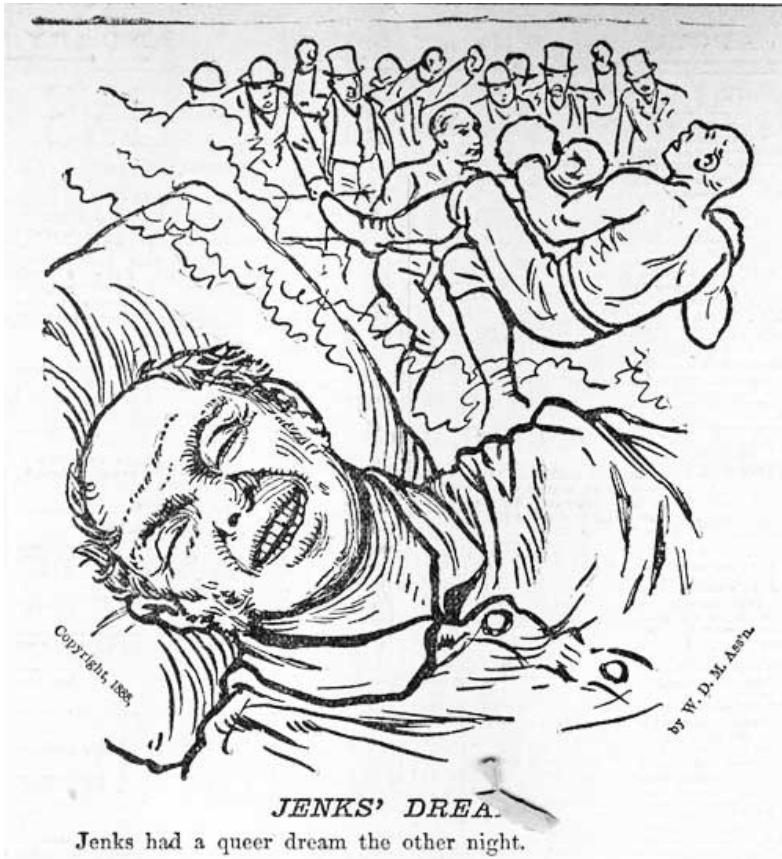
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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

They didn't use many illustrations, so this one stood out. (I've adjusted the images to make them look white again; the pages are horribly yellowed.)



Well, now, it's not like that. Really:

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THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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He thought he saw a prize-fighters' ring, and in the middle of it stood a doughty little champion who met and deliberately knocked over, one by one, a score or more of big, burly-looking fellows, as they advanced to the attack. Giants as they were in size, the valiant pigmy proved more than a match for them. It was all so funny that Jenks woke up laughing. He accounts for the dream by the fact that he had just come to the conclusion, after trying nearly every big, drastic pill on the market, that Pierce's Pleasant Purgative Pellets, or tiny Sugar-coated Granules, easily "knock out" and beat all the rest hollow! They are the original and only genuine Little Liver Pills. .

Beware of Imitations, which contain Poisonous Minerals. Always ask for Dr. Pierce's Pellets, which are little Sugar-coated Pills, or Antibilious Granules. **One a Dose.**



SICK HEADACHE,
Bilious Headache, Dizziness, Constipation, Indigestion, Bilious Attacks, and all derangements of the stomach and bowels, are promptly relieved and permanently cured by the use of Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Purgative Pellets. They are gently laxative, or strongly cathartic, according to size of dose. Smallest, Cheapest, Easiest to take. 25 cents a vial, by druggists.

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Beware of Poisonous Minerals when dealing with Deranged Bowels!

Men wanted:

HELP WANTED—MALE.

UNITED ORDER DETECTIVES—We want an organized force of detectives all throughout the United States, to work in cooperation by informing each other of suspicious characters in any locality, quelling riots and to intercept criminals at any point upon notice from main office to be established at Minneapolis. No membership fee required. For particulars address U. O. D., care Journal, Minneapolis.

Trust Mexican Mustang Liniment to cure Swinney! This ran eight times across the bottom of the page:

HOST WITH THE MOST



And now, the amazing part. On a page crammed with ads, I chose this one. I really don't know why.

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- unmetered disk space
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\$10 per month
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BLEAT PREMIUM

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

On a lark I googled the name, thinking he might pop up in some obscure compendium of 19th century fakirs – and was rather amazed to find him pop up in the New York Times a few months after this appearance.

It's an [obituary](#). Mr. Bishop died shortly after this performance – under mysterious circumstances, the New York Times reports. “The Mind Reader’s Last Trick Ends Fatally. While entertaining the Lambs’ club He is Seized with Cataleptic Fits and Dies in the Clubhouse.” Sorry here. (reg. req) The article notes that he was famous for his marital infelicities, had once been placed in a mad house, escaped to Honolulu.

As it turns out, he'd suffered the fits before – and here's where the Times story gave me a little chill, as thought the hand of Washington Irving Bishop had reached out and guided me to that tiny ad. Which it didn't, of course.

But:

MINNEAPOLIS, May 13.—When Mind Reader Bishop was in Minneapolis, a few months ago, he was still ill from the effects of overexertion in St. Louis. On the day he was to give his street test here he was quite ill. The committee who were to hide the needle which he was to find, not understanding the strain to which he was subjected, took the needle nearly a mile from the hotel and hid it in the Exposition Building. Bishop started out in the hack, with a bag over his head, to find it. When near the Exposition Building he suddenly dropped the lines and seemed lost for a moment, and the team dashed into a post. He managed to secure the reins again and drove on to the Exposition Building and found the needle, but he immediately fell down in a hysterical cataleptic fit, similar to the one in which he died, and was carried back to the hotel rigid.

What a tale – told today for no reason other than I had some time to kill while I ate lunch, and decided to look at the back of a book I'd passed every day for years.

That's it for now – Curious Lucre around noon, and Lance Lawson Giant-size Sunday Fun editions right now at buzz.mn. See you soon.

Pass it along, if you wish



39 RESPONSES TO *thursday, june 04: jenks' dream*



Ross says:
June 4, 2009 at 2:26 am

Alias John Thomas Frankfurter, a local Elks, um, Member(you can just hear Eric Idle's Noel Coward imitation in the background, can't you? "Uh, thenkyooveddymuch.")



Mumblix Grumph says:
June 4, 2009 at 3:19 am

"So whaddaya wanna call the band?"

"Howzabout 'Mexican Mustang Liniment'?"

"I like it, but it's too long."

“Death to Swinney?”

“I don’t know what the hell that means, but it’ll work.”

“I still like ‘The Beatles.’”

“Shut up, Ringo.”



Mike Kozlowski says:

June 4, 2009 at 4:46 am

...Years ago we were cleaning out my grandmother’s home in Cleveland, OH, when we found a book called “The Common Sense Medical Advisor”, which was apparently written by the same Dr. Pierce. There were lots of pics of people recovering from various ailments at the good doctor’s Buffalo sanitarium, and all kinds of testimonials as to how effective his products were. It pushed all his pills pretty heavily (we got the biggest laugh out of his Pleasant Pills) and to this day is still one of the funniest things I’ve ever read. On the other hand, since the active ingredient in those pills was probably opium, it would have been damned hard not to be pleasant.

Mike Kozlowski
Columbia, SC



Craig says:

June 4, 2009 at 6:33 am

I love this line: “The news of his death spread rapidly, and many persons who knew Bishop pooh-poohed the idea that he was dead, declaring that the tit or trance was only part of his trick. One man insisted that he had seen the mind reader apparently dead at least twenty times.”

“Apparently dead” – it’s like a Monty Python sketch.

Craig



Patrick says:

June 4, 2009 at 7:18 am

Does anybody else hear a certain Rolling Stones song or Ray Stevens song while reading the ad for the sugar pills?



HaroldJ says:

June 4, 2009 at 7:26 am

I looked up Swinney in my copy of Navin’s Explanatory Horse Doctor Swinney is a strain of the outside muscle of the shoulder and is best treated by application of the following liniment

2oz each, oil of spike, oil of origanum, aqua ammonia, spirits of turpentine, sweet oil, alcohol.

The book was published in 1864 before anyone knew that Mustang Liniment was the way to go when dealing with Swinney.



Mike Robertson says:

June 4, 2009 at 7:52 am

James, have you read Jack Finney’s wonderful novel, ‘Time and

Again? It hinges on a mystery found in a century-old newspaper clipping and is one of my top ten books ever. There are lots of period photos included—plausibly—with one that blew my mind when I first read it years ago: the arm of the Statue of Liberty, standing alone on a street corner in NYC. I had no idea.



HunkyBobTX says:

June 4, 2009 at 7:53 am

In 2099 will they look back on the medicine of this era and be similarly amused? “Look honey, they actually had drugs to combat impotence! and the called it ‘Male Enhancement!’ Ha!”



jimbo says:

June 4, 2009 at 7:56 am

“strongly cathartic” = best euphemism for “may cause bowel voiding detectable as a seismic event within a 500 mile radius.”



Jan says:

June 4, 2009 at 8:44 am

“carried back to the hotel rigid”

Hmmm...Hotel Rigid, where check-out times are strictly enforced.



juanito - John Davey says:

June 4, 2009 at 8:48 am

No, the band name to use would be *The Cataleptic Fits!*



Andrew says:

June 4, 2009 at 9:05 am

I could swear I have heard the story of Baxter somewhere else, perhaps in a fictionalized form. Does it ring any bells for anyone else?



IrritableBear says:

June 4, 2009 at 9:20 am

All those cures, and still no treatment for Irritable Bear Syndrome.



Jan says:

June 4, 2009 at 9:25 am

@ Andrew: No Baxter bells but my ears are ringing. Perhaps Dr. Pierce has a Tincture for Tingling of Tender Ears.



MikeH says:

June 4, 2009 at 9:27 am

Wikipedia comes up blank with Swinney and Wind Galls, though both of these may be what that poor bobbysoxer was suffering from in the out of context ad, and mom was bringing out for her Mexican Mustang Liniment



juanito - John Davey says:

June 4, 2009 at 9:48 am

Andrew Says:

June 4th, 2009 at 9:05 am

I could swear I have heard the story of Baxter somewhere else, perhaps in a fictionalized form. Does it ring any bells for anyone else?

Paul Harvey.

Good day.



teach5 says:

June 4, 2009 at 9:48 am

Should I assume that the Mexican Mustang Liniment be taken in conjunction with a Mexican jumping bean? The results could be startling, if not entertaining.



Baby M says:

June 4, 2009 at 10:09 am

I doubt the makers of Mexican Mustang Liniment had much success; somehow I just don't think there were that many Mexican mustangs with sore muscles in Minneapolis in those days.



roger h (bgbear) says:

June 4, 2009 at 10:44 am

Patent medicines and psychics, there is a seeker born every minute.



grs says:

June 4, 2009 at 11:04 am

I am highly entertained by the image of a guy with a bag over his head driving a horse-drawn carriage down the street. You just don't see that sort of thing any more.



Stone says:

June 4, 2009 at 11:15 am

James – would it be possible to place a piece of that clear plastic sticky sheeting over the page before removing it? It could possibly even scan well. Just a thought...



Mark says:

June 4, 2009 at 11:33 am

The only way to save what's left is to destroy it carefully.

James, you can turn a phrase. Nicely done



rbj says:

June 4, 2009 at 11:36 am

Mexican Mustang Liniment is known by another name, Viagra.

**swschrads** says:

June 4, 2009 at 11:52 am

you mistakenly appear to be in deep weeds from the starting line today. standing "before the mast" means that you have been called to account for your misdeeds at morning Captain's Mast, the shipboard Kangaroo court.

since everything else appears normal, the likelihood is a mild case of Mistaken Simile Poisoning. I can relate. "another day at the oars," is perhaps closer to the mark.

if there's an angry, chained gorilla on the drum, it's indeed a nasty day of work.

an Irritable Bear walking the aisle with a whip would really make it suk (take that, nasty-word trapper!)

**grs** says:

June 4, 2009 at 12:14 pm

standing "before the mast" means that you have been called to account for your misdeeds at morning Captain's Mast

I think you're going to have trouble supporting that one. On-line references indicate that the phrase means "a common sailor," because sailors slept in a forward area of the ship, i.e., before the mast. Certainly, Richard Henry Dana, Jr., in his famous Two Years Before the Mast, meant that he was at sea for two years, not that he was facing disciplinary action for a two year period. It may *also* mean what you say, but I haven't seen that definition in my cursory search—only the meaning of being at sea.

**Jeff** says:

June 4, 2009 at 12:22 pm

James, thank you for the tidbit on Bishop. I have found articles on him dating back to 1882, at least. It seems that folks never quite knew what to make of him. His story reminds me of a psychic version of Tesla, whose mental strain would wipe him out occasionally. Very curious...

**GardenStater** says:

June 4, 2009 at 12:23 pm

He was carried back to the Hotel Rigid.

I stayed at the Hotel Rigid once. Man, the place was dead!

**Grebmar** says:

June 4, 2009 at 1:23 pm

Why scan the pages? Sometimes a shot from a digital camera (especially with a tripod) will do nicely. Those nineteenth century papers disintegrate rapidly from the acid content of the paper. Maybe scanning/photographing the whole thing is the only way to save them.

**roger h (bgbear)** says:

June 4, 2009 at 2:01 pm

Something I have seen done: since the the item being scanned has more value that the scanner, another solution is place the scanner on the document rather than the reverse.

A smaller scanner can easily be man-handled and flipped around.



fizzbin says:

June 4, 2009 at 2:29 pm

...purhaps the day could be unsukced if said peramblating, whip totin' upset ursine was wearing a black leather peek-a-boo bra.....I'll sign off now and whip myself for delightful pennance.



swschrads says:

June 4, 2009 at 3:17 pm

Irritable Tranny Bears? geez, now we've got to deal with discrimination complaints if we argue about that.



IrritableBear says:

June 4, 2009 at 3:19 pm

Irritable Bear charges extra for that.



huddydrvr says:

June 4, 2009 at 7:41 pm

@Mike, RE: Jack Finney. Glad someone brought up Finney's great book. Are you aware that he wrote a sequel to "Time and Again" where the protagonist has to (try to) stop the Titanic from hitting the iceberg? Finney also wrote several other time-travel and alternate history fictions. There's a good anthology of his short stories called "The Woodrow Wilson Dime" after one of his short stories. (Finney was also the author of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers", the original movie of which really gave me the creeps). Finney also wrote a book that contained two true items from the newspapers of the 1880's, a missing ship and a murder mystery, that he uncovered while researching for "Time and Again."



Ross says:

June 5, 2009 at 1:51 am

"IrritableBear Says:

Irritable Bear charges extra for that."

Well, of course you do; walking on deck in those stilettos is exhausting. Especially for a bear.



IrritableBear says:

June 5, 2009 at 8:33 am

Shaving Irritable Bear's legs was the true challenge, until Irritable Bear developed Irritable Bear Nair™. Not surprisingly, it's main ingredient is Mexican Mustang Liniment. Unfortunately, Pierce's Pleasantly Purgative Pellets have no effect on the resulting Piercing Pain, which irritates Irritable Bear even further.



fizzbin says:

June 5, 2009 at 10:43 am

...peek-a-boos, stilettos, Bear Nair!!!! Ooooh, what have I done – what HAVE i done!!



Tim says:
June 5, 2009 at 10:54 am

Jenks is the 1890s Harvey Pekar



Defrost Indoors says:
June 6, 2009 at 10:53 pm

Horse geek weighing in! Sweeney shoulder is an injury to a horse's suprascapular nerve, which can be caused by an ill-fitting collar or a traumatic injury such as a kick or collision. Once the nerve is damaged, the shoulder muscles start to atrophy. Wind galls: fluid in the leg joints caused by injury, making the legs puff up. They're relatively harmless in and of themselves but are usually a good sign that your mustang needs some rest and possibly some therapeutic shoeing or to be worked on softer ground.

There are so many things which can go wrong with horses which are even merely subject to modern, recreational riding and driving that I sometimes think it's a miracle that humans managed to get so much work done with them in the past.



Marbee says:
June 7, 2009 at 11:46 am

After reading "a sex offender named Willie Johnson (known alias, Whizzer O'Dongle)" I thought that the rest of the blog could only go downhill after that.

I was wrong.

Wind galls...is that gas?

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FRIDAY! JUNE 04

 on JUNE 5, 2009 · [63 COMMENTS](#) · in [RETRO DELIGHTS](#)

Sorry, folks – a long day at the office, and a piano recital tonight ate up all time for this, and I have still a column and two other pieces to do before I sleep. And then NewsBreak's last show for the season, first thing in the AM. There are many boring reasons for the hiatus, by the way – summer staffing issues, waiting for new equipment that will let us go live-to-tape (we were testing the rigs on approval before, to see if they fit our needs), working on a new set, and so on. If all goes well we'll come back at the Fair with all-day coverage, and if that means I have to spend ten days on the porch at the Strib building, then that means I will be a *very* happy fellow.

So to entertain you until I return tonight with something or other – 100 Mysteries, I hope – I give you the first of a giant chunk of scans from another set of newspapers discovered at the office. You'll recall I said there were two volumes? The other wasn't another 1899 edition, it was a collection of pages collected by a private citizen, most from the 30s, most in perfect condition. Many pictures of downtown

I've never seen before, anywhere.

140 OR SO

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND



But for today and tomorrow we'll have fun with [this](#): a 1933 test to see if you're a good husband. A wifely version and parental version comes next. Test yourself or you spouse or someone you know, and report back here – or add your own “merits” and “demerits.” See you soon!

THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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Pass it along, if you wish



63 RESPONSES TO *friday! june 04*



DryOwlTacos says:
June 5, 2009 at 5:27 pm

Some of those are not just demerits, they're deal breakers! Smokes in bed, only -1? Lawyer up, dear – a jury of my peers would not convict me for murdering you.



swschrads says:
June 5, 2009 at 5:32 pm

DuMont hasted about a year and a half, it become nothing. in the mid-50s Allen B. DuMont Industries also became nothing in the 60s. the name lives on in a few lines of oscilloscopes and related test equipment, which is wheer it all started from, o-scopes in the 30s.

IIRC, the initial TV network scene in 52/53 when hundreds of TV stations were built was NBC and DuMont. CBS came along third. DuMont failed and went BK. when the government ordered NBC to break up, think that was around 56 or 57, the blue network on radio became ABC, and they launched a couple hours of TV a few nights a week a year or two after that.

some station ownership groups had some characteristics of networks, but the next one to come along was Fox, from scratch, in I

believe the late 80s. the WB popped up in the 90s along with whatever else in the late 90s that merged with WB to become The CW.

the real activity came in the late 70s and early 80s as outfits copied Ted Turner's purchase of a satellite channel to put his UHF station in Atlanta on the satellite. you can call those networks, as they have national distribution, national sales, and regularly scheduled program lineups.

so we have hundreds of networks, and the "big 3" are the guys with the financial challenges.

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bgbear says:
June 6, 2009 at 8:52 am

wow, it was a joke about Fox, not meant as history.

The kernel I based on was a relationship of Dumont to Metromedia which became Fox.

I know it is like the hen taking credit for the souffle.



Dave says:
June 6, 2009 at 10:53 am

Am I the only person who noticed a subtle similarity between the lady featured on the curious lucre thumbnail and the lady in the thumbnail for this? Just wondering ...



Will says:
June 6, 2009 at 12:08 pm

You get points for:
"Gives wife real movie kisses, not dutiful pecks on the cheek."
"Kisses wife when leaving for work or a trip."

But you lose points for "Kisses wife just after her makeup has been applied."

Gee whiz, make up your mind. You want passion or not?



TUAWSteve says:
June 6, 2009 at 12:23 pm

60. But I should have a much higher score, considering that I do ALL the cooking and cleaning in this household, and "The Missus" does nada. Of course, she has the "real" paycheck and benefits, so I guess this all balances out. Somehow.

BTW, is it just me or does the bride in this picture look like a total beeach? I have a funny feeling it would be "Divorce" for her.



IrritableBear says:
June 7, 2009 at 8:11 am

Irritable Bear scored a 12.



Marbee says:
June 7, 2009 at 11:33 am

HOST WITH THE MOST

Where's "Leaves the toilet seat up?"

After taking a few accidental midnight tushie dips in the dark...it could be grounds for the big "d" or even the big "m" with the right jury.



Ross says:

June 9, 2009 at 1:48 am

Juanito: 'And the proper British response would be "too right", or more phonetically accurate "too roight"'

Actually, the way you've phrased the initial remark suggest an upperclass("posh") accent--until recently, the response would never be as working-class as "too right", with or w/o the working-class pronunciation. More likely, the response would be "Indeed", or (if the listener was too polite or uninterested to agree) the wonderful, "Just as you say."

Marbee: Why, in this supposed age of equality, is it still incumbent on the man to put it back down? Are women too feeble or uncoordinated to do so themselves? It's not like bending down with a full bladder is somehow more comfortable for a man. Jeez. Just be glad he puts the seat up before he lets fly...



Fred says:

June 9, 2009 at 7:54 am

Ross; "Are women too feeble or uncoordinated to do so themselves? It's not like bending down with a full bladder is somehow more comfortable for a man."

Just what I was thinking of saying but more eloquently put...



Jorrah says:

June 10, 2009 at 6:43 am

Here's how I figure it:

Up - Men peeing
Down - Men pooping
Down - Women peeing
Down - Women pooping

Three out of four situations requires the seat to be down. Therefore, the status quo is down, and if a man temporarily alters that status, then he is responsible for returning it and making all right with the world.

I read a Spider Robinson short story once, "God is an Iron", where the male character discovered that the female character lived alone when he lifted the toilet seat and saw a message written in marker:

"Oh, it's good to have a man around the house!"

(Quoted from memory, errors are the fault of Google for not finding the exact wording)



headhunt23 says:

June 10, 2009 at 10:08 am

Complains about being married and longing for bachelor days is only 1 demerit?

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Peter S says:
June 10, 2009 at 12:50 pm

This survey has been linked, via another website (Fark) and without credit, to an article on Salon.
http://www.salon.com/mwt/broadsheet/2009/06/10/husband_test/index.html

Bleat don't get no respect!

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MONDAY, JUNE 08

on JUNE 8, 2009 · [30 COMMENTS](#) · in [ADVERTISING](#), [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

Rain, rain. Upside: if the backyard was any lusher, it would be arranged by Nelson Riddle. Downside: one of the precious summer weekends was lost to temps twenty, I say I say son *twenty* degrees below normal.

On Saturday I went on errands with the Giant Swede; he had to get a box for his son's crawfish. He said he explained to his son that the crawfish was food, not a pet, but it didn't work. (My daughter had the same protective instinct of her class' crawfish.) He was looking for some sort of weed preferred by the clicky horrid things, and while asking a clerk a fellow leaned over and suggested guppies. "They snatch 'em right up." His son, holding a bag full of guppies, grinned and nodded: sure do! They were crawfish fanciers as well. I wandered away to see if I could find dog stairs for Jasper; while examining something on the bottom shelf I saw a tiny cricket, an escapee from the lizard-food bin, hopping away to freedom. He only made an inch per hop. We all have those nightmares: can't run away fast enough.

I wandered over to see the birds, listen to their agreeably idiotic chatter. It reminded me how birds used to be much more popular – when I was a kid, it seemed as if half the homes I entered had a bird chirping away in a cheap cage in the corner. They were furniture. Birdsong and cigarette smoke: two things you'd be surprised to find if you walked into a house nowadays. It was the World of the Aunts – birds, nylons, heels, Larks. (The combustible type.)

A few images. I don't think this is the original name.

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If only it made a wocka-wocka noise and ate ghosts.

The next image is disturbing. It's for a small fish tank in which a creature is entombed in living death until it enters, well, death death. But I know a friend who knows someone who was involved in shooting the box art and he said that a woman was murdered during the photoshoot by a jealous boyfriend. If you look hard you can see it. True fact: she later went on to be [murdered during an Ohio Players song](#).



As long as we're on the subject of the war between the sexes, I present this week's entry in the Parade of Men Without Chests. Seen at Target:

THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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A very modern image. The opposite would be unthinkable; the idea of the Male Mate looking at us and grinning while his spouse cleaned would be one of those terribly offensive images, the very sight of which would discourage small girls from careers in science. Although it might work if he was a slob. Fat, unshaven, boorish, with a sports magazine in his hand. That would be okay; his smile to us would only underscore his cluelessness. The woman certainly wouldn't be diligent and serious in this case – she'd be harried and annoyed, her only salve the efficiency of the machine Target had provided.



As it is, we have the Perfect Modern Couple: he has been sufficiently trained, either by Her or Society, to clean up, because that is what men should do. (The fact that the expectation exceeds the reality by a factor of 100, and hence makes everyone unhappy, is another story.) She isn't cleaning because that's not her job. That's one

of the reasons for her smile; the other is the fellow himself, who doesn't tell her to move (really, should not she move when he's vacuuming?) but lifts milady's lovely gams while he works on some microscopic piece of lint. She's smiling at other women. Isn't it great? Don't you wish? Aren't I lucky?

Well, it's cute for the first month or two, but eventually she gets annoyed when she comes home from work and he's vacuuming again instead of doing his art or his novel or whatever it is he says he's doing since he quit the

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HOST WITH THE MOST

coffeehouse because the boss wouldn't let him play Very Important Indie Label Bands over the sound system. At some point having a fellow who takes a great deal of pride in neatening and straightening isn't enough by itself.

"Can't you go out and do something useful?"

What, this isn't important work, keeping our house clean?

"It's my apartment, not our house. Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't meant that. It's been a long day, and – hey, where are the wine glasses? Did you move the wine glasses again?"

I think they should be on the top shelf with the other glassware we use for entertaining.

"We went through this. Fine, put them up there, but leave a few on the bottom shelf so I don't have to get a chair."

It just looked wrong to have some up there and some down there. I'm sorry for caring.

"Oh, don't throw a fit. Get me a glass."

You can get one. Nothing's stopping you from pulling out a chair.

"FINE."

Why are you angry? You get angry when I open doors for you.

"ONCE. I got irritated ONCE. That was before I really knew you."

Well, what do you want me to do?

"I don't know."

I know. I feel the same way. Uh – don't pull that chair, 'kay? The felt coaster came off and it'll make a scratch.

Before anyone climbs up my fundament for being an A-Grade git-r-done brute, I do most of the light housework around the house. My wife does the laundry and the gardening, gargantuan tasks both. I handle all the surfaces – tables, counters, sinks, furniture – and I do the grocery shopping and most of the cooking and the weekday child logistics. So why doesn't this ad speak to me?

Because it's not supposed to. It makes me feel like Dr. Cornelius, the smart ape from the Planet Of, pitched back in time watching a Bonzo movie.

–

Most of the weekend was spent on the usual things. Constant Patrons will recall the problems I had a while ago removing one drive and replacing it with another – well, just as I was drifting off to a nap on Friday I



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remembered that I'd tried using a bluntish needle-nosed pliers, but not a proper pliers. That blew up any chance for a nap. (It worked.) Lots of backing up and data swaps ensued, and dry and dull as that sounds I live for this sort of meta-organizing stuff. As long as I can do something else in the meantime. Watched movies, including the first flick we'll see on this week's new Sci-Fi Black-and-White World site, and finished the extraordinary "Rome" HBO show. Few shows end with such finality and perfection, and leave you wanting 15 seasons more.

Sunday I worked. Daughter & Wife went to Ft. Snelling, since it was free admission day at the state parks. Daughter announced her arrival by bursting through the back door while I was in the gazebo.

"DAD! I got a BULLET!"

She did: a gen-u-wine Civil War musket bullet. She's taking it to show-and-tell tomorrow.

I expect the call from the office regarding her expulsion around 11 AM.

TODAY: Matchbook, of course; buzz.mn is up. The rest of the spousal quiz should be up this afternoon, so stop back. See you soon.

Pass it along, if you wish



30 RESPONSES TO *monday, june 08*



rivlax says:
June 8, 2009 at 11:35 am

Expulsion not only for bringing ammunition to class, but ammunition made of deadly (in the other sense) LEAD!



Drew says:
June 8, 2009 at 11:36 am

"Men without Chests"? A reference to Lewis's "The Abolition of Man"?



DrBear says:
June 8, 2009 at 11:40 am

We have gone from cave man to concave man.



Julia says:
June 8, 2009 at 11:43 am

Funny, my husband and I were just quoting Foghorn Leghorn vis a

vis the chickenhawk.



Joan H. says:

June 8, 2009 at 11:44 am

Ah, *Rome*.

You'll be happy to know it stands up quite well when you're ready to watch it again.



Michael Rittenhouse says:

June 8, 2009 at 11:47 am

I'm pretty sure that woman survived the Ohio Players studio session.

However, the bicycling nun-model in the Blue Nun TV commercials was actually murdered by her policeman-boyfriend.

Unfortunately, it happened in the pre-Internet days, so I can't prove it.

*BTW, do NOT Google "blue nun bicycle nun murdered boyfriend policeman." At least not at the office.



MikeH says:

June 8, 2009 at 12:19 pm

i thought I was gonna freak out with no new Bleat earlier this morning. Now I feel today is going to be a grand ol' day. Flowers blooming, birds chirping, women walking along the boardwalk in skimpy clothes, ahhhh...the good life. Thanks James!!



Trogdor says:

June 8, 2009 at 12:30 pm

How times change! I took a **disabled hand grenade** to 1st grade show and tell! It got stolen. But still I remember standing up front talking about it. It was from the beaches of Normandy no less. At least I didn't take my dad's WWII M-1 Carbine in a for a demo, only because I didn't think of it!

Later, in High School speech class I brought in my nunchuks for a demonstration.

Somehow, I turned out ok.



crossdotcurve says:

June 8, 2009 at 12:37 pm

Trog-a-dor! Burninate!



Dr. Spyn says:

June 8, 2009 at 12:54 pm

The fellow with the inverted chest — so weakened by his lack of lungs that he has to vacuum sitting down — is just another fine example of how it's okay to malign white guys. We have become the Tinys of society's Lance Lawson. Take, for instance, the current Yoplait commercial. Big, dumb white guy — BDWG — is on the phone talking about these wonderful pseudo-desserts he eats, yet

loses unsightly avoirdupois. Until Smart Woman catches him out for eating her flavored yogurt. D'oh! Might as well go back to eating lard nachos while watching Sports Center. BDWGs as a class can't be insulted no matter what the abuse. Try doing that to any other social group and witness the firestorm.



Gina says:

June 8, 2009 at 1:00 pm

“Rain, rain. Upside: if the backyard was any lusher, it would be arranged by Nelson Riddle. Downside: one of the precious summer weekends was lost to temps twenty, I say I say son twenty degrees below normal.”

There are times when I despair because I know that, even if I slaved for hours, I could not write paragraphs as brilliant as the throwaway lines that this man tosses off apparently without a second thought.

Sigh.

Moving right along . . . I wish I could get Mr. Lileks to do all the dry and dull backing up and saving and transferring work I've put off for years, because it's, well, dry and dull. (And HARD.) Whereas he actually ENJOYS it. Life is really not fair.

[/grump]



Joe Miller says:

June 8, 2009 at 1:11 pm

My grandfather, Albert Bendix, used to raise birds in a building in back of his house. He raised primarily canaries and parakeets. I still have some of the logs he kept of his breeding plans and of the diseases the birds occasionally got. As a kid we always had birds in our house. If they escaped their cages, they could always be found atop a curtain rod somewhere in the house.



hpoulter says:

June 8, 2009 at 1:45 pm

Actually, the fish doesn't mind the small container as such. That's a betta splendens, or Siamese Fighting Fish, and in their natural state, they live in tiny stagnant puddles in very hot countries. They have evolved the ability to gulp air to supplement their gills and metabolize it via a lung-like “labyrinth gland” in their heads.

The small containers don't kill them. What kills them is pet store salesman pushing them as “no maintenance” pets. They are actually quite sensitive, especially to temperature. Keeping one in a tiny unheated bowl in your cool office is a death sentence. Get a little 3-to-5-gallon tank with a heater, do partial water changes, and they will be happy.

- the fish geek.



dbp says:

June 8, 2009 at 1:55 pm

“She's taking it to show-and-tell tomorrow.

I expect the call from the office regarding her expulsion around 11 AM.”

You've got that right. Some time ago our elementary school was locked-down because some kid found an empty cartridge on the floor.



hpoulter says:

June 8, 2009 at 2:04 pm

From his tweetage, I thought Lileks was going to give us something screedy on British politics. Personally, I take a somewhat guilty pleasure in watching Gordon Brown fall apart. Prime Minister's Question Time is the most amazing institution of government I think I've ever seen – it would never work here. Blair, for all his faults, was really good at it. Brown is hopeless – he looks like Terry Jones doing some kind of grumpy old coot. It's hard not to feel sorry for him, and even harder not to laugh.



Rat says:

June 8, 2009 at 2:43 pm

Wondering if the vacuum guy is a descendent of that clan of chicken-chested Scots, the McScrawneys.



Michael Rittenhouse says:

June 8, 2009 at 3:22 pm

“Prime Minister's Question Time is the most amazing institution of government I think I've ever seen....”

Margaret Thatcher was masterful at it. I wonder if any recordings of her are available.



Doug Collins says:

June 8, 2009 at 3:50 pm

Re: the Bullet

We just had a fit of rationality here in Texas:

<http://www.tribunenews.com/news/399-three-years-after-tisd-fire-alarm-fiasco-zero-tolerance-policy-revoked.html>

I'm a little bothered that the new law “all but eliminates” the idiotic zero tolerance policies of local school boards, but I suppose that is better than not eliminating it at all.

Now, if we could just eliminate the bureaucratic, judgement-challenged morons who have cheerfully applied these policies in the past.....



Vlad the Impala says:

June 8, 2009 at 3:53 pm

Toss the musket ball to the child, then make her tell the teacher that she “caught a bullet over the weekend”.

And I don't think that the Man without a Chest is only thinking about the lint on the floor. I don't.

I mean, I wouldn't.

**Retread** says:

June 8, 2009 at 4:39 pm

Mr. Clean Freak looks like Tom Cruise.

**lanczos** says:

June 8, 2009 at 6:03 pm

The REAL Reason for Her Smile: IT'S CLEAR...

that she won't have to purchase her own tampons ever again.

**Baby M** says:

June 8, 2009 at 10:10 pm

But when, I ask you, when, will we finally see *Irritable Bear 3: This Time, It's Personal!*?

**Ross** says:

June 9, 2009 at 2:19 am

"... if the backyard was any lushier, it would be arranged by Nelson Riddle."

Almost perfect: when you hear mostly wailing brass, that's Billy May (later Neal Hefti) but the lush string arrangements were the specialty of Gordon Jenkins. Nelson Riddle was the one who could combine & balance both ends of the spectrum.

I'm with a couple of music popular critics/historians in believing that Riddle's arrangement of Sinatra's "I've Got You Under My Skin" is probably the most perfect pop recording ever made (if you can't hear it in head, quick go listen to it & crank the orchestral break—the steady swing underneath from the rhythm section, the exactly-controlled build & crescendo of the strings spilling into the almost inevitable sounding trombone solo that dovetails into one of the coolest brass riffs ever recorded—sheer magic).

**Heather** says:

June 9, 2009 at 8:32 am

Ah, good old Fort Snelling. On fieldtrips as a kid, we called it "Fort Smelling" (of course). I do recall it having a peculiar aroma, although perhaps that has more to do with its nickname than any actual odor encountered there.

**tseib** says:

June 9, 2009 at 12:39 pm

Gina wrote: "There are times when I despair because I know that, even if I slaved for hours, I could not write paragraphs as brilliant as the throwaway lines that this man tosses off apparently without a second thought."

I was thinking the same thing. The Nelson Riddle allusion has been bouncing around my head ever since I read it yesterday, and while it delights me, it also makes me sad that I can't think of a single person, even among my very smart family and friends, to share that line with . . . Someone who would A. know who Nelson Riddle is, B. instantly conceptualize his musical style, and C. connect it within seconds to an adjective describing organic growth, and D. bow at the metaphorical feet of He Who Holds all Literary Cleverness in His Hands [and probably has no time or interest in contemplating its

full brilliance himself].”

In honor of our host, and the remarkable artist he references, I shall pull out my Linda Ronstadt “Lush Life” CD and spend an hour tonight contemplating the rich, smoky saxophone and almost surreal beauty of the strings in “When Your Lover Has Gone.”



RLR says:

June 9, 2009 at 1:33 pm

The rest of the spousal quiz should be up this afternoon, so stop back.

Did I miss it? Can't seem to find it anywhere.



Richard Durbin says:

June 9, 2009 at 3:02 pm

Gina wrote: “There are times when I despair because I know that, even if I slaved for hours, I could not write paragraphs as brilliant as the throwaway lines that this man tosses off apparently without a second thought.”

It can't be that hard. I bet if you wrote 7 or eight columns a week, every day, for 30 years, then you could it too.....



Adc says:

June 10, 2009 at 10:56 am

C.S. Lewis reference FTW!



Marc says:

June 11, 2009 at 6:58 am

Any news on the spousal quiz

Cheers



Steev says:

June 11, 2009 at 5:26 pm

Someone needs to do a study comparing the decline in bird ownership to the decline in newspaper circulation. There is probably a direct correlation.

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ABOUT

Monday Matchbook

B&W World: Pigs in Space

TUESDAY, JUNE 09

on JUNE 9, 2009 · [96 COMMENTS](#) · in [POP CULTURE](#)

So I laid back in the dentist's chair, gassed to the gills, and listened to an audiobook of "2001." Either my ace dentist Doc Double-A was a fast worker, or it was an abridged version. Possibly both. Why "2001"? Never read it. Read all those Rama novels, read the third sequel to 2001 – which was nonsense - but never the original. The fellow reading the book had the difficult job of being HAL without making us think of the original HAL, which must have been as tough a gig as the poor joe who did the audiobook for "Forest Gump." I laid there in cloud-cuckoo land, nothing the differences between the book and the film, thinking back to the day I saw the movie.

First run.

Cinerama Theater.

I had prepped for months; as a total space / sci-fi nerd kid, this was the Event of a Lifetime. I bought a magazine at the SuperValu that had pictures of the set, the INCREDIBLE SETS, and drooled at the models of the ship, the total future coolness of it all. When I heard they used "Also Sprak Zartrathselah" or whatever for the music, I got it from the library. Pumped and Primed and STOKED for the event of my young life. Mom and Dad took me to the theater. I got popcorn with butter – the yellow-and-black tubs they used for the special popcorn with the glistening goop drenching every perfect kernel. Oh man this was going to be great.

The movie began.

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140 OR SO

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

Monkeys?

Then the monolith. The monolith unnerved me deeply. The music was scary. I had no reference for any of this.

But then it was space and Strauss and it was okay – it was . . . distant, but it was okay. I was happy to see the Howard Johnson’s on the space station; I’d been to a Howard Johnson’s! I’d loved it! They’d be there in the future too! Then the scientists started talking about quarantines, and disease, and things felt unnerving again. They went to a place on the moon – and there was that THING again, and noise, and I had no idea what was going on, and I did not want to be here anymore no not at all.

I wanted to leave the theater. Mom took me out. I was nine. Give me a break, okay? Kids today, they can take anything, but in 1968, the Monolith in widescreen just busted every single preconception I had; nothing fit. All my research on the Discovery had been for naught; I’d either glossed over the details about the reason for the voyage, or hadn’t grasped them, or just come without the ability to absorb stark Kubreckian cinema full-strength. I think my Mom took me out for pie, because I know my dad stayed behind. He’d paid for it, and by God he was going to watch it. Which is why I can’t see the iconic image of Keir Dullea beholding the field of stars without thinking of my Dad – younger than I am now – sitting in a theater, watching that interminable FX sequence, ending with StarBaby, thinking: this is why I watch movies about the Big One.

That’s what he called it. A joke among the family: *I was in the Big One. Double-you-double-you two.* And we’d roll our eyes. *We know, dad.*

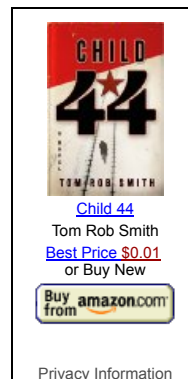
Of course, that’s all he ever said about it.

I’ve probably watched “2001” a half-dozen times since then, and found it cold, fascinating, visionary, mired in its era, empty, depressing, realistic, long, and so on. It’s a testament to Kubrick that I never see the same film twice.

“And you’re done!”

But the book wasn’t over. Ah well.

A good day for this sort of thing; it was 53 when I woke, 53 at noon, and 54 at 9 PM. Around here we call this progress. Spent the evening working on various things. As the shadows lengthened I stepped outside to see if daughter was still in the neighbor’s yard – of course, no. Gone to the Four Winds. Found her eventually, and while I still can’t shake the feeling that she’s two and must be VISUALLY TETHERED AT ALL TIMES I remember when it was like to enjoy the boon of new summer. Twilight is magic. She was playing with friends who’ve formed a Club, as all kids do; nowadays, though, they record their exploits for some theoretically possible YouTube channel, so Natalie uses an old chipped Flip camera I gave her to commit their exploits to history. My goal was devious – have her shoot her life for future viewing. Tomorrow I’ll send the camera on the bus for the Last Day of School.



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

OCTOBER 2013						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
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And I'll meet the bus when it comes back with my own camera, as I have for all these years.

Because I can't finish the family movie until I get that end-of-school shot which means I can edit the video and move the files off the EDITING hard drive to the RAW FOOTAGE hard drive and free up some space, for heaven's sake.

Speaking of space: I'm watching "2010" tonight, one of those movies I like to see every other year. It's strewn with anachronisms; there were so many things they didn't bother to rethink. It comes alive when they're in deep space. On one hand I regret, as ever, the failure to live up to Clarke's projections. We should be out there. What was so important that we couldn't spend our time and money going up and out and beyond? On the other hand, the movie assumed Soviets in 2010, complete with totalitarian trappings and interminable Central American conflicts.

So there's that. Not a small thing.

TODAY: [buzz.mn](#) already has the small-town website of the week, with bonus Wisconsin movie theater marquees from 2000; Comic Sins this afternoon, and Black & White World Sci-Fi edition later. See you soon!

By the way: I had to be taken out of the theater during "The Ghost and Mr. Chicken," too. That organ. Those shears in the neck of the bloody painting. NO THANK YOU.

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Pass it along, if you wish



96 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, june 09*



TerryKoz says:
June 9, 2009 at 12:40 pm

Has anyone ever seen the actor who plays Dr. Chandra in "2010" and our host (Jim Lileks) in the same room?

I thought not.



Matt Springer says:
June 9, 2009 at 12:45 pm

There have been lots of science fiction movies, grs, just not many in space. The Prestige was certainly science fiction, for instance. Good science fiction too, though none of it was set in space.

Anyway I'm mainly aghast at James having managed to make it through the dreck that was the Rama sequels. The first book was great, the rest (written with (ie, written by) Gentry Lee) were just awful. While I'm not the biggest Clarke fan in the world, he did write a lot of good stuff. The Rama books aren't among them.

Personally I think Clarke's strongest in the short story department.

HOST WITH THE MOST

If you get a chance to read one of the anthologies I'd highly recommend it. His work got a bit weaker as he got older (he wrote at least two stories where the punchline was a reference to God using the pronoun "she"), but all of them are still quality work.

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Bridey says:

June 9, 2009 at 12:56 pm

I rented it for him and discovered that the incredibly slow pacing made it virtually unwatchable for anyone steeped in the rapid cuts of today.

I'm not sure it's "the rapid cuts of today" — kids seem to have plenty enough attention span for the long and fairly complex Harry Potter books, the Lord of the Rings movies, hours with demanding video games, and so forth. It may be just that — imho, of course — 2001 really is one of the most boring movies ever made.

I was raised on horror flicks, so I sat through 2001 as a kid and wasn't scared by it, though I had no idea what was going on. (HAL did make a certain impression, though.) Then, as an adult, I discovered that was going on was, basically, not much. I've never made it past the 90-minute mark as a grownup. Kubrick just does not float my boat (or launch my spaceship, or balance my monolith).

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BLEAT PREMIUM

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John says:

June 9, 2009 at 12:57 pm

As someone who bicycles every day and never wears a helmet, I heartily second Ronsonic's image of an adventure-averse culture. Otherwise, though, I can't get exercised (so to speak) about adventure, or movies. 2001, which I saw when it came out, was almost appealingly mystifying, sort of; I liked 2010 'cuz it had plot and actors and an amazing ending; and then I went back to eating lunch or returning library books or emptying the lint filter. Futurology is ALWAYS wrong — why get excited about it? My idea of an impressive movie is Close Encounters of The Third Kind, which I first saw on a black and white TV with Portuguese dubbing, and it *still* worked! Wild, guaranteed-to-be-wrong prediction: adventure won't start at our planet, it will come to it.



Brian Greenberg says:

June 9, 2009 at 12:58 pm

Rented 2001 on VHS. Fell asleep halfway through. Felt bad that I'd fallen asleep on such a classic movie.

Rented it again on DVD a few years later. Fell asleep again.

At that point, it ain't me. It's the movie. Call me a contrarian...

It did, however, produce the most useful tweet I've ever seen [paraphrasing here]: "Loved the monolith. Looks like the box the UN building came in."



bellczar says:

June 9, 2009 at 1:00 pm

Where do you have a dentist that still uses nitrous oxide gas? I don't think very many of them use it anymore.

Eduardo — the sister theater to the Indian Hills was the Cooper in

suburban Minneapolis.



swschrads says:

June 9, 2009 at 1:05 pm

Ronsonic: the difference, I think, between the halcyon days of yore and today is: Once upon a time, bold adventurers would set their a\$5 atop a firebucket with enough power to atomize a small civilization, built by the lowest bidder, because It Was Man Stuff. The Right Stuff.

today, “risk” and “macho” consist of weaseling widows and orphans out of their life savings, and investing that with Bernie Madoff and his close personal friends. the really foolhardy and risky folks will run for public office, heedless of their reputation or background.

whatever we as an American civiization set our mind to doing, we’ll find a way to get it done. it’s just all a me-me-me-MEEEEEE world, and nobody will blink one eye for anybody else’s benefit any more.

go home and gulp martinis and watch American idol instead of hit the Kiwanis or Shriner club meeting to raise money for children’s hospitals.

THAT’s the core problem. society be damned.

and some day, we’ll wake up and it will be, at this rate.



Grebmar says:

June 9, 2009 at 1:16 pm

I have contended that there have only been perhaps two actual science fiction movies: 2001 and Solaris (the original Russian movie, not the recent George Clooney one).

Blade Runner can also certainly counted among real science fiction films. Probably also “Gattaca.” There are a few more, but I can’t think of them now. Most of what passes for science fiction is action-adventure set in space.



Grebmar says:

June 9, 2009 at 1:18 pm

Sorry about the inconsistent formatting. Fix it in your head, please!



roger h (bgbear) says:

June 9, 2009 at 1:48 pm

Looks like the box the UN building came in IIRC from the MAD magazine parody.

Action adventure or not, every time I have to stop and rate my favorite Science Fiction film, I come back to “Forbidden Planet.” Shakespeare, spaceship, robot, lasers, aliens, monsters from the ID, pretty girl, electronic music, Leslie Nielsen, what not to love?



wimseyguy says:

June 9, 2009 at 1:48 pm

Eduardo, as a fellow native Omahan I too saw 2001 at the Indian Hills theater. I also saw How the West was Won in Cinerama for my

first communion as well as Ice Station Zebra years later.

Speaking of anachronisms, 2001 has it share. The Pan Am space shuttle for example. In the late '80s I once flew through JFK on Pan Am just a few weeks after seeing 2001 on late night TV. As I got off an ancient 727, stepped over trash and buckets to catch the water from the leaking roof, I was glad I was on terra firma and that the clowns at Pan Am weren't running a space station.



Larry says:

June 9, 2009 at 1:49 pm

Re: the pacing of 2001.

At the time of its release the fx were leagues ahead of any space movie done before, and I think the distance between previous films and 2001 exceeds any subsequent jump, e.g. 2001 to Star Wars. I can recall sitting in the theater transfixed by the images.

Of course fast forward to now, and with fx that hold up well but aren't anything special, it is easy to see kids like my son bored silly.



Baby M says:

June 9, 2009 at 1:55 pm

By the time I saw *2001*, I was mature enough to follow what was going on—but I agree with some of the commenters above, its great flaw is a lack of exposition. I'm still amazed at how good the 1968-vintage effects shots look even by today's standards.

What's scary? The original *Alien* scared the stuffings out of me—not so much the alien-popping-out-of-your-chest part as the long monster/cat hunt sequence. Others I'd put on the "ultra-scary" list: *I Am Legend*, *The Birds*, *Psycho*, the Rover from *The Prisoner*. *Juggernaut* has enough tension and sense of peril for a dozen thrillers; you'll never look at a pair of wire cutters quite the same way again.

The absolute scariest and hardest to watch for me, though, is *United 93*—because it's not made up.



coronaball says:

June 9, 2009 at 2:08 pm

When I was 9 or so, I watched the Andromeda Strain when it came to TV. Watching alone I was scared bejeeber-less, although now it is one of my favorite movies.



RLR says:

June 9, 2009 at 2:30 pm

Where's the 1933 quiz for wives?



GardenStater says:

June 9, 2009 at 2:34 pm

Baby M: I never saw *The Prisoner*, but the rest of your "ultra-scary" list don't scare me at all. Funny how scary is in the eye/mind of the beholder, much like beauty and comedy.

I really enjoyed *I Am Legend*, but mostly because of the early shots of Will Smith cruising through an abandoned Manhattan. So cool.

(Oh, and if the bridges and tunnels were blown up, how'd the woman and the boy get their SUV onto the island? Just sayin'....)



GardenStater says:

June 9, 2009 at 2:35 pm

RLR:

“Where’s the 1933 quiz for wives?”

It’s with all the missing Official Solutions from past Lance Lawson strips, and right next to Buzz 2.0....



Lilicat says:

June 9, 2009 at 2:50 pm

Bellczar – my dentist uses nitrous oxide gas – (that’s why he’s my dentist) – heck, I need the stuff just to make the appointment. Dr. Porges, Wynnewood PA. He’s great.



Eduardo says:

June 9, 2009 at 2:57 pm

Some Indian Hills theater info is here:

<http://cinematreasures.org/theater/264/>



Richard Durbin says:

June 9, 2009 at 3:24 pm

I never did “get” 2001. I guess I’ll have to read the book if I can ever remember to care.

It seems to me that one man’s real SF, is another’s pretentious drivel. So it goes.

The only move that scared me bad enough to walk out was Return from the Planet of the Apes. I was 4.



MikeH says:

June 9, 2009 at 3:43 pm

Hi kids,

New Comic Cover is up in case anyone is interested.



Chris M says:

June 9, 2009 at 4:37 pm

Saw 2001 in the theater when I was 12, I think. Long time after the first run, but the theater put on the full Cinerama 70mm experience. I still remember the big curved screen and how overwhelming it felt.

I had read the book beforehand, so I was disappointed by the Star Gate sequence–I was expecting actual *stars* to go whizzing by. No Saturn’s rings, either, darn it.

I’ve watched the film more than 5 times since then, and now I prefer it to the book. Each time I watch it, I see something new. Almost

every shot in the film could be printed and framed.



Archer says:

June 9, 2009 at 4:55 pm

Since you mentioned the popcorn... Last summer while visiting Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, I took my children to a movie at a chain movie theatre equivalent to Regal Cinemas. We went to the concessions to get drinks and the man behind the counter asked if I wanted popcorn. I laughed and said, yeah, only if it's REAL butter. He said you can have butter or margarine. I stood there dumbfounded. I asked him if he meant the butter-flavored oil goo, but he said it was the real deal. I ordered the biggest tub of popcorn they had. There must have been a whole quarter pound melted stick of butter on there and it was sooooo good. (Just as I remember it when I was a child.) Plus, it wasn't obscene prices like here in The States. My kids got tired of me commenting about how good it was though. ~Yes, I did let them have some.~



Robin says:

June 9, 2009 at 4:57 pm

"The Ghost and Mr. Chicken" is just plain old good movie making. I love watching the actors and trying to place where I'd seen them all before. many of them were known to walk the streets of Mayberry before they stood out in the cold at midnight to hear the organ play at Old Man Simmon's place...



Gabriel Hanna says:

June 9, 2009 at 5:21 pm

I think most science fiction movies age terribly. In Star Wars, for example, the models look great, but the computer graphics look terrible. Or the original Star Trek, where everything looks like Apollo 13—buttons that light up when you press them and computers that make noise and blink lights.

2001, I think, didn't really "age" at all—space missions still look like that, and will for years to come.

It's hilarious to read the original Foundation novels and the characters are using slide rules—far in advance of our primitive twentieth-century slide rules to be sure. Isaac Asimov just didn't think about computers in those days (he was a biochemist).



Glenn says:

June 9, 2009 at 5:38 pm

"We are the culture that cannot tolerate that which is not safe." — Agreed.

I disagree that it has anything to do with why we're not exploring outer space though.



Gina says:

June 9, 2009 at 5:52 pm

In my opinion, "2001" needs to be riffed, and badly. Mr. Lileks, you up for it?

**Lily** says:

June 9, 2009 at 5:56 pm

I think we would be out in the solar system and there would be all kinds of space travel if we wouldn't have let the government do it for us. Once the private companies get going...we'll see all kinds of space travel...including space tourism.

**Shelley** says:

June 9, 2009 at 6:03 pm

I was never scared by any movie until I saw Poltergeist in, what was it? 1981 or so? I was 16. Can't say I've been so creeped out and scared since.

However, my dad did pull me out of The Legend of Billy Jack. Was it the fighting? No. The blood? Nope. It was all the anti-authority, liberal, hippie crap that my father didn't want me exposed to.

It sort of worked I suppose, but he couldn't save me from my brain being "damaged by the heathen devil weed Marijuana!"

**HunkyBobTX** says:

June 9, 2009 at 6:19 pm

I work in the manned space biz. The reason we're not out there to a greater extent is that every 4-8 years a new Administration comes along and changes the plans, or Congress interferes by changing the funding. New "Blue ribbon panels" or commissions come along and change things. NASA has some good lunar surface system plans, but with the new occupant in the WH, there has to be a new presidential blue ribbon panel that will change the plans and requirements. Happened with the International Space Station used to be called "Freedom" but we were forced to work with International partners, and the use of the station went from really cool things like a place to assemble interplanetary vehicles to a place where people float around and grow goop. Am I bitter? Yep.

**The MCP** says:

June 9, 2009 at 6:22 pm

Well, to be fair to Asimov, he wasn't the only "big-name" SF author who didn't foresee the microcomputer age; Heinlein missed it completely as well. He still had his characters doing astro-navigation by slide rule and gyroscope in a lot of his earlier novels...

As for 2001, I've always been very much of two minds about the movie. On the one hand, I think it's fair to say that it *is* the movie which legitimized the science-fiction movie as being able to be about something more than just giant bugs, flying saucers, and ray guns... on the other hand, it really does take *much* too long to get where it's going, the acting is mostly wooden and passionless (at least from the human characters), and while I'm not one who needs (or wants) the entire plot spoon-fed to me in the simplest and most easily-digestible form possible, a *little* exposition at a couple of key moments would've been nice. 😊

If I had \$100mil to play with and the opportunity to remake it (yeah, I know: "sacrilege!" "heretic!"), I'd tighten things up to shave a good 20 minutes off the running time, then follow the book a little more closely at a number of points so that there isn't quite so much a

sense of “Who are these people, WTF is going on, and why should I care?”



HunkyBobTX says:

June 9, 2009 at 6:23 pm

P.S. The only reason we got to the moon in the first place was there was a political imperative: beat the Russians. We still have the technical skills to go back, but the political will to do so has been lacking ever since July 20th, 1969. Too bad the moon wasn't made of gold or crude oil.



Ed Singel says:

June 9, 2009 at 6:32 pm

I saw 2001 in the late 60's as a college student. It was a midnight showing with a packed house. I remember leaving with two thoughts: “Wow, that was weird!” and “Man that theater smelled funny!”

I second (third?) the thoughts above on the state of our culture. Another factor is the short attention span coupled with the need for instant gratification. In centuries past, architects would begin construction on cathedrals with full knowledge that they would be completed by their great-great-grandchildren. Try that today. Apollo worked because it was all within a decade. Anything that takes much longer would eventually be cut or stretched into oblivion due to loss of interest.

My favorite movie is “Forbidden Planet”, and it has been since I saw it as a 6 year old in the mid 50's.



Ursus says:

June 9, 2009 at 8:05 pm

I fled from Alien when I was about 10 or so



Bleepless says:

June 9, 2009 at 8:18 pm

2010 was being run serially in a Soviet magazine. It stopped, without any announcement, when a Western source pointed out in public that 5 of the 6 Soviet characters bore the same last names as prominent dissidents. Heh-heh.



Tom O'Bedlam says:

June 9, 2009 at 8:24 pm

“Too bad the moon wasn't made of gold or crude oil.”

Somewhere in Heinlein — probably in the short story “The Man who Sold the Moon” — the hero, who is also an entrepreneur industrialist, says to a doubter something like, “My god, man, there's a whole planet's worth of resources and raw materials out there.” He's referring, of course, to the moon.

Don't have the book any more, so I can't look it up.

Someday, in this as in many other things, we'll catch up to Heinlein.

**huddydrv** says:

June 9, 2009 at 11:34 pm

SThere are many reasons why we don't have a coherent and ambitious plan for space. everal of you got parts of it right, but not all of the story. Here's a few observations from someone who's been there:

1 – NASA is a highly politicized, mature bureaucracy. Congress views NASA as a means to transfer gold from Ft. Knox to their districts, not necessarily caring if it's an efficient or even useful way to spend the funds. NASA has to do a lot of things that have nothing to do with its mission of space and aeronautics, just to keep its congressional "friends" happy. Advancement in the higher echelons of NASA requires adopting a certain worldview and approach to things that (IMHO) tends to suppress creativity.

2 – There is no real visible worldwide competition as there was in the 1960's. Apollo was not done primarily to get to the moon, but to demonstrate the superiority of a free democracy. (Which incidentally, IMHO, is not a bad reason to do something). The current popular and political culture seems to take the opposite point of view.

3 – NASA is over-regulated. The same rules apply to NASA that apply to all other federal agencies in terms of hiring, firing, and buying things, including all the socioeconomic (aka "social engineering") that has permeated all government operations. NASA has three safety-oriented organizations with overlapping responsibilities, a result of the last shuttle accident board recommendations.

4 – NASA is not allowed to make mistakes. Mistakes result in wrecked careers and ruined reputations. It's no surprise that this has resulted in an extreme risk-averse culture. If you don't make mistakes, you're not stretching far enough. Achieving predicted values is not true experimentation, but it's been the norm for a long time.

5 – There's not enough money in the world to develop regular space travel with reusable spacecraft (the shuttle and station are not space travel in the sense I'm referring to), especially with the mindset that there's no profit to be made by venturing into space.

That's not all, but it's probably enough for now....

By the way, Apollo proved that if you give a bunch of white crew-cut guys enough money, and let them alone, you can do anything. 😊

**Kev** says:

June 10, 2009 at 12:48 am

Wait; how can you be 54 now if you were 9 in 1968? Something doesn't add up.

You must be talking about this sentence: "A good day for this sort of thing; it was 53 when I woke, 53 at noon, and 54 at 9 PM." I misread that too at first, because I knew our host isn't that old. But he said *it* was 53, meaning the temperature. (It's been in the 90s here in Dallas lately; I'd love to see 54 at 9 PM.)

**Ross** says:

June 10, 2009 at 2:31 am

No real opinion about "2001", although I adore "Dr. Strangelove", "Paths of Glory" and "Barry Lyndon". As for scary movies, I'm not a

fan, so I haven't seen many in a theater, but I have one wonderful memory of them: years ago (1979? '80?), when the venerable old Riverside Theater was slated for restoration (but looked, at the time, like the set of "Escape From NY") they operated as a cheap second-run movie house. I went with two friends to see "Carrie" and "Dawn of the Dead".

Romero's film was a riot (especially to us Milwaukeeans, as it's supposed to be a mall here that the heroes are holed up in), less scary than "OK, what outrageous way to die comes next?" and the shot of the zombies jamming up on the escalator & toppling into the fountain (all while the Muzak plays) still makes me giggle. The only screams from us were from the girl in the threesome, because the other guy would wait just the right length of time, wait 'til she was wrapped up in the film again & suddenly clamp teeth on her shoulder.

Now, "Carrie", on the other hand, I found truly creepy, although it was lightened somewhat by the very funny people in the row behind us. Their crowning moment: the last scene, as the girl bends to place the bouquet on the grave, into the silence comes the voice of the 40-ish black guy behind us calling gently, "Come git yo flowers, honey!". We turn, laughing, to look at him, turn back and -BANG!- Carrie's hand shoots out of the grave to clamp on the girl's arm.

We're laughing & screaming, the guy behind us is laughing fit to burst, which makes _us_ laugh harder. By the time the credits roll, the whole front of the house is laughing & throwing stuff at the screen. Man, that was fun.

The right crowd (& not completely stoned) at a midnight movie was like nothing else. It's probably why I fell for "Mad Movies" and MST3K-I'd already done it live, in a way.



shesnailie says:

June 10, 2009 at 5:09 am

_@_v - didn't care much for 'dr strangelove' or its more serious box office competitor 'fail safe' - our host once mentioned 'the bedford incident' as the tipping point of cultural rot to which i respectfully submit 'fail safe' and its premise that the president would volunteer to nuke new york city because one of our bombers couldn't be stopped from taking out moscow.

on a similar stupid movie ideas from the left vein is the so-called comedy 'the russians are coming the russians are coming'. russian navy should've sued for defamation. seriously... because the first thing you're going to do after running aground off the coast of the united states is send armed sailors into town. everyone knows that they would've sat in that sub till the oxygen ran out on account of being too afraid of repercussions from the home office to make any kind of decision.

dr strangelove - like lolita - was a disorganized grabastic load of porcine excrement that amongst other crimes against humanity starred peter sellers in multiple roles. at least the b-52 before-you-bomb checklist sequence had some lulz. of course if someone actually tried to ride to oblivion on the back of an h-bomb in real life they'dve been blown off by the slip stream as soon as it cleared the bomb bay.

as for 2001... can't help wondering what hal would've reacted if dave had threatened to smash all external sensors and shove the odessey into a decaying orbit if hal didn't open the @\$%&#! pod bay door - especially explaining that one of the funny little quirks of the human race is that if one of them is denied something they'll see to it no one else can have at it just for spite.

also why couldn't the people handing hal its marching orders that dave and frank needed to be kept out of the loop so as not have prejudices colour their observations of the big black thingamajigie – they're humans hal... just humour them... tell 'em it's a double blind study...

while i'm picking nits... doesn't the idea that the government would keep the presence of aliens secret so as not to fubar people's faith in the big snail in the shell seem like an archaic canard these days? religion was a spent force in western civilisation by the 1920s already...

in the first place one would think goverment would WANT people to abandon religion so the glorious state can take its place.

in the second place, the idea that aliens have visited this planet is pretty much taken as gospel these days and with the possible exeption of way too much interest in anal probes and the planet uranus, it doesn't seem to make much of an impact on the global psyche one way or another.



Headless Unicorn Guy says:

June 10, 2009 at 11:13 am

On one hand I regret, as ever, the failure to live up to Clarke's projections. We should be out there. What was so important that we couldn't spend our time and money going up and out and beyond?

Screwing in the mud at Woodstock.



Headless Unicorn Guy says:

June 10, 2009 at 11:22 am

It's hilarious to read the original Foundation novels and the characters are using slide rules—far in advance of our primitive twentieth-century slide rules to be sure. Isaac Asimov just didn't think about computers in those days (he was a biochemist). — Gabriel Hanna

Gabe, the solid-state/miniaturized electronics revolution blindsided EVERYBODY. Even more so than the Second Russian Revolution.

Remember all the supercomputers in far-future SF the size of the Sears Tower or bigger? One of the classic tropes of pre-1980s space opera, along with FTL, Antigravity, Vacuum Tubes, and Slide Rules.

(The kicker is, what if we hadn't lucked out discovering semiconductors and solid-state electronics early, but plateaued at vacuum-tube electronics for a while? Since compute power would be so limited (and complex vacuum-tube systems unreliable), a live pilot/operator would still be the best all-around control system; projecting trends in aviation/aerospace from the Nifty Fifties, we could very well have had a Gernsbackian period of rocketships, astronauts, vacuum tubes, and slide rules.)



Headless Unicorn Guy says:

June 10, 2009 at 11:30 am

I worked in an early multi-screen theater in 1969. On the day of the moon landing they sent a bunch of us home cause attendance was way off. However, one of the theaters was showing 2001 (about a year after its release?) and there were 6 people in that theater. Who were they? — Larry

Stoners.

2001 was one of the big stoner films, right up there with Yellow Submarine and Disney's Alice in Wonderland. They say at 2001's Los Angeles premiere, some stoner lost it as the Black Slab beckoned Dave into infinity; running down the aisle, he crashed through the screen screaming "It's God! It's God!"

From then on, the first six rows of seats (usually hard to fill) at screenings of 2001 were a favorite haunt of stoners.



Dave M says:
June 10, 2009 at 1:36 pm

IMO, the reason we don't have colonies or mining operations on the Moon is the same reason we don't have them in Antarctica or on the ocean floor; all that "common heritage of mankind" commie UN treaty crap. Also, our failure to use nuclear powered spacecraft, also mostly because of commie UN treaty crap.



Hunter says:
June 10, 2009 at 7:24 pm

I saw 2001 at a drive-in theater, The Patterson, just over the line in Goochland, Virginia. Saw it with my Mom and younger sister. I know my Mom was hating the whole thing, but I was sitting on the hood, leaning back on the windshield, totally mesmerized by the film. I was 12. I still rank it as my number one film, the one that I will watch anytime, anywhere, with anybody. The most memorable viewing... sitting in the cadet lounge at VMI and watching it with a crowd of cadets. The running commentary has always stuck with me, showing me that I was not the only one that wanted to "get out there." One earlier comment here nailed it, "...I get something different out of it each time I view it. I would KILL to see it in Cinerama."



William Overby says:
June 11, 2009 at 8:52 pm

I remember being ABSOLUTELY TERRIFIED by "The Ghost and Mr. Chicken!"

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B&W World: Pigs in Space

Out of Context Ad Challenge

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10

on JUNE 10, 2009 · [166 COMMENTS](#) · in [MEDIA](#)

The kids tumbled off the bus with grins and shrieks today: school's *done*. They sloughed off their backpacks and headed up the hill for the swings, as they always do, but this time it meant something more; since each backpack was crammed with the compacted detritus of their desks and lockers, they'd literally shed the school year when they dumped their burdens. The neighbor has a rope hanging from a tall tree and two, yes *two* zip lines. I watched my daughter fly through the air, beaming, and marveled again at how *big* she's got. How *happy* she looks.

But five minutes later: tears.

How does it feel to be done with school?

"Sad. I'll never see Miss (student teacher) again."

Half an hour later, utter glumness. She said she already missed the things they did in class, the fun they had in third grade, the projects, the games. First time she's ever had that realization that life moves on. People move on.

Took a while to work through it, and when she was ready, she went out to the backyard swingset, and kicked off her crocs while I tried to hit them with a whiffle bat. Life's big problems; life's small solutions.

-

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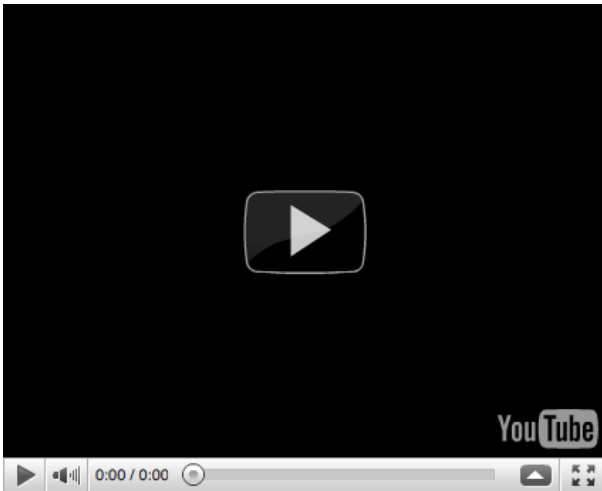
A BOOK I RECOMMEND



Why does everything I love turn to krep? I don't banish content-producers (you know, musicians, painters, comedians, directors, etc) for one or two silly comments, or even for a long string of gaseous emissions. Kraftwerk can make a cool song about radioactivity, then turn around 20 years later and remix it as anti-nuclear energy song, and I still don't care. We all have roll-the-eye moments when someone we like pops off, or an actor annoys you with a

statement that suggests he's conflated his larger-than-life screen size with the wisdom of Moses. But smug, politically-oriented crudity from someone not overtly political, delivered with the assumption we all share his "values" – *boring*.

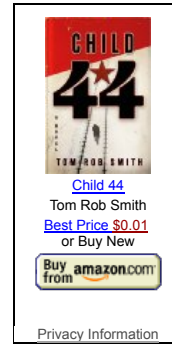
Addressed at kids of famous people: *pathetic*.



People have used other words – disgusting, repellent, abominable, danker than the fetid breath of the nine-bladder'd Arazon, Privy-Cleaner of Hell, et cetera – but pathetic is all I can muster.

But no, it *must* be funny, because David is funny and *hip*. Right? Or maybe not; maybe he's actually a brackish, hermetically-souled guy who's spend the last twenty years going from table to table with a giant wooden grinder, asking anyone if they want some fresh-ground scorn with that. *Say when*. Or maybe he's about as edgy as a soccer ball, and exists only to remind people they were Edgy once, and hence must be ever-blessed with the gift of Wryness and Irony. With those shields we can never grow old, you know. We'll always be as sharp and perceptive as we were when we were sitting on a cast-off sofa in college, working through a midweek buzz, happily fellated by the preconceptions the TV so charitably provided.

Or so I remember; haven't watched the show in years. I thought it was brilliant at first, but at some point early on Bill Wendell's introduction stopped being *Bill Wendell as Don Pardo* and became *Bill Wendell Intentionally and Ironically Being Don Pardo for Your Ironic Enjoyment*. The introductory graphics got slick. Paul Shaffer morphed into this eyeless



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homunculus yes-man, like Ed McMahon on painkillers converted into handy portable Idol form (really, sometimes I see a picture of this tiny fellow wearing shades, grinning at nothing, and he reminds me of something Indiana Jones would replace with a weighted bag of sand before he stole it.)

What's amusing is how unamusing he is in the clip. How sour he seems. Compare him to his predecessors: Carson was all midwestern charm, with unreadable yet mannerly reserve; Steve Allen was almost as smart as he was certain you thought he must be, but he was cheerful; Parr was a nattering nutball covered with a rich creamy nougat of ego, but he was engaging. Letterman is empty; he's inert; he stands for nothing except disdain for people foolish enough to stand for anything – aside from rote obsciance to all the things Decent People stand for, of course, all those shopworn assumptions passed around in the bubble.

This posture was fresh in '80; it even had energy. But it paralyzes the heart after a while. You end up an SOB who shows up at the end of the night to reassure that nothing matters. I think he may have invented the posture of Nerd Cool, an aspect so familiar to anyone who reads message boards – the skill at deflating enthusiasm, puncturing passion with a hatpin lobbed from a safe distance. The instinctive unease with the wet messy energy of actual people.

Yes, reading too much into it. Really, it's just a rote slam: If your mother is a loathed politician, and your older sister gets pregnant, famous old men can make jokes about you being knocked up by rich baseball players, and there's nothing you can do. That's the culture: a flat, dead-eyed, square-headed old man who'll go back to the writers and ask for more Palin-daughter knocked-up jokes, because that one went over well. Other children he won't touch, but not because he's decent. It's because he's a coward.

Oh, one more thing: it's okay for David to say that because someone said something else about someone, and since I didn't write about that, I'm a hypocrite. Just so we're clear.

Well, one more thing. Some say Dave – I'm sorry, the staff members who wrote the joke and had it printed on cards for him to read – thought the daughter in attendance was the older one who had the pregnancy controversy last year. This is possible; it also means that we accept as an excuse the fact that the writers confused the daughters they wished to humiliate.

That confusion must be the reason the NYT left the joke out of its [transcript](#) of the monologue.

One more thing: the monologue contained an Angela Lansbury joke. Dude is OUT THERE.

Then again, there's always [Conan O'Brien](#), who thinks African-Americans are *persona incognita* in Wisconsin.

These guys don't get out much, do they?

—

Today: lots. Out of Context Ad Challenge around 10:30 or so, Mpls update around 2 PM. See you soon!

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166 RESPONSES TO *wednesday, june 10*



boblipton says:

June 12, 2009 at 5:04 pm

And I see that Letterman's show is being punished, brutally punished, by higher ratings.

http://www.studiobriefing.net/studiobriefing.net/TV_News/Entries/2009/6/12_PALIN_BATTLE_LIFTS_LETTERMAN_OVER_OBRIEN_THURSD

Bob



GJoe33 says:

June 13, 2009 at 12:18 am

I lived for 11:30 back in the 80's when Letterman took to the stage and "released" his monologue. When he went to 10:30 back in 93 or 94, I quickly lost interest after what seemed like 6 months of constant "I'm pissed and I'm going to make all the execs pay for it" attitude. I had always liked his "stick it to the man" type humor, but it had always been an undercurrent to his actual comedic writing, after 1993 it was now at the forefront of everything he did.

Now, I would much rather watch the show he produces, late night with Craig Ferguson.

As far as his little sidekick Paul... how pathetic.



Sam says:

June 13, 2009 at 2:47 pm

I read James Lileks's piece of (bad word) article in the equally fecal NY Post.

Hey (the a-word), do you remember GOP leader Rush Limbaugh's TV show? Do ya? On his TV show, early in the Clinton administration, Limbaugh put up a picture of Socks, the White House cat, and asked, "Did you know there's a White House dog?" Then he put up a picture of Chelsea Clinton, who was 13 years old at the time.

Maybe you forgot about that, huh?

You right-wing hacks go after Letterman for what was obviously a joke about teen mom Bristol Palin. She's 18, she got knocked up (hence, Letterman's joke) and is a public figure now that she's a spokesperson for the abstinence policy she so clearly didn't follow. Are you all too (profanity) stupid to get the joke? Are you unable to discern context?

It looks that way, so the jokes on you.

(Post edited by host to remove profanity.)



RJ says:

June 13, 2009 at 4:29 pm

It's still hard to believe she was the GOP VP nominee, shallow benches I guess.

Shallow benches? How empty do the benches have to get to pick Joe "I'm an idiot" Biden?

**from canada** says:

June 13, 2009 at 6:04 pm

Hi James,

Dave's joke was hilarious and bang-on. He cut to the heart of GOP hypocrisy and you should have quarantined your little whine-fest on your screed page. The GOP is DEAD and good riddance.

**Sonia** says:

June 14, 2009 at 9:21 am

I think that people have forgotten that it was Dave Letterman who started to use the word "ass" on the air which had never been used before and it was never challenged. From there, it became acceptable and more and more words are creeping into primetime TV which are not words children should be hearing since many children watch network TV during primetime. Far raunchier talk appears on the cable channels, but, those are paying channels, and they have the go ahead to do so. I am not a right-winger nor prude, but I do feel that it has gone too far and I am old enough to remember that it was Letterman who started it. In addition, I don't think jokes about "knocking up" any female are funny. It puts women in a subservient position and it displays his attitude towards women, in general. Why wasn't A-Rod outraged and insulted and angry? Are people afraid to talk up? I think CBS should fire this angry, tired old man and get some fresh, really funny blood in that spot and comedy that doesn't stoop to such a low level.

**Steve in OR** says:

June 14, 2009 at 4:44 pm

Hey Sam, stupid, listen up: What current President of the United States was born to a seventeen year old mother who married the man who may or may not have fathered the child several months after she became pregnant?

After you have figured it out you can google up the nude photographs said mother was posing for at the time.

Then you and fromcanada can tell us some funny jokes about that family. Because you aren't hypocrites, are you?

Upsidedownunder and DrummingAncient are right. It's coming.

**vidpok** says:

June 15, 2009 at 7:28 am

Once again, people, it's Jack P-A-A-R.

**Ray Butler** says:

June 15, 2009 at 4:01 pm

Palin made family values and morality an issue. She's a failure at both. Therefore she's a hypocrite and a target of satire. What's hard to understand about that?

Besides, Palin a serial liar, a cynical politician hiding behind a shroud of obfuscation and duplicitousness. None of that is in dispute. That's why she's a target and it DOES include the self-righteous "morality" of her kids as well. She started it. Her daughter continued it. Expect more cuz she asked for it.

Why not make similar remarks about the Obama girls? Maybe because they are not hypocrites?

**David** says:

June 15, 2009 at 4:22 pm

For gosh sakes people, it was NOT a rape joke, it was a (tasteless and rather nasty) joke about promiscuity. The only reason I feel compelled to defend Letterman here is that it's clear much of the outrage is being orchestrated and hyped in order to score political points. And by suggesting that Letterman is some kind of child molester or "pervert" and continuing to milk this spectacle for all it's worth, Gov. Palin has shown once again that she is no class act either.



Nasty Nick says:

June 15, 2009 at 8:07 pm

First of all, I like Sarah Palin. A lot. But not blindly. Secondly, I've got a 12-year-old daughter. So I worry a lot. Thirdly, I've got a 15-year-old son who himself has a son. So I know about teenage pregnancy (which, for those of you who've seen 'Juno,' really isn't worse than hard drugs).

Much of humor is juxtaposition. So, here you have a Yankees game at which you have the presence of:

1. A-Rod, a ballplayer who has been reported to serial date various big-name gals like Madonna and Kate Hudson.
2. Sarah Palin, a Republican whose daughter got pregnant at exactly the worst possible moment for her mom.

The joke certainly would have been better if it had been Bristol Palin at the game with her mom or if Willow Palin was older. (And if it had not been delivered in Dave's leaden style...)

But Dave didn't say anything about forcible impregnation. I think those of you who are outraged by this joke are taking an extra base on a grounder past the second baseman and are in danger of getting thrown out sliding into second, thus ending a promising late-inning rally.

In the end, this whole episode serves to reinforce the stereotype that conservatives are shrill, brittle, humorless folk. And, dangit, we know that's just not true. We've got PJ O'Rourke and Larry Miller.

What an opportunity this would have been for Sarah Palin had she just issued a moderately humorous statement along the lines of "Wrong daughter, Dave" and been done with it.



--- says:

June 15, 2009 at 8:40 pm

I'm just relieved that Steve in OR, our host Mr. Lileks and most of his commenters have finally embraced political correctness. Anything is possible.



from canada says:

June 15, 2009 at 9:07 pm

Look at Steve in OR, Upsidedownunder and DrummingAncient threatening violence ... over what??? It's always the right who crosses that line.

Wake up. America doesn't have a "culture war" problem. It has a right wing problem.



areader says:

June 15, 2009 at 9:14 pm

Yeah, upsidedownuder is pure lunatic. Shorter version: me and glenn beck think a new civil war is coming because of those mean lefties, and it will be the lefties fault when it happens, don't blame us.

Sheesh, change your diaper, then change the channel.



RJ says:
June 16, 2009 at 2:02 am

But Dave didn't say anything about forcible impregnation. I think those of you who are outraged by this joke are taking an extra base on a grounder past the second baseman

Yeah, calling a 14 year old a slut is so much better than a joke about raping her.



from canada says:
June 16, 2009 at 6:58 am

James Lileks, you can assume some responsibility here, and NOT post comments that threaten violence.

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THURSDAY: SORRY

on JUNE 11, 2009 · [41 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

Madness. Had nine separate projects to do today, ranging from the mindless (cleaning scratch lines out of ancient Lance Lawson cartoons printed from Bessie, the old fiche machine) to the column to a speech I have to give to mockups for a work product. I've been sitting at the machine since 8:40 AM, and it's 14 hours later. So, nothing now.

At least daughter is old enough to entertain herself – it's the first full day of vacation, so of course she was already bored by noon. Had a friend over; they were bored together until I drove them out of the house to go cavort in the backyard and splash in the Oak Island Water Feature and, oh, I don't know. Go catch bugs! Put them in a jar or something. They always drill large holes for the air, because we know how traumatic it can be to watch a bug suffocate. I don't know if bugs can suffocate. Probably yes, but it takes so long it's indistinguishable from old age.

Then Karate. It was Child Safety Class Day, or, How to Deal with Abductors. (Screaming, biting, and kicking were taught, but no straight hard punches to the nadsal regions.) While I am not in favor of government surveillance, I would not mind orbital cameras tracking all registered sex offenders, and using lasers to atomize them when they get near kids. We'd have to tweak the system so it didn't go off if they got near a dog, but don't tell them that; let the threat be clear. Besides, if you don't want to be converted to a pile of ash

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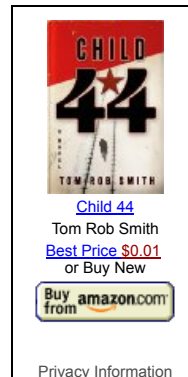
A BOOK I RECOMMEND

when you're slowing your van down by a kid walking to school, don't do it in the first place.

Then work. No reading, no TV, no games, no fun. Thursday is a big wobbly day, and I'm not anywhere near to starting the column, let alone polishing it.

So I'll just roll out the update now, such as it is. Curious Lucre is done, but the Engraveyard has three parts. The second to get an update: First Day Covers, a somewhat dull subject that has its moments. This will take half a year to finish, if I add seven or eight per week. The new updates start [HERE](#). Enjoy! Or at least don't fall asleep.

New Lance Lawson? Why, yes. Two more Sunday strips today, starting [now](#).



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
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Pass it along, if you wish



41 RESPONSES TO *thursday: sorry*



Ross says:
June 11, 2009 at 3:29 am

F.S. Key would really have been annoyed if he'd been getting that comment over & over, since he didn't write the tune. Didn't anyone object when they found out, during the War of 1812 of all times, that he just slapped the lyrics on a popular English drinking song? 'Course, a lotta folks here and in Britain(my Mom included) loved "Lili Marlene" during Dubbaya-Dubbaya-Eye-Eye, without any irony I've ever found...



Zoc says:
June 11, 2009 at 3:56 am

"hard punches to the nadal regions"

Ah, *that* explains my subconscious aversion to the new Microsoft "Natal" motion controller.



pdb says:
June 11, 2009 at 4:11 am

I used to scoff and roll my eyes when parents engaged in violent hypothetical one-up-manship about the terrible ways they would bring vengeance upon child abusers.

Then my son was born.



Baby M says:
June 11, 2009 at 5:27 am

"Poor Old Poe. Morbid old Poe: even his special first-day edition celebrates DEATH."

Brilliant!

**Joe the Painter** says:

June 11, 2009 at 6:31 am

James, if you should ever care to read back through your own archives and perhaps take note, you may realize that, for someone who has no actual reason to apologize, you apologize a LOT on this blog...At least Obama has the rest of us to apologize to the world for, but you? C'mon man, step back and take a look; You're a guy with a job and a family and a life who just happens to enjoy ripping his Van Heusen open and exposing his big, spandex 'S' to the world once in a while...This does not involve any obligation on your part.

...Now then, if there were something for you to actually consider apologizing for, it would be the pitiful neglect you show for the Screedblog...

**hpoulter** says:

June 11, 2009 at 7:00 am

You bet. Apology? It is to larf. Lileks produces more for free every day than many of us do for money.

Forget the screedblog – I MISS THE DINER. I understand why it isn't happening now, but I sure hope it comes back someday. My wife and I use Diner mp3s for entertainment whenever we are on a long drive.

As for the headline – I read it with that Lileks “Sore-ry” pronunciation, thanks to the Diner.

**Bryan** says:

June 11, 2009 at 7:09 am

I was just going to grouse at James yesterday for under-use of the screedblog.

But now I want to see James as a superhero. What would his powers be? Ability to seasonally match bathroom tissue colors? Able to operate clunky old microfilm machines? Ooh, he could be like Gambit and chuck old motel postcards at people!

Agreed, with Joe the Painter. Quit apologizing, Jimmy-kins. You provide yeoman service around here – for free! – and if you don't have your A-game every day, well, we'll live.

**Joe the Painter** says:

June 11, 2009 at 7:20 am

Heh heh, the Screedblog comment was actually tongue-in-cheek, though I rarely enjoy anyone eviscerate common enragement issues like JL. It seems to roll off his tongue, whereas when I engage in societal/political/institutional complaint, I tend to render myself to the stone knives and bearskins level...

**Darrell** says:

June 11, 2009 at 7:24 am

Re: First Day Covers, remember the old days of Monday Night Football, when the camera would search out particularly clever signs displayed by fans? One night, at KC IIRC, the camera showed what had to be the best one ever: “Will Rogers Never Met Howard

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Cosell”.



Marjorie J. Birch says:

June 11, 2009 at 8:38 am

Francis Scott Key was an ancestor of F. Scott Fitzgerald. I detect a resemblance.

They were a little timid (if not downright apologetic) with the background illustrations for Joel Chandler Harris, you think? The Brer Rabbit stories were written in Negro dialect and you have not learned the meaning of misery until you have heard a white, Presbyterian schoolmarm from Pennsylvania attempt to read these stories out loud. Even at age eleven, I was thinking “this is wrong, this is terribly wrong.”

Did Lillian Gish ever get her own stamp? She’s the one who damn near went over the waterfall.



SWBart says:

June 11, 2009 at 8:47 am

It could be that he’s apologizing for making us a bunch of twitching addicts. I know if I don’t get my morning dose of Lileks, I’m edgy and irritable all day. Myself, I could quit any time I wanted to, I just don’t want to.



stephen5 says:

June 11, 2009 at 9:02 am

I don’t know about those other bands, but Sinclair Lewis was never in Aerosmith.

Also, that is one mean looking whale. Krill beware.



Al Federber says:

June 11, 2009 at 9:25 am

I understand James’ feelings about child predators, but killing “all registered sex offenders” if they are seen near a child might not be the best course of action. I once knew a fellow who is forever branded as a sex offender simply because his unbalanced and vindictive wife cried rape to the police. He spent five years in prison, and is marked for the rest of his life. It does happen.



HunkybobTX says:

June 11, 2009 at 10:13 am

Our Genial host must have some British heritage. I went to Stonehenge once and saw a sign on a fence apologizing for the ground not being level.



swschrads says:

June 11, 2009 at 10:28 am

in the early years of the US’ existence, we were so poor that all we HAD for entertainment was leftover old English drinking songs tht wouldn’t fit on the last boat out.

at least the Canadians had cut little white baby seals to club for fun. we had nothin’.

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so that explains why our Presidential March is the old Scottish laird's song "Hail to the Tree," and our national anthem is an old English drinking song.

at least their goldarned English cookbooks went back with 'em, we got that much right.



JamesS says:

June 11, 2009 at 10:29 am

Where did James hide the link to Lance? There's none on the Buzz page.



hpoulter says:

June 11, 2009 at 10:42 am

JamesS – read the comments – sheSnailie linked to it. Lileks uses a common naming convention for the strips (though not for the solutions, unfortunately)



Larry Sheldon says:

June 11, 2009 at 11:20 am

Speaking of predators, how about Big Name Entertainers making "jokes" about raping minors in ball-parks? (I am of course, for the slow traffic, talking about the Deviant Loserman saga abusing Sarah Palin and her daughter, and Alex Rodriguez.)



swschrads says:

June 11, 2009 at 11:37 am

the joke was not about rape, but about getting "knocked up," which in the clinical usage is "impregnated." that implies consent as commonly used in the English language.

still a lame "joke," and Dave apologized for it. ain't his first, won't be his last.

I would hate to see what happens if Lewis Black tees off against the Palins instead of ol' TV boy. Sarah Palin would probably die in a million screaming little pieces.



swschrads says:

June 11, 2009 at 11:38 am

the joke was about getting "knocked up" which doesn't imply rape, the clinical word would be "impregnated," which implies consent.

lame attempt at a joke, and Dave apologized. it's been done before.

what I'd be scared to see if Lewis Black teeing off on Sarah Palin; she'd die in a million fizzing, screaming little pieces.



swschrads says:

June 11, 2009 at 11:40 am

the Dave joke used a word (apparently being filtered now here) implying consent. lame and sad, and he apologized for it, but there y'go.

now, if Lewis Black would tee off on Sarah Palin... she'd die in a

million fizzing, screaming little pieces.

there are worse than ol TV boy.



Tory Mitchell says:

June 11, 2009 at 11:46 am

Hi, Mr Lileks...thanks for the First-Day Covers update! That has always been one of my favorite sections of your site. Tory from Portland, Oregon



SullyAg says:

June 11, 2009 at 11:56 am

Herman Melville would have been a lot happier if he'd never met Nathaniel Hawthorne. Just saying.



huddydrv says:

June 11, 2009 at 11:58 am

The Letterman "joke" about Palin's kid is about as funny as a joke about Obama and watermelon would be. It's hard to imagine someone being that insulated and tone-deaf that he couldn't have predicted how offensive that "joke" would be to most anyone right of, say, the Kos maniacs. And his so-called apology was pretty lame; why can't people just say, "Geez, I'm really sorry. That was out of bounds."? Perhaps a public execution of the writer of that "joke" wouldnt' be out of order, either...



bolie4 says:

June 11, 2009 at 12:13 pm

I'd be all for the space laser as long as they purge the list of non-child sex offenders... we don't need to vaporize that guy who told a dirty joke in the office or the 18 year old who had consensual sex with his 16 year old girlfriend... the list is so clogged up with everyone who did anything remotely sexual that it's hard to filter out the ones who might actually be a threat to your child.

P.S. Less apologizing, more screedilizing!



Mike in Cleveland says:

June 11, 2009 at 12:41 pm

For God's sake, stop opening nearly every other Bleat with an apology about your lack of output. You've got a family, and a job... and you don't charge us to access your site (thank you). Unless you enjoy playing the part of an internet martyr, knock it off!



SullyAg says:

June 11, 2009 at 1:09 pm

Instructive to compare the medie reaction to Letterman's comment with the media reaction to Don Imus's "nappy-headed 'hos" comment ...



HunkyBobTX says:

June 11, 2009 at 1:17 pm

So if the tune to “The Star Spangled Banner” is hard to sing, why was it originally a drinking song? or is that an urban legend?

A suspect entry from Wikipedia says it really wasn’t a drinking song, but...

“This absence of an official connection to drinking did not keep the song from being associated with alcohol, as it was commonly used as a sobriety test: If you could sing a stanza of the notoriously difficult melody and stay on key, you were sober enough for another round.”

I’m not sure I could pass that test sober.



DryOwlTacos says:
June 11, 2009 at 1:18 pm

If you should find yourself held out a window by your heels, make the following statement: “I offer a complete and utter retraction. The imputation was totally without basis in fact and was in no way fair comment and was motivated purely by malice, and I deeply regret any distress that my comments may have caused you or your family, and I hereby undertake not to repeat any such slander at any time in the future.” — John Cleese in “A Fish Called Wanda”

Now THAT’s a proper apology!



HunkyBobTX says:
June 11, 2009 at 1:19 pm

Will Rogers never met Barney Frank.



HunkyBobTX says:
June 11, 2009 at 1:24 pm

Don’t know about the rest of you, but I’m looking forward to an update of the Bureau of Corporate Allegory.



Larry Sheldon says:
June 11, 2009 at 2:37 pm

Bleating about non-bleating.

Don’t do it.



Dianna says:
June 11, 2009 at 2:45 pm

Frankly, I don’t know what is so bad about Barney...



Vlad the Impala says:
June 11, 2009 at 2:52 pm

Lewis Black:

From his wikipedia entry:

In 2000, Black and fellow comedian Jim Norton were arrested for their involvement with “The Naked Teen Voyeur Bus”,[8] a specially designed bus with acrylic glass walls containing numerous (18 and 19 year old)

“teen girls.”

He’s supremely UN-qualified to talk to anyone on earth about abstinence and civil discourse.



swschrads says:

June 11, 2009 at 5:32 pm

especially civil discourse, if you’ve ever heard his comedy albums.

but that’s the point. Jay Leno wouldn’t say boo to a goose. Dave would ask it if it ever felt like a big tub full of hot gas, or a big tub of goo.

Lewis Black would () tell the () () sack of () () just what the () () is wrong with it, (). and its relatives, if () any. ().



Ryan W. Mead says:

June 11, 2009 at 5:38 pm

As someone who designs first day covers as an amateur hobby and enjoyed your first set, I look forward to what clever remarks you come up with. (Poe actually had another stamp issued for him this year to celebrate the 200th anniversary of his book- I made a few FDCs, but still haven’t come up with a cachet design.)



Dan Holway says:

June 11, 2009 at 6:21 pm

I find all this ‘oh, you don’t have to apologize’ stuff rather maddening. Come on, I pay good money for my internets, and I expect my money’s worth. I don’t hear Mr. Google offering up lame-ass excuses why he can’t tell me Atlanta’s average yearly snowfall; he just gets the job done. (2.9”, btw.)



HunkyBobTX says:

June 11, 2009 at 7:47 pm

“Frankly, I don’t know what is so bad about Barney...”

How about this:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEZPSD3Xx_4



Ryan W. Mead says:

June 11, 2009 at 8:25 pm

That should be the 200th anniversary of Poe’s BIRTH, not his book.



Ross says:

June 12, 2009 at 1:32 am

HunkyBobTX Says:

“...I’m not sure I could pass that test sober.”

Not to worry, most people(who aren’t trained singers-& that doesn’t include most contemporary popular singers) can’t; the song’s range, IIRC, is an octave & a half. Your average singer has to switch octaves for either the opening bar or “...freeeeeee!” Which is why it’s so often a cringeworthy train wreck when some celebuard is invited to sing it at a sporting event.



HunkyBobTX says:
June 12, 2009 at 8:43 am

@Ross -
Did you meant to say most contemporary popular singers are not trained? Otherwise I would suspect that the train wrecks would be less common.

I've often wondered what the reason was the National Anthem is butchered so often at sporting events. I had thought they were changing the ending just to be cool and modern and I wasn't hip enough to appreciate it.

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Thursday: Sorry

100 Mysteries: Dramatic Raines

FRIDAY: EVERYTHING IS LESS THAN ZERO

on JUNE 12, 2009 · [300 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

Not a faint glimmer of a shadow of a chance of anything today. Just to run it all down:

Video shooting in the morn, top-secret thing in the afternoon, followed by – oh, RIGHT! Newspaper column due. Karate class. Make dinner. Finish edits on piece for Southwest Airlines magazine. Write all the copy for Friday's newsbreak. Write & edit version of Letterman Bleat for Sunday's New York Post, due tomorrow afternoon. Upload Lance Lawson. BED. Get up, do Newsbreak, finish Post column, another Top Secret Thing meeting.

Also known in most circles as “real life.”

Back tonight with “100 Mysteries.” I hope.

Latest Lance Lawson Mystery . . . [here](#).

Topic for the comments, just so we don't all wander around feeling unfulfilled and empty:

Name a song you're somewhat ashamed to admit you really like.

I'll provide my answer later today, after I hone the list. There are so many.

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

Pass it along, if you wish



300 RESPONSES TO *friday: everything is less than zero*



Michelle says:
June 12, 2009 at 6:37 pm

Everybody Have Fun Tonight, and Him by Rupert Holmes, second hit after Escape (The Pina Colada Song.)

That said, I have no shame, none at all, I am SHAMELESS. If I like it, it's good to me and that's good enough!



Darren says:
June 12, 2009 at 6:55 pm

I always have "Stayin' Alive" playing in my head when I'm walking down the street - No white suit though...



Dick Hassing says:
June 12, 2009 at 7:16 pm

Steve Allen once joked about a "Sing Along With Ymac Suma" album.
If dear Ymac was still alive, I wonder if she would consider doing an album with Meat Loaf. It might have been discussed already, but Meat has that operatic approach to his tuneage.

"Hit Me With Your Best Shot" is a song that runs through my mind from time to time and I have to ask where it came from. It's not one of my favorites. However, a pairing of Pat Benatar and Luciano Pavarotti doing a duet on that has always interested me.



Bob W. says:
June 12, 2009 at 7:24 pm

I'm actually not ashamed about this one, but it came up in a "worst songs" conversation back in the eighties at an art supply store I used to work at.

Going Up the Country, by Canned Heat.

The other store associates thought I should be ashamed, though.

I usually don't like falsetto singing, but it worked in that song. It also kind of worked in Neil Young's After the Gold Rush. But I have to be in the right mood for that one.



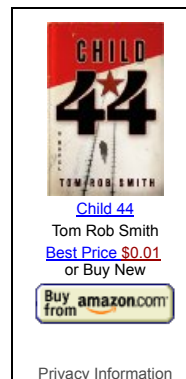
Andy MacPhee says:
June 12, 2009 at 8:05 pm

Love Gun, by Kiss. Undeniably catchy and great- but try telling that to most people.



kc duffy says:
June 12, 2009 at 8:10 pm

From childhood - Big Bad John (Jimmy Dean), The Witchdoctor



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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(Chipmunks), and The Ballad of the Green Beret (Sgt Barry Sadler).
 From my teens – Massachusetts (BeeGees)
 From my 20's – Karma Kameleon (Boy George) and Footloose (Kenny
 Loggins)
 Now – Image of the Invisible (Thrice)

One question...what the heck did I do in my 30's and 40's?!?!

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John M. Hanna says:

June 12, 2009 at 8:12 pm

“Do You Think I’m Sexy?” The Revolting Cocks version.



Christina says:

June 12, 2009 at 8:15 pm

“Rock Me Amadeus” is proof that not all Germans are nerds. I have a German cover of “You May Be Right” with a sax solo that is painful to hear — it’s the aural equivalent of the dancers on the Lawrence Welk show.



NeeNee says:

June 12, 2009 at 8:19 pm

“Afternoon Delight” by the Starland Vocal Band.

It was 1976; my innocent children are 8 and 4. They sing lustily in the backseat of the 1971 Chevelle: “Skyrockets in flight!! (ZOOOOOM) Afternoon Delight! A-a-a-a-A-a-afternoon Delight. . . . Gonna find my baby gonna hold her tight, lookin forward to a little afternoon delight. Rubbin sticks & stones together, make the sparks ignite. And the thought of lovin’ you is gettin’ so excitin’ . . .”

Number Two: “Undercover Angel”. So happy

Number Three: “Y.M.C.A.” My kids were crushed when they learned of the group gayness.

Anything by the Partridge Family, 1971-1973.



KillMeNow says:

June 12, 2009 at 8:58 pm

“Puffin’ Billy” – Melodi Light Orchestra 1952 (don’t ask...)

“Shaving Cream” – Benny Bell 1946/1975 (seriously, don’t ask...)

“The Bertha Butt Boogie” – The Jimmy Castor Bunch 1974 (really, you don’t wanna know...)



KillMeNow says:

June 12, 2009 at 9:17 pm

“Mah Nà Mah Nà” – Various (I know, I know...)

“Life Is a Rock (But the Radio Rolled Me)” – Reunion 1974 (Okay, I’ll go away now...)



Greg says:

June 12, 2009 at 9:23 pm

It is surprising how many of these songs I recognize and remember, and secretly like. (And some I really really hate).

A few months ago I had a significant Ramones relapse, it was pretty bad, and given my present employment position it would be totally inappropriate to be singing along with “I wanna be sedated” or “Teenage Lobotomy.” Or even worse: “I wanna sniff some glue”. But I got over it without too much damage.

Anyway, I’m wondering if the “guilt” we have isn’t more related to a longing for a younger, more carefree time when maybe we didn’t have to be as image conscious, or maybe just associating a certain piece of music with a pleasant memory.

James, this has been a fun thread.



Bizarcane says:

June 12, 2009 at 10:11 pm

Ah, jeez, I’m totally late to this thread.

First song that pops into my head as a guilty pleasure is “The Poor People of Paris” (the Les Baxter version). It’s that doggone Gallic jaunty whistling.



cgm says:

June 12, 2009 at 10:18 pm

Someone else who reads the Bleat is called “Chris M”? Who knew? OK, I’ll use my initials....

Anyway, definitely “Hey Mickey”. And Philip Bailey and Phil Collins, “Easy Lover”. Oh the embarrassment.



cgm says:

June 12, 2009 at 10:23 pm

Almost forgot—the theme song to “Friends” by the Rembrandts.



steveH says:

June 12, 2009 at 10:24 pm

“Red Rubber Ball”, (Cyrkle)
 “I’ve Got a Brand New Pair of Roller Skates”, (Melanie)
 “Dancing Queen”, (Abba)
 “Sweet Home Alabama”, (Leningrad Cowboys)
 “Orinoco Flow”, (Enya)
 “Hotel California”, (Eagles)
 “Queen of Hearts”, (Juice Newton)
 “Crazy on You”, (Heart)
 “World of Our Own”, (Seekers)
 “Mississippi Squirrel Revival”, (Ray Stevens)
 “Ahab the Ayrab”, (Ray Stevens)



Gilzippy says:

June 12, 2009 at 10:57 pm

I’m late with this entry, but I have to get this off my chest:

-Bungle in the Jungle – Jethro Tull
 -Rock & Roll All Night – Kiss
 -Sweet Caroline – Neil Diamond

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BLEAT PREMIUM

Go [HERE](#) to join - for as little as you like. You’ll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is [HERE!](#)

-I'm a Believer; Daydream Believer – Monkees
 -Get Down Tonight – KC & the Sunshine Band
 -Jeremiah Was a Bullfrog – Three Dog Night

Most appallingly: my six year old has outgrown the Wiggles.....I miss them. I'm sorry.



MaryIndiana says:

June 12, 2009 at 11:35 pm

HarrisonS–

No disrespect to the harbour town where you passed an idyllic childhood, but yeah,I am pretty sure “Brandy” is just plain dumb. Anyone,doctor,lawyer,indian chief who is wedded to their job and not their spouse is leading a pretty sad little life. :) There is nothing noble about denying yourself a family in the name of....*fishing!

Yes,I have decided that Brandy was in love with the Gorton’s Fisherman.

ALL that aside,the song still makes me oddly happy.

At night...when the bars close down Brandy walks through a silent town..



Bruce Lewis says:

June 13, 2009 at 12:11 am

“Once You Understand” by Think!. THIS THREAD MAY NOW END

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sH8go6bj-Y4&feature=related>



Emily says:

June 13, 2009 at 12:45 am

I remember being really, really young. Grade school. My best friend and I saw Xanadu, and came out of the theater exclaiming our undying love for the movie.

I have an excuse, really! I was just a wee one...



Tom says:

June 13, 2009 at 1:10 am

Bon Jovi, “Wanted Dead or Alive”. Was rocking out to this song on the iPod, a colleague asked what I was listening to, and I was *so* embarrassed.

“I’ve seen a million faces, and I’ve rocked them all!”



Tony Dickson says:

June 13, 2009 at 5:14 am

I guess there’s no love for Gary Puckett and the Union Gap Band around here.



inhocsig says:

June 13, 2009 at 5:28 am

“Little Red Riding Hood” by Sam the Sham & the Pharoahs

**Matt** says:

June 13, 2009 at 7:24 am

Last week I was making up lyrics for “99 Red Balloons” and the song didn’t leave my head for 2 days.

Oh- and if we’re doing song themes, the opening theme for ‘Pee Wee’s Playhouse’ (not his movie house) by Danny Elfman.

**Dave** says:

June 13, 2009 at 10:19 am

“Sugar, Sugar”. I know I’m not supposed to like it, but I do. I’m also ashamed to admit that my wife likes “MacArthur Park”.

**Mijinjax** says:

June 13, 2009 at 10:41 am

The macarena – I loved it. I loved the dance, the weird guys singing it, the weird girls dancing it. Loved it.

**Mr_Fastbucks** says:

June 13, 2009 at 11:50 am

“She Blinded Me With Science” by Thomas Dolby

“99th Home Position” by Hunters and Collectors

“Wildfire” by Michael Martin Murphy

**ArganikMark** says:

June 13, 2009 at 12:15 pm

The Pina Colada song (Escape) by Rupert Holmes was so ubiquitous around ’78 (?) and I can’t say i really “like” it but it sticks in the head and tells a story. But that reminds me of the song “Timothy” by the Bouys which was also written by Rupert Holmes years earlier. I think I was in fourth grade when it hit the radio, around 1970, and even then figured out the cannabalistic subtext. “Trapped in a mine no food to eat... Timothy, Timothy, where on Earth did you go?...” Great short story and terrific string arrangement. Love that terrible song.

**jujube** says:

June 13, 2009 at 2:15 pm

“Danny’s Song” by Loggins and Messina

“Even though we ain’t got money, I’m so in love with ya honey.....”

yeah, right

**Reese** says:

June 13, 2009 at 4:25 pm

Late. So late. But...

Does anyone know these lyrics and from where they come?

I’m as happy as a lime

A-floatin’ in a boat

That’s full of lemon ice cream

I'm so happy to spend my time
A-singin' what I sing
It's like a living day dream

(chorus) Where? (where-do)
Do we go from here
Do we leave on a plane for London
What? (what-are)
Are we gonna wear

Younger cousin had this on her toy 45 player ca. 1970. May have been Barbie related. Love the song, no shame.

No shame for Duran Duran, Berlin, Go-Go's etc. either. Even Spandau Ballet makes me groove! Tastes also formed for the earlier "super groups" like Styx, Boston, Kansas.

Saw Katrina and the Waves open for the Pointer Sisters open for Wham in Alameda stadium where the Raiders play. "Walking on Sunshine and "Everything She Wants" were quite memorable that day, I'll tell you that.



RB says:

June 13, 2009 at 4:39 pm

"I'm Henry the Eighth I am...."

"She was only sixteen..."



Bob W. says:

June 13, 2009 at 6:53 pm

steveH:

"Red Rubber Ball", (Cyrkle)

Yeah, but where else are you going to find a song with the word "starfish" in the lyrics?



AnnieD says:

June 13, 2009 at 7:01 pm

Total eclipse of the heart. Ugh.



Nancy says:

June 14, 2009 at 12:37 am

michele Says:

"Len, Steal My Sunshine."

Oh-yea! That song. Loved it--in secret. And the dorky video.



IrritableBear says:

June 14, 2009 at 3:26 am

BBBBBenny and the Jets. (sssssss). Love it. Hate it. She's got electric boobs, a mohair suit. You know, I read it in a magazine.

Elton is not high on my list of people who should be revered. But this is raw genius. Terrible, irritating raw genius, but raw genius nonetheless. Can't listen to it without stomping my foot until it hurts.



Ted S. says:

June 14, 2009 at 9:49 am

I don't think anybody's mentioned Tony Orlando and Dawn yet.

Or the Stars on 45 Medley

Or Hooked on Classics

Or Sheena Easton

For the person who mentoined Eurovision, how about the original version of "Love is Blue":



Ed Singel says:

June 14, 2009 at 4:14 pm

Surfin' Bird by the Trashmen.

By the way, congrats to James for stimulating nearly 300 comments (at last count) from a 15 line post!



yclipse says:

June 14, 2009 at 4:41 pm

SteveH and BobW:

Did you know that "Red Rubber Ball" was the first hit written by Paul Simon?

Now for mine:

Sylvia's Mother, written by. . . Shel Silverstein.



Scott Schuyler says:

June 14, 2009 at 5:41 pm

I love Red Barchetta by Rush.



Yitzchak Goodman says:

June 14, 2009 at 11:42 pm

"The Bertha Butt Boogie" – The Jimmy Castor Bunch 1974 (really, you don't wanna know...)

I'm proud to say I like that song. No question!



Defrost Indoors says:

June 15, 2009 at 12:45 am

I LOVE the Stars on 45 medley and cannot find it anywhere... reminds me of Saturday afternoons at the roller rink.



Highway says:

June 15, 2009 at 7:39 am

Yeah, I'm late too, and most of the songs people listed are ones I like and have in active playlists.

The one that embarrasses me most tho I didn't see in the whole thread:

Rollin' by Limp Bizkit...

“Keep Rollin' rollin' rollin' (what?!?), Keep rollin' rollin' rollin' (come on!)”



Josh says:

June 15, 2009 at 8:23 am

“Black Hole Sun”...as performed by Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hZmWjQjHg0>



Jesus Fido Kibij says:

June 15, 2009 at 11:30 am

Anything by childrens star Raffi. (I have two-year old.)



metaphizzle says:

June 15, 2009 at 12:02 pm

Mid-90's Christian Rock is my weakness.

DC Talk: *Jesus Freak* and *Supernatural* were derivative as heck and churned out by some corporate music-making machine, but whoever calibrated the machine on those days deserves a medal.

The Newsboys. When I was young, I loved them. Then in high school I thought they were cheesy. Then in college I gave *Love Liberty Disco*, *Take Me to Your Leader*, and *Not Ashamed* another listen on a whim and finally realized just how awesome they are.

The W's. A late-90's Christian ska-swing band—a trifecta of embarrassing genres! But I fell in love with them before I was old enough to know that I was supposed to dislike that stuff. And by the time I realized the cheesiness of their hit single (“The Devil is Bad”), I'd already heard and liked the rest of their (on the whole, far more sardonic) discography. (In retrospect, I suspect that “The Devil is Bad” was secretly some kind of joke at the expense of the Christian Music industry.) I think they, more than anything else, are responsible for my current bizarre tastes in music.



TheOtherDarkChef says:

June 15, 2009 at 3:31 pm

OK – the guiltiest of pleasures, and the emptiest calorie delight of the music world...

YANNI

From his earliest days touring MN with Kameleon (yes, he did attend U of M!).

BTW, VivisMom – “Barbie Girl” is sung by Aqua. Currently on repeat on my iPod.

“Made of Plastic...I'm FANTASTIC!”

Other honorable mentions:

“Can't Get You Out Of My Head” – Kylie Minogue

“Save Some Love” – Keedy

“Toxic” – Britney Spears

“Galileo” – Indigo Girls

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ABOUT

100 Mysteries: Dramatic Raines

Monday Matchbook #338

MONDAY, JUNE 15

on JUNE 15, 2009 · 89 COMMENTS · in [COMPUTERS](#), [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

Saturday we went to a restaurant:



And nothing's more boring than someone tell you about a trip to a restaurant. At least it's boring to me. But two things stood out: in an almost empty restaurant, they seated us right next to two other people, both of whom were droners struggling to make conversation; 2. After a long period in which no bread was produced, we had to ask for bread, which lead to the usual chi-chi restaurant "but of course" from the staff, as if they had decided to stop giving everyone bread 10 minutes before and informed everyone with their obvious non-bread-giving demeanor, but we were too stupid to pick up on it.

RECENT COMMENTS

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140 OR SO

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

I had “Scottish Salmon” – which sounded less attractive than they may have suspected, since Scotland isn’t an adjective you normally attach to salmon, and it made me wonder if it would come wrapped in bacon and deep-fried. Which would have been fine. Instead I was served two tiny wedges, Scottish salmon apparently raised in shoeboxes all its life; there was a layer of blue crab stuffing between them, a bed of purple potatoes, which just seemed like showing off, and a heap of what appeared to be a vast quantity of well-aerated spittle. Either Scottish Salmon was rabid, or – or, well, what?

What is the foam? I asked.

That’s a sage foam.

A sage foam. What, you have Erasmus back in the kitchen pitching a fit?

The chef takes cream, adds sage, and whips it until you get the foam.

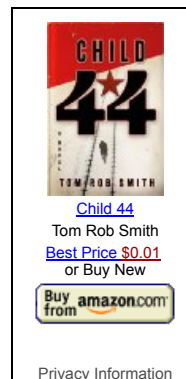
Thanks!

It was all very delicious, and I was tempted to ask for an additional “Side of foam,” just for the fun of saying it.

When I added the tip my wife noticed, with dismay, that I’d added some coins to make for a round number. I’d never push the tip amount down to hit a round number, but if I can add 12 cents, sure. She asked how I would like that if I were a waiter. Well, I’d been a waiter, and I know that change is just that; it’s the bills that count, and as long as the amount of green is acceptable by the standards of a restaurant that serves midget salmon and foamy sage, I could have added a subway token and a pair of dice, and he wouldn’t care. Was I wrong? (No, I wasn’t, but I might as well let you tell me I was.)

The Top Secret Project concludes this week, but it means I’m still crammed up with work. The panic that was Friday has now been replaced by the Panic That Is Monday, and I can’t wait until this is DONE and I can take a few days off. I have some vacation days that need to be burned off. This will not mean Bleat diminution; everything’s set to go for the usual updates. (Match, Comics, B&W World, Mpls, Out of Context Ad Challenge, First Editions, and 100 Mysteries.) (Man, that’s a lot of stuff. For free. I’m nuts.) Also I will be dealing with tech support again, since the same internet problem that’s plagued me for a few years has returned. I nearly wept when I talked to the first Qwest tech, who had to go through the list of questions – seriously, the automated system makes you inspect to see if your modem is plugged in – and when I was finally handed off to a higher level of tech support, I listened to hold music for five minutes until a recorded voice told me they weren’t taking calls on weekends. I tried the web-chat version, only to find it’s M-F only. So I sent an email. I have since been informed that my email has been received, and will be handed off to the Austro-Hungarian Civil Service. That’s what I get for buying the Kafkatech modem.

Back around noon with the thrilling matchbook addition. It’s not much, but the site’s almost up to #350, which is a helluva lot of updates. The greatest collection on the internet! Right? No one can take that away from me!



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Not that I see anyone trying.

(As it turns out – no. But it's Japanese.)

Pass it along, if you wish



89 RESPONSES TO *monday, june 15*



nedcooney says:

June 15, 2009 at 12:20 pm

I hateithateitHATEIT when that happens. At a Cracker Barrel, of all places, they saw fit to seat us right next to the only other party in the area (slow time, slow day). We could hear them BREATHING, fer Chrissakes! And for some reason, I always hesitate to say something like “Could we sit over there, please?” Maybe because it sounds rude, and everyone can hear it in an almost-empty place.

Times like that make me wish for the presence of my obnoxious sister-in-law. She can be excruciating to be around sometimes, but she NEVER allows restaurant staff to treat her that way, and makes sure most of the other customers in the immediate area know about it!



Trogdor says:

June 15, 2009 at 12:21 pm

bolie4, you could leave a stamp from Subway, they don't honor those anymore anyway.



DryOwlTacos says:

June 15, 2009 at 12:25 pm

Not too sure a subway token would be well received by local servers, but a pair of dice might be useful, since we are less than an hour's drive from several Oklahoma casinos.

I'm certainly no judge of chichi, because at the first glance, it doesn't look to me like a place that serves Scottish salmon. The gold medallions across the window just scream “Golden Wok.”



Gina says:

June 15, 2009 at 12:41 pm

Dies laughing over Erasmus

I hope you really said that.



Judge Crater says:

June 15, 2009 at 12:58 pm

There is a very interesting producer of farmed raised salmon in Scotland, called Loch Duart. They have the only farmed salmon that approaches the quality of the best wild salmon. Well worth buying if you come across it: <http://www.lochduart.com/>

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HOST WITH THE MOST

**Chas C-Q** says:

June 15, 2009 at 1:05 pm

Ian Anderson (of Jethro Tull) started a salmon farm and cannery near his home in Scotland, largely to provide employment and education to the region. "His Strathaird concern, based on his estate on the Isle of Skye was worth £10.7 million in the late 1990s, when parts of it began to be sold off." (WP) He innovated a system of pen-raising fish in open waters.

**Rev. Back It On Up 13** says:

June 15, 2009 at 1:12 pm

Ian Anderson's Salmon is the stuff of my fantasies.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:

June 15, 2009 at 1:19 pm

What is wrong with scotch and salmon?

**bgbear (roger h)** says:

June 15, 2009 at 1:23 pm

Moderated again. Maybe it is me, I have offended. I suspect irritable bear.

**Dave (in MA)** says:

June 15, 2009 at 1:49 pm

Having Binged the Olive Garden Screed I came up with an American Spectator site that wants to be paid, so I took matters into my own hands and came up with [this](#) courtesy of the Wayback Machine.

**Jay** says:

June 15, 2009 at 1:49 pm

Rounding up tips (with credit cards, not just getting rid of some extra loose change) strikes me as inherently a little unsophisticated/classless, implying that tipping is a big deal for you and you want to show off how much thought you put into it. Not to sound too much like advice from Esquire, but to me it seems a hell of a lot more self-assured and manly to glance down at the bill, quickly write down a round number that hits between 15%-20%, and move on. Act like you've been there before, folks.

**Gina** says:

June 15, 2009 at 1:52 pm

Jay, though I can't speak for our host, I can say on my own behalf that you're assuming the presence of math skills that some of us just don't possess. "Quickly write down a round number that hits between 15%-20%"? What do I look like, Einstein?

**LindaL** says:

June 15, 2009 at 2:12 pm

Thanks for the tip HPoulter! And the change. And the expired light

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rail ticket. Here's your dice.



bgbear (roger h) says:

June 15, 2009 at 2:12 pm

Hey, I did the pizza deliver bit too back in the 80s. I was happy to get anything and change added up.



DaveTheDuffer says:

June 15, 2009 at 2:16 pm

James,

The Japanese matchbook site is wonderful. It is however, Japanese and afflicted with at strange design – sort of a second life without the avatars. I secretly like the design but I won't admit it.

You still have the greatest DOMESTIC matchbook site.



D Palmer says:

June 15, 2009 at 2:25 pm

Gina, well you do need a haircut.

As a waiter in college and after at Chi-Chi's (see above comment) and Bennigan's, I didn't mind change.

First, you always need some on hand to make change for customers. 2nd, I needed quarters for laundry and parking meters, 3rd its a nice savings plan. Throw the change in a jar and cash it in every couple of months. Voila, beer money for the weekend.

Tip calculation is easy if you can round, divide and add. No physics or calculus required.



Patrick McClure says:

June 15, 2009 at 2:27 pm

I went back and re-read the Olive Garden screed. It was just as enjoyable as the first time I read it. As for tipping, I always round up to the nearest dollar, as long as it's over 15 %, or 20% if the service deserved it. I use a debit card, and it is easier to subtract whole numbers from my account balance at the end of the month. As for Jay's assessment, I don't give a fig whether, he, or other people, think I'm a rube for doing this. It makes my life easier, and I've yet to have a waiter or waitress complain that my tip wasn't exactly 15% or 20% and next time could I please subtract enough to make sure it hit those holy numbers.



crossdotcurve says:

June 15, 2009 at 2:45 pm

Lileks, at the conclusion of the Olive Garden screed, writes:

“Here's the deal: we don't need your support. But understand that if Iraqis had flown planes into Big Ben, we'd take out Saddam, because we understand that an attack on you is an attack on us. The West is not defined by Belgian edicts on acceptable levels of tomato sauce viscosity. The West is a set of ideas that need defending.”

The mind reels. “Iraqis” flying/flew the planes.

**Jay says:**

June 15, 2009 at 2:53 pm

Patrick-? I didn't say anything about tipping "exactly" any percentage. I would think you were far more of a rube if you busted out your iPhone to calculate tip %'s, as opposed to just the unfortunate rounding up.

Also, as to the debit card—doesn't your bank have a website that does all the math for you? Is this related to the "checkbook balancing" my mom still does by hand? I'm not (entirely) trying to be a smartass here; I genuinely don't quite get the necessity of that sort of procedure anymore, or what it is people actually do at the end of each month (or whatever). So, this is an invitation for others to advise me on how I'm making a massive financial miscalculation. If it helps, I'm coming up on five years on my own post-college, but I'm still single, so perhaps I'm missing some coordination function necessary when you're married/have kids. To be clear, I get having an overall budget, checking your account online to keep from being scammed/manage your money, etc. I'm just not sure I understand the ongoing utility of re-adding up every debit purchase again myself.

**Rev. Back It On Up 13 says:**

June 15, 2009 at 2:56 pm

Whenever I try to read this famous so-called Olive Garden screed, I get a big NO on my computer screen and a "WAAH-waaah" of failure.

I am so into this you can't even imagine, and it's being dangled in front of me like a carrot on a stick. I don't even know WHY I want it – I have no use for the Olive Garden – even the food in their commercials looks vile to me and I can't get worked up into hysteria over breadsticks – but for some reason, I feel like I *need* to read this.

It's the Great Lileks Olive Garden Swindle.

**Dave (in MA) says:**

June 15, 2009 at 3:27 pm

Rev. Back It On Up 13, well then perhaps you don't need to read the aforementioned screed, because there's nothing anti-Olive Garden in it. If you still feel the need to read it, scroll back to my previous comment wherein it is linked.

**Patrick McClure says:**

June 15, 2009 at 3:28 pm

Jay, sorry to have offended you. I should have thought that post out better. Yes many of us old fogie types (my words not yours and I'm proudly claiming it) still check our bank statements (electronic now, I have gotten past paper) against our own records at home. (OK confession time, my wife actually does it becauser she is more accurate at it). I always thought that rounding up to the nearest dollar over the tip was a good thing for me and the server. I thought you were saying that people who do that look as if they don't have much experience in a decent restaurant. and got a little ticked at that. My own overly sensitive feelings I suppose.

Rev. BIOU13, try <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/fr/637482/posts>

**Rev. Back It On Up 13** says:

June 15, 2009 at 3:35 pm

Thanks Dave in MA, you saved the day. I needed to read it even if I don't care for the Olive Garden, because I can read things about things I don't love.

And that was an excellent read, having way less to do with the Olive Garden than I was expecting.

**Shelley** says:

June 15, 2009 at 3:41 pm

To name a Mexican Restaurant Chi-Chi's is either pretty ignorant or totally funny.

"Why hello. Welcome to Ta-Ta's."

**WatchWayne** says:

June 15, 2009 at 4:01 pm

No, that's "Hello, and welcome to Hooters!" Really, I tell my wife, I go there because the food is good, and reasonably priced.

(never been to Hooters, hope I never do... Chi-Chi's was a different story— every Monday from 1985 until we rode them into the ground sometime in the 90s. Our waitress was Shirley, aka Cha-Cha)

**bgbear (roger h)** says:

June 15, 2009 at 4:11 pm

I believe the proper colloquialism is "chiches" and "chi-chi" is a derivative.

-el oso beh heh

**D Palmer** says:

June 15, 2009 at 4:57 pm

WatchWayne, That's the problem with Hooters (I visited the original in Clearwater in the 80's when there was only 1). The food ISN'T very good (you're shocked I'm sure) and for the most part, the girls aren't good looking enough to make up for the mediocre food.

However, I wouldn't say you need to be ashamed about actually going to one, the outfits are really PG-13 at worst.

**D Palmer** says:

June 15, 2009 at 4:59 pm

Chi-Chi's however had pretty decent food. I was never afraid to eat at one (something many serves can't say about the establishments they worked for) and you got good value for your money.

The Orland Park IL and Deerfield IL stores where I worked in the late 80's provided me with a living wage too.

**GardenStater** says:

June 15, 2009 at 5:59 pm

I always thought Hooters was a topless place, until I finally went to one. The girls are cute in some places, not so cute in others.

And their deep-fried pickles are amazing! I could eat a barrel of those things—especially with a few cold beers to wash them down. Yum!



Garry says:

June 15, 2009 at 6:13 pm

It's just a domestic sage foam, without breeding, but I think you'll be amused by its pretensions.



Kev says:

June 15, 2009 at 8:30 pm

Ian Anderson (of Jethro Tull) started a salmon farm and cannery near his home in Scotland, largely to provide employment and education to the region.

It's hilarious to learn that Ian Anderson is a farmer, seeing as how his band was also named after an [agriculturist](#). (I did an extreme double-take when I saw the original Tull's name in the index of my high school world history book.)

Speaking of aging rockers with unusual second careers, did anyone else catch that Phil Collins is now a noted [Alamo enthusiast](#)? He gave a presentation in San Antonio back in March, and he claims in the linked article that he's basically stopped singing to devote time to this new venture.

(And to tie this all together, Wikipedia notes that Collins was guest drummer with Tull for the Prince's Trust Gala in '82.)



Jay says:

June 15, 2009 at 9:18 pm

Patrick—You didn't offend me at all, I just wanted to clarify. My second post was not meant to be all that serious, although now that I think about it, I really do wonder whether there's a bit of a generational divided w/ the checkbook balancing thing.



The MCP says:

June 16, 2009 at 12:18 am

As far as I'm concerned, Chi-Chi's was basically pseudo-Mexican food for people who are afraid of spices. Even their "Diablo" menu, supposedly the hottest sauce they had, made Taco Bell's "medium" sauce look like Dave's Insanity by comparison.



Jen says:

June 16, 2009 at 7:17 am

Try this for the Olive Garden screed:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20020305235250/http://www.lileks.com/screed/olivegarden.html>



WatchWayne says:

June 16, 2009 at 7:37 am

D Palmer, thanks for your comments. However, please do not

underestimate how jealous/paranoid/irrational a wife can be. It really gets a little tiresome sometimes.

Also, thanks to Bonnie for the kind words. You brightened my day, at least as much as I possibly brightened yours.



Forrest Gregg says:

June 16, 2009 at 10:07 am

” I always wondered if it was named after the owner or his grandmother from the Old Country.”

Neither. Chi-Chi’s was generically named by the investors, mostly former Green Bay Packers players like Max McGee. Most of the same investors, including the legendary Marno McDermott, would later go on to create Fuddrucker’s.



Ben says:

June 16, 2009 at 11:28 pm

OK, I know this is late, but I had to:

>>Your first clue should have been the curtains on a rod around the front door. “Pardon us, please, we’ll open these right back up, after the paramedics take the last victims out through the back door. It seems that the Heimlich Maneuver is not very effective on foam.”<<

I’m guessing you’re not from an area that experiences truly frigid weather – in such areas, if you’re unfortunate enough not to have an actual vestibule, those curtains help keep the arctic air from shooting into everyone within 20 feet of the door when it opens.

Most places around here (Boston) have taken them down by now, but they’ll be back up for the winter, for sure.



Fred says:

June 17, 2009 at 3:21 pm

There’s a new chain store opened up a few months ago that’s supposed to be like Hooters on speed. Never been inside so I can’t say. The name: Twin Peaks.



Dave says:

June 19, 2009 at 12:46 am

Twin Peaks is pretty big down here in Dallas. I think “Hooters on speed” is a pretty extreme description, though. What’s different: the chicks are wearing tied-off plaid shirts, shorts and stockings, taking the chain away from the Hooters cheerleader fetish and towards the...um...mountain climber fetish? I guess. What’s the same: mediocre food, lame beer, all overpriced. I don’t need some feminist in desperate need of a shave to tell me why I shouldn’t go there; I’m too damn cheap to do otherwise.

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- 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
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A lost cultural reference,
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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?

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ABOUT

Monday Matchbook #338

Comic Sins: Blue, the Blue Circle!

TUESDAY, JUNE 16: STAY TUNED

on [JUNE 16, 2009](#) · [78 COMMENTS](#) · in [ADVERTISING](#)

Large-scale Bleat up around noon; busy with the final moments of the Top Secret Project. In the meantime, for fun: here's an ad from Sunday's paper. Discuss. And be careful. *The owls are not what they seem.*

RECENT COMMENTS

- [polymathamy](#) on [06.14.12 Bleat](#)
- [Amanda from Michigan](#) on [Boo. Hiss](#)
- [Julie](#) on [Testing the new RSS feed idea](#)
- [shesnailie](#) on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)
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Try ShareFile free for 30 days today and get **2X storage** at no additional cost!

Limited time offer.



TRY IT FREE

A BOOK I RECOMMEND

Progress is Overrated

Has progress taken us to a better place?

I'd say it's taken us for a ride. (Probably in a carbon-coughing oil guzzler.)

Honestly, what thanks do we owe progress? We're up to our necks in landfill, down to the wire on resources, and climate change is out to get us – or at best leave us with a nasty sunburn.

Historically, civilizations are destroyed by progress. Just ask the Pharaohs. No sooner had they built those jumbo triangles and giant cement cats than they flushed themselves down the Nile.

That's why at Post Shredded Wheat, we put the "no" in innovation.

Henry Perky created the Original Shredded Wheat in 1892. One man. (Him.) One ingredient. (Wheat.) One machine. (The machine.) We didn't give it any add-ons or plug-ins. Heck, we didn't even name it.

All we did was make it Spoon Size in 1961. Did we go too far? Time will tell. But I will say our naturally fiber-rich, 100% whole grain wheat has been free of enhancement, progress and pyramids for 117 years and counting.




Frank Druffel



"We put the 'no' in innovation"

See Frank in action at ThePalaceOfLight.com

[Child 44](#)
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THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

OCTOBER 2013						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
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Pass it along, if you wish



78 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, june 16: stay tuned*



hgbear (roger h) says:
June 16, 2009 at 10:25 am

Road to Wellville is an interesting movie on the subject of these 19/early 20th century quacks.

Several naked women as a bonus, of course one of the unclothed is Camryn Manheim. I hear many find her, ahem, Rubenesque figure attractive, NTTIAWWT.

looks like we're going to need a bigger canvass – Peter Paul Reubens



GardenStater says:
June 16, 2009 at 10:30 am

Maybe these two clips will make it a bit more clear:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfOxr4SdiPc>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tzuGhKZeYk&NR=1>



GardenStater says:
June 16, 2009 at 10:33 am

It seems that whenever we insert a url into a comment, it automatically “awaits moderation.”

So go to YouTube, and enter “Frank Druffel.” You’ll see the real creative thinking behind this very clever ad campaign.



Grebmar says:
June 16, 2009 at 10:40 am

Having looked at (or wasted more time, depending) the Palace of Light website, it adds to the satirical nature of the print ad. Watch the second episode, to the reaction of some of the employees, when Druffel gives the anti-innovation speech. It’s actually a very clever ad campaign for something that hasn’t essentially changed in over 100 years. Is Druffel a real person? Probably not, but he has a Facebook page!



WatchWayne says:
June 16, 2009 at 10:40 am

The angle that ad took isn’t all that original– remember the Volkswagen Beetle ads from their latter years?

[Full-page ad, no pictures a-tall]

[Serious, somber-looking text]

“Here are all the new features of the 1967 Beetle” (approximatley)



Bill Peschel says:
June 16, 2009 at 10:44 am

I agree that it’s a clever ad, but I know too much to do more than admire the sneaky marketing concept. I keep thinking:

- a) They want you to buy Shredded Wheat by avoiding mentioning that it tastes of floor sweepings and twigs;
- b) There are too many people out there who agree with Mr. Druffel and feel that (to borrow from Douglas Adams), not only was it a bad thing to pick up the plow and scythe, but a bigger mistake to come down out of the trees in the first place.
- c) Mention climate change, and I’m reminded that there’s a bigger correlation between sunspots and temperature change than the rising CO2 chart in “An Inconvenient Truth,” and this chilly spring isn’t doing my potatoes and corn any good, dagnabbit!

But props to Hunky Bob’s rant. That made me laugh!

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HOST WITH THE MOST



curtsnide says:
June 16, 2009 at 11:09 am

I like that the style of this print ad fits the message. It looks like an Olgivy ad from around the mid-sixties.



DryOwlTacos says:
June 16, 2009 at 11:15 am

Frank Druffel is the Joe Isuzu of the breakfast food world. But he would be funnier if his anti-progress rant didn't include an excerpt from the Algore Manifesto that too many take for gospel.



Charlie Young says:
June 16, 2009 at 11:24 am

Wish I actually had time to dive into this silly ad campaign, but other necessities get in the way. It looks pretty tongue-in-cheek to me when I went to the Post web site.



Kev says:
June 16, 2009 at 11:37 am

Henry Perky invented the original Shredded Wheat in 1892."

I initially misread the guy's name as "Herky Perky," which made me LMAO. The first two things that came to mind were 1) Herky was a minor character in the Henny Penny nursery rhyme, and 2) You do the Herky Perky and you turn yourself around. (That's what it's all about, right?)



Bill says:
June 16, 2009 at 11:44 am

So entirely off-topic (unless you connect some sort of advertising dot). But given your past affinity for the product, Mr. Lileks, I naturally thought of you when I read the troubling news that the FDA has now confirmed Zicam and its all-powerful zinc-i-ness seems to cause loss of smell. oh the horror...

http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iqOZLMhWX_xiMmRVVVoMTp47QJqgD98RRS9G3



Gary says:
June 16, 2009 at 11:45 am

Before anyone else starts channeling Ayn Rand, please go to palaceoflight.com

It's a joke.



Tory Mitchell says:
June 16, 2009 at 11:53 am

An adorable print ad. I love stuff like this...(I guess which is why I come here...) From the BEAUTIFUL Pacific Northwest, this is Tory M



Mike Gebert says:
June 16, 2009 at 12:07 pm

"We don't do irony here. See, this is a place where people smoke

The
Who You Know Deal

- unmetered disk space
- unmetered transfer
- unmetered resources

\$10 per month
(we'll even help you move)

 **HostingMatters**

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](#) for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

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

dope while skiing topless..."



swschrads says:
June 16, 2009 at 12:12 pm

hopefully a fact: Crunch Berries cereal was invented by a Mr. Fred Dingle.

marketing convinced Quaker to create a fictional Captain Crunch to push it, instead.



EmGee says:
June 16, 2009 at 12:20 pm

This ad campaign is only clever and successful if it's honest, eg, Ogilvy & Mather's classic VW Beetle ads.

This one isn't either, in light of the 3 other varieties of shredded wheat products sold under the Shredded Wheat moniker. It isn't even Epic Fail, but only soft, pathetic, whimpering fail. I thought the tv ads were cute, but also thought, who are they trying to kid with their cleverness – besides themselves?



Mike in Cleveland says:
June 16, 2009 at 12:45 pm

The picture of Mr. Drufell isn't all that big, but after seeing it I can imagine him saying, "I am shocked, shocked!! That there's any suggestion of improving Post Shredded Wheat."



Harry Payne says:
June 16, 2009 at 1:15 pm

From "Rhymes I learned at my Mother's knee (and other low joints)":

On Edinburgh bridge a Scotsman stood
Chewing his beard for lack of food
He said, "It may be tough to eat
"But it's better for you than Shredded Wheat."



Brian says:
June 16, 2009 at 1:26 pm

"this is Joe, he is 40-50 and blah blah blah"

This is dead on how some advertising/marketing gets pitched. It is making fun of corporate mumbo jumbo, advertising double-speak, "All New, all better, new and improved" eco and non-eco...it is simply fantastic!



Renna Warren says:
June 16, 2009 at 1:33 pm

Progress is just gress that's lost its amateur standing.



Mitch says:
June 16, 2009 at 1:33 pm

Post Shredded Wheat, now with More Irony? (You know, for the

Internets!) While I agree with the defenses offered here for 20th Century Progress, I have to admit to a growing suspicion that the 21st Century's idea of progress is all too virtual.



hpoulter says:

June 16, 2009 at 1:38 pm

I wasn't reacting to his bogus "anti-progress" slant, but rather to his confusing "cement" with concrete (and triangles with pyramids and sphinxes with cats). As a civil engineer (in another life) that drives me nerts. Things aren't made out of cement. That would be like pouring flour on your plate and calling it bread.

But, the owls are not what they seem.



Grebmar says:

June 16, 2009 at 3:12 pm

"And the ad writer's knowledge of Egyptian history is nonexistent. The pyramids were build roughly 2000 years before Egyptian civilization was (ahem) "flushed down the Nile.""

Well, it doesn't really say anything about the _ad writer's_ knowledge of Egyptian history. The line was written for the character of _Druffel_, who presumably knows nothing about Egyptian history. Whether the writer knows anything is irrelevant. It's meant to be Druffel's glib comment on progress. Fictional characters aren't required to state historical fact!



Sydney Brillo Duodenum says:

June 16, 2009 at 5:43 pm

Without chemicals, I point you in the direction of Shredded Wheat bricks broken into chunks, lathered with honey and allowed to sit for approximately 5 minutes in a bowl of half and half. Trust me, you'll be the man in the smiling bag every morning.



Pam-EL says:

June 16, 2009 at 6:31 pm

Grebmar: you're right, I'm wrong.

I thought the ad was real (non-parody and non-satire) because my brain wasn't fully rebooted when I read it this morning.



Liman says:

June 16, 2009 at 7:09 pm

This must be by the same agency that did the Diamond Walnuts Robert Goulet ads and website.



bgbear says:

June 16, 2009 at 8:16 pm

OK, I watched more of the the Post commercials/youtube videos and I am now convinced that this is James Lileks' secret project. The humor and writing are very close.

Really telling is the comment about pay phones losing out to cell phones.

Prove me wrong!



Shaky Barnes says:
June 16, 2009 at 11:28 pm

This is funny and some of you people need to chill out.

BTW this is lifting a lot of color from the USA Network show "Psych"
— or perhaps some of the same creative geniuses are behind it.

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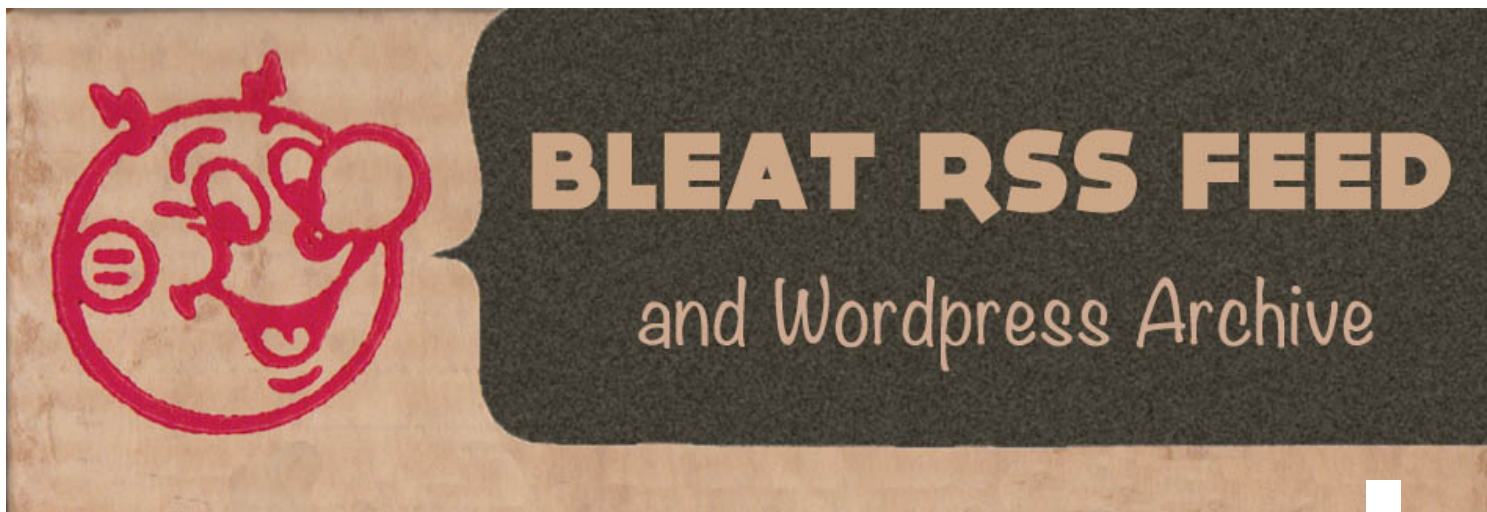
WHY A STORK?
A lost cultural reference,
alas. Plus: Listen! [...]

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ABOUT

A Brief Announcement

Out of Context Ad Challenge

RECENT COMMENTS

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17

on JUNE 17, 2009 · 95 COMMENTS · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#), [RETRO DELIGHTS](#)

Tuesday was the big presentation of the Top Secret Thing, so I tried to get lots of rest. As amusing as the Bill Murray model may be on film, showing up unshaven and devil-may-care with dual streaks of arrogance and self-loathing doesn't work well in real life. I went to bed at 12:30, expecting the usual ration of sleep I need – and woke up, for no reason, at 5:30 AM.

It's a good hour to wake, 5:30; I knew I had five hours under my belt, and if needed Bones McCoy could shoot me with enough drugs to call off the rocket attack on Zayon. (Strike that; not sure I like the comparison.) Waking an hour before you have to get up is misery, because you tick off each precious minute before you give up. At 5:30 AM there's still hope.

Then came the birds. The damned birds, right outside the window. Tweet tweet. Then came the planes, the early morn cargo flights that dislodge the fillings. I got out some earplugs and tried to think of happy things. No use: no sleep. Why? I wasn't nervous about the presentation at all. But the greatest impediment to sleep can be the conviction that sleep you must, and this just feeds on itself. Then I started worrying about the leaking roof, how the roof was bulging with water in every room, and for one blessed moment I realized I'm dreaming. And I was off.

Up at the appointed hour, into the suit, off to the office. The presentation consisted of describing the work of our team, and since I'd been marinating in the ideas for two weeks it was easy enough. It was fun, and you can't say

polymathamy on [06.14.12 Bleat](#)

[Amanda from Michigan](#) on [Boo. Hiss](#)

[Julie](#) on [Testing the new RSS feed idea](#)

[shesnailie](#) on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

[Wagner von Drupen- Sachs](#) on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

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DOUBLE YOUR STORAGE!

Try ShareFile free for 30 days today and get **2X storage** at no additional cost!

Limited time offer.

TRY IT FREE

A BOOK I RECOMMEND

that too much about something that involves Powerpoint.



In case you're wondering, it's a company-wide initiative to develop a branding strategy for our new line of moist towelettes. We had a prototype:

Ah, but what to call it? Daily Fresh? Dailyfresh? The ever-popular mid-

word capitalization model, DailyFresh? That's in the hands of the executive committee. Our work here is done.

Of course, no, that's not it. But it is a Top Secret Thing, and it was an honor to be involved. As I've said: I've had more sheer fun at the paper in the last two years than ever before, and in the last year I've seen more initiative and forward-thinking than I've seen in ten years.

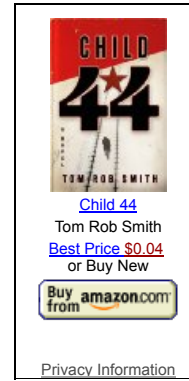
When I was done I got a head-start on the time off, and went home to ruthlessly clean. Removed apples in the fridge that had gone as soft as a dog's favorite tennis ball, stocked, polished, brought up the last boxes I'd removed from the office – stuff I'd boxed when I changed desks two years ago – then felt a wave of fatigue hit me. Well, just as pain is a sign of weakness leaving the body, fatigue is a sign of coffee leaving the body. (One of a few signs, that is.) I made some more. Or rather tried to. The coffee pot, Big Head Todd, has chosen a new way to beg me for death. I've had four of these models now – the Cuisinart unit with no carafe, just a tank and a spout. Each one has gone south, but most became incontinent and dribbled coffee all over the counter. This one refused to turn on for a few days, then started working again. Today it didn't work as usual, but the clock on the front showed nothing, indicating no power. Jiggled the cord. Nothing. Couldn't be the outlet; the radio was working. Tried a different outlet: it worked. Moved it back to the original outlet: it didn't work.

Moved it over to the other outlet, didn't turn it on, then moved it back to the original outlet. It worked.

From which I could deduce nothing. Except that it was broken. Well, I bought the service contract on this one. Yes, to quote a famous Richelieu impersonator, I did that thing. For once in my life I bought the service contract, and it was on a coffee maker – only because I liked it, and the others had died.

[Seven pages of one-star Amazon reviews](#) seem to indicate it's not an unusual problem.

Picked up Natalie from her singing “camp” – every year she gripes about going, every year she has fun. (“They make us dance,” she said yesterday. “I don't like to dance.”) By the time I left the house it had begun to rain; by the



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

OCTOBER 2013						
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THE DISTANT PAST

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time we got home it was pouring, and when I laid down for a nap a great sky-rending clap of thunder shook the house. Even deaf Jasper looked up: holy jeezum crow, boss. I understand how the ancients may have been convinced that thunder was the anger of the gods, but consider the plight of the unbelievers, the skeptics, the Romans who rolled their eyes at the pantheon of busybodies. Wasn't Jupiter flexing his cheeks, but what was it? A spark in the ether, no doubt, which rends the clouds and produces the sound. Thus spake the wise man: the clouds are actually quite firm, which is why the rending sound is so great. The only reason they do not fall to earth is the exhalations of the wind, which bears them aloft. When the wind abates, the clouds descend and become fog.

Fine, then Clodius Appius, but why then are the clouds thin? A man can pass through fog with ease. I thought you said – yes, I'll have another braised sparrow brain, they are really quite excellent – anyway, I thought you said the clouds were thick.

“They are, my young friend. They are thick in the middle. At the bottom, they are much looser in consistency.”

“Bah – Greek nonsense. I say clouds are merely suspended apparitions. Possibly froth of of the ocean, blown high.”

(laughter all around)

The new graphic at the top of the page hails from this booklet.



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UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](#) for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

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

It's not just the nation's cheese. It's a man's cheese for men only making He-Man Snacks! World's first overcompensating cheese.

A little late in mentioning this: Sam Butera died. Another link to Swank Vegas, gone.



Later today: Out of Context Ad Challenge at 10:30, buzz.mn Miscreant Roundup at noon, and a Minneapolis update in the afternoon.

Oh, one more thing, re: the entry below, and why future matters of Topical Contention will be filed in the Screedblog. I didn't put them there originally because, believe it or not, I didn't think they were that partisan. Hah! Even

mild issues end up as exercises in biatchslappery, and it only takes a few brackish souls to pee in the soup to make me feel sour about opening up the 495,306th place on the internet to make the same old arguments.

I know it's a bit kumbaya to say this, but I'd like to imagine that the average thread contains 50% comments from people who think I'm wrong and/or nuts on the Issues of The Day, but can put alllll that aside to enjoy things we have in common – daily life, pop culture, dogs, endless peeves, movies new and old, and all the other things that occupy the majority of this site. Seriously: if you love old sci-fi or noir or architecture or comic books or Bruckner or Ellroy or the sociological signifiers inherent in the Jetsons, maybe we could get around to arguing marginal tax rates some day, but it's not like we have to.

As was noted in the comments for the previous thread, though, it's my site; I should do what I want. But it's not just my site, is it? Yes, it is, in the sense that I pay for it and write the entries and slap together all the updates, but ever since I opened up comments it's become something else. Six months into comments, there are 13,000 remarks. It's been an absolute joy to see this community form around the Bleat, and I'd rather move stuff elsewhere – and let the debate find its own level there – than turn this back into the previous version, and stifle the next 13K remarks before they have a chance.

No big deal. Now for GOD'S SAKE, let's not talk about that. Someone once wrote that “moist towelette” were two of the most beautiful words in the English language, and I think I agree. We all have a problem with Moist, but “towelette” is not only lovely – the faux-French falls off the tongue like meat from a good piece of BBQ – but it has post-war better-living-through-packaging connotations as well. You'd find a towelette in a drive-in, or a Gemini space capsule, no?

So there's the morning topic: coffeemakers, beautiful words, and whether the average Roman intellectual really believed in the gods. Have at it; see you soon.

Pass it along, if you wish



95 RESPONSES TO *wednesday, june 17*



swschrads says:

June 17, 2009 at 10:20 am

stupid committee decisions is why I changed my legal team to Foolem, Billum, and Runn 😊

lack of stupid committee decisions is why I need a legal team.

I will stay out of the coffeepot thing. a cardiologist 13+ years ago told me no more caffeine, and I've never felt bet

(thump)

**bgbear (roger h)** says:

June 17, 2009 at 10:23 am

I think most Roman believed in the gods. Like many today, they could not imagine the world just coming out of nowhere. What was more likely is that many Romans started to realize is that the gods did not really micromanage everything that happened in the world or that the gods really cared what happened.

I don't believe in gods but, I often feel that people who do are more reasonable than me. I can't stand atheists, too sure about things and quick to consider believers idiots, they a fundamentalist really. I guess agnostic is the description for me.

**Trogdor** says:

June 17, 2009 at 10:27 am

I love the comments from the "Bleat House Gang". Sometimes, often really, I laugh at HunkyBobTX, MxMaster and swschrads as much as at James. Not at him, but *with* him. Not to give you guys big heads as everyone here contributes equal amounts of joy.

BUT Monkey, I originally found James by reading his Screeeedblog. And so for my political ranting, Sarah Palin loving, socialism hating, creationism facting, I now comment at HotAir.com, which is fine, like a manly moist Kaukauna Cheese spread.

(I wonder if this comment will now be moderated?)

**Kev** says:

June 17, 2009 at 10:34 am

Then came the birds. The damned birds, right outside the window. Tweet tweet. Then came the planes, the early morn cargo flights that dislodge the fillings.

Birds, then planes. Would you have been surprised if Superman showed up next?

@GardenStater: Re long-lived cars, I took a '91 Acura Integra up to 338,000 miles. When it hit a third of a million (3's all across), I made sure that a friend with a digital camera (I didn't have mine yet) was at the ready. Needless to say, I've stuck with the Honda family ever since.

**Suzanne Goldman** says:

June 17, 2009 at 10:40 am

Most assuredly, the two most beautiful words in the English language are:

"Yes, dear". Said with the most unsarcastic tone, of course.

And that coffee maker of yours? The last Cuisinart almost killed the cat in it's final attempt to grind the beans. Unground beans were flying everywhere pelting anything in sight. I think one put a dent in the wall. I have resorted to the most basic of machines these days.

**John Robinson** says:

June 17, 2009 at 10:46 am

Keely Smith was hawt. She simply was. Hawt in a way all the

Brittaney's and Kieras and Anjolin's and the rest of their ilk can never hope to be. Ever. Never ever.



Drew says:

June 17, 2009 at 10:55 am

Whoa. I just noticed that Manly-Man Snack-Man is also the Bleat Mascot! When did that happen?



Patrick says:

June 17, 2009 at 11:22 am

I've heard Arizona is pretty good, so I may give it a try one day. Right now what I do so I can have tea at work is I'll either buy a gallon of Milo's Sweet Tea at our local Buy-N-Large, or else I'll get a gallon at Chick-Fil-A. One gallon will usually last me a week.



Bryan V says:

June 17, 2009 at 11:27 am

That clip of Sam with Louis and Keely was another of life's interesting coincidences for me. It was only a week or so ago that I found the album "Louis and Keely!" while (finally) digitizing our old LP collection and, not remembering where it had come from, went back to look into their history and act. When I saw the cover graphic for the youtube video posted here I recognized Keely instantly; she has exactly the same expression as on the album cover. Did she ever change it? That video outtake was the only time I ever saw even a piece of their act, which was obviously an extreme study in contrasts. I see that there is still a "Louis and Keely" act being done in Vegas, too: a tribute.

For some reason this whole thing made me check IMDB and, sure enough, Louis Prima was voice of King Louie in Disney's "The Jungle Book". And the associations just keep coming - I'm sure I also saw a very early clip of the Muppets in which a male and female muppet are singing "That Old Black Magic". It didn't mean much to me at the time, but looking back on it now I would swear that they were channeling Louis and Keely.



Chris M says:

June 17, 2009 at 11:32 am

Is "Kaukauna Klub" different from plain old "Kaukauna"? 'Cause I buy Kaukauna brand cheese food spread all the time. Is this stuff not available everywhere? For coffee, I've had a basic Krups coffeemaker for nearly 10 years now. Not alot of frills, but it still works like new.



Dick Hassing says:

June 17, 2009 at 11:41 am

Does the new Bleat mascot need a name?

Sir Vin Upgrubton?



gmann63 says:

June 17, 2009 at 11:46 am

Nay, the most beautiful words in the English language is close to

“moist towelette”, but are actually “warm leatherette”.



Spud says:

June 17, 2009 at 11:51 am

I almost submitted the first comment on yesterday's post, but remembered how I don't like to wade into politically contentious waters anymore: it's fetid and you don't come out feeling refreshed. I remember the hey-day (or is it heyday?) of blogs in 2002 (after 9/11) when everyone wanted to give their opinion on terrorists, what we should do, and BDS had not gone into full bloom. While we still (and will always) have folks giving opinions, the flammers and nutjobs do not make political discussion on the web enjoyable.

Two most beautiful words? Hey (or hi) baby! [Yes, the title of a Ted Nugent ditty.] Those words are particularly good when you're saying them as you look at the face of your five y.o. daughter beaming a big two-front-teeth-missing grin.



Bonnie_ says:

June 17, 2009 at 11:54 am

I liked Screeyness and I am a mom, so I can ignore whining in the comments. But I enjoy all parts of the dialogue, so I'm happy no matter what.

I had fun telling my niece that her riding outfit hairpiece is called a “snood.” She had no idea that her black net bag that collects her hair behind her riding helmet is a snood. The girls were all giggling on their horses, shouting “snood” at one another.

And although my brother is rich enough to indulge her in a horse (this is, after all, Colorado, so not so rich) she is not snooty. Not one bit. Which brings the question to mind — is “snooty” derived from “snood”? Does anyone here know?



Baby M says:

June 17, 2009 at 12:02 pm

An here I thought [Snood](#) was a videogame!



Gibbering Madness says:

June 17, 2009 at 12:16 pm

“Snooty” comes from “snoot”, a variant of “snout”, meaning “nose”. It first appeared around 1919, and presumably originates from the idea of looking down your nose at someone.

“Snood” comes from the Old English “snod”, originating around 1000 AD, and originally meant any kind of ribbon or other method for confining hair.



Spud says:

June 17, 2009 at 12:28 pm

I just checked with my Poultry Scientist wife, and she says the “snood” is the piece of flappy skin that you see draped across and hanging down a turkey's beak. Don't know if there are any recipes for this particular turkey pieces part.

**Dave Heaton** says:

June 17, 2009 at 12:39 pm

Holy cow. I was intrigued by the woman in the clip with the deadpan expression, so I did a little searching. As others have already said above, her name is Keely Smith, she was the wife of Louis Prima, and their stage schtick together was that he was wild and crazy, and she played it deadpan cool. So the antics in the clip just echoed their Vegas act on TV.

These two practically invented the Las Vegas lounge act—before the rat pack—starting in 1954. She sang, he played, and between the two of them they defined the genre.

The holy cow comes from the fact that she is alive and well, and is still singing after all these years. NPR has a great interview with her available online.

**EmGee** says:

June 17, 2009 at 12:56 pm

I'm glad you are sticking with the carafe-less Cuisinart. I've had mine for over 3 years now, and never had a problem. It's loyally made my morning java nearly every day without complaint, although sometimes it develops a condensation puddle underneath, but almost every 'maker I've had does that. Since it costs almost as much to replace a broken carafe or 2 or 3 (if you can find one), going carafe-less is the best way.

I'm one of your liberal readers, but I too found Letterman's comment about the Palin girl unfunny and uncalled for. Perhaps the joke's on us though, since he probably knew that attacking one of her children would bring out the pitbull in her and she wouldn't let go of it. How does that saying go? "No such thing as bad publicity"? Maybe his ratings needed the boost that only a week in the headlines can acheive.

**GardenStater** says:

June 17, 2009 at 1:00 pm

@Nancy and Kev: You're an inspiration! Like I say, the most I've managed so far is the 235K Trooper. I wanted to fix the things that needed fixing (power steering, heat, A/C, dent in the door) and keep 'er going, but GardenWifey thought it was time to move on. I'd love to get a car over the million-mile mark, though I'm not sure I'll live that long (or drive that much).

Then again, with a daily round-trip commute of more than 60 miles, plus miscellaneous, I could probably get there in about 40 years or so.

Think the Jeep will last that long? More importantly, will we still be able to purchase gasoline in 2049?

**Grebmar** says:

June 17, 2009 at 1:18 pm

Coming late to the party here, but I thought I would add my thoughts. James and I are also almost diametrically opposed on matters of the day, but I have been reading the Bleat since at least early 2001 from Berlin. I read for the humor, which is always good, for the Minneapolis commentary (former Minnesotan here), and the general keen observations on the absurdities of 21st century

everyday life. I mean, who else can write multiple pages about his attempts to get his computer to do some arcane task and make me read every word? I can even understand why he likes Disney World so much, even though I would never go there.

Like a previous commenter, I actually enjoy most of James' screeds. They are not the usual boilerplate conservative commentary—they show he thinks for himself. I appreciate a good argument for the other side.

Now, does this mean that the Mac/PC debate is also verboten here?



crholt says:

June 17, 2009 at 1:32 pm

For me, the generic “moist towelette” meant the brand name “Wash ‘n’ Dry”. I can still recall how they smelled and felt – we’d only get to use them on long car trips. We’d eat our lunches packed by mom, then clean up with a Wash ‘n’ Dry. Always brings back memories of my sister and I in the back seat of the big Plymouth wagon on the way to visit relatives in the midwest.



crholt says:

June 17, 2009 at 1:33 pm

My bad – “Wash ‘n Dri” is the brand (well, it WAS a long time ago!)



juanito - John Davey says:

June 17, 2009 at 2:00 pm

Patrick Says:

June 17th, 2009 at 11:22 am

One gallon will usually last me a week.

A week??! You're just not applying yourself then...

Spud Says:

June 17th, 2009 at 11:51 am

Two most beautiful words? Hey (or hi) baby! [Yes, the title of a Ted Nugent ditty.]

“Jump in the back of my Ford”? I've met Ted a couple of times, and while he is just as sick & crazy as he seems to be, he's also pretty charming and accommodating one on one. And talk about “screedy”... He's a good egg at a personal level, despite the bombast.



Andrew says:

June 17, 2009 at 2:34 pm

The discussion about what Mr Lileks should and should not post on his website, coupled with the remark about Roman times, compels me to make a short list of the wonderful things I owe James for turning me on to.

Rome (just got the 2nd season from Netflix today)

The Wire

Fark.com

Achewood

Get Fuzzy

James Cagney

An appreciation for film noir and all kinds of early 20th century pop culture

No doubt there are countless more things I owe to James, but that list alone is enough to deserve a lifetime of thanks.



Bryan C says:

June 17, 2009 at 2:51 pm

Keely was coooool. And despite the Young Ayn Rand impression she's giving in this video, she was actually very pretty.



Irritable Bear says:

June 17, 2009 at 3:43 pm

Irritable Bear is irritated that nobody is trying to say "moist towelette" in a John Wayne manner. Without adding the word "pilgrim".



D Palmer says:

June 17, 2009 at 4:54 pm

And she has a truly amazing singing voice, cool and clear.

Keep an eye out on TCM, they occasionally run a movie the two of them did called Hey Boy! Hey Girl!

And she is indeed very pretty. Prima specialized in finding, marrying, and then divorcing attractive young singers. I believe Smith was the first of 4.



D Palmer says:

June 17, 2009 at 4:57 pm

A quick check of Wikipedia shows Smith was actually wife #4 of 5.



Kev says:

June 17, 2009 at 6:39 pm

@Nancy and Kev: You're an inspiration! Like I say, the most I've managed so far is the 235K Trooper.

Actually, one of my friends puts us all to shame; he took an '89 4Runner up to over 400K miles! Like my Integra, it got to a certain point and pretty much fell apart after that.



Inger says:

June 17, 2009 at 7:57 pm

I love the bleat. I love screed, and the matchbooks, the comic books, the film noir, all of it. It's all very nice.

But Sir Lileks – please, please... MORE RETWEET THEATRE.

(please)

Thank you.



huddydrv says:

June 17, 2009 at 7:58 pm

RE: Keeley Smith. She was 80% Cherokee, married Prima when she was about 18 (the dog!). Great voice! Prima tended to the eclectic (e.g. "Pennies from Heaven" featuring a menu of Italian food falling from the sky) but he could sure toot the horn. Butera was a genius

with the sax. Prima had a cerebral hemorrhage following surgery for a brain stem tumor and was in a coma for three years before he died in 1978. Keeley still does concerts now and then.

RE: Old stuff. I drive a 1941 Hudson with 85,000 original miles. Still runs good! I also drive a 1991 Exploder, with 180,000 miles. I have a friend who drove a 1965 Toyota the equivalent of an earth to moon round trip, retiring it with nearly 500,000 miles (he sold it to a guy who's probably still driving it).

RE: Coffee maker. After trying several overly fancy coffee makers, including the one with the built-in grinder, we settled on a basic 12 cup carafe model by Cuisinart. It works well, has a built-in replaceable carbon filter, and has few complications to go bad. I also use a Tassimo pod brewer. It is great for a single fresh cup of coffee. I particularly like the Starbucks House Blend.



Gabriel Hanna says:

June 17, 2009 at 8:14 pm

COFFEE PRESS. Seriously. No moving parts. Put the kettle on the stove. Take a shower. Pour water from kettle into coffee press. Get dressed. Drink coffee.

They run about \$20.



Paige says:

June 17, 2009 at 8:34 pm

Beautiful words/phrases: "moonflower", "snow cream", "mellifluous", and the aforementioned "luminous". "Doe-eyed", "complicated", "fondant", and "langostino". Heh. This diet, she ain't workin' out so well.

Best coffeemaker: Krups. No question.

Comments on Screedblog? Eh, rather not...There are entirely too many places where hate doth spew freely forth, and I'd just feel better knowing there was somewhere to go where we were all expected to act as guests. No vitriol, and no humsnorkeling either.

And that reference to "the damned birds" made me think of Thurber's utterly disturbing story, "The Whippoorwill". Brrr.



The MCP says:

June 17, 2009 at 9:38 pm

>> May I suggest: Arizona Sweet Tea. Sure, it's not fresh brewed, >> but in terms of sweet tea, it's simply obscene.

It's also chock-full of high-fructose corn syrup. Which is a shame, 'cause I actually like a couple of their teas (I used to be particularly partial to their Green Tea with Honey), but I've sworn off HFCS



RJ says:

June 17, 2009 at 9:40 pm

COFFEE PRESS. Seriously. No moving parts. Put the kettle on the stove. Take a shower. Pour water from kettle into coffee press. Get dressed. Drink coffee.

Pick grounds off your tongue with every sip.



GardenStater says:

June 17, 2009 at 9:43 pm

@RJ: Yeah, kind of like smoking unfiltered cigarettes. You find yourself constantly spitting little bits of tobacco leaf off the tip of your tongue.



The MCP says:

June 17, 2009 at 9:56 pm

As for coffeemakers — my current model is a genuine Mr. Coffee “Classic Edition” model, which I enjoy for its thoroughly retro look; it has that lovely square-bodied design that’s simple and functional, without all those weirdly pseudo-artistic curves and arcs and rounded surfaces that’re so in vogue these days, and it’s done in plain brown plastic and (*sigh*) brushed aluminum rather than that gloss-black finish that everyone insists on using nowadays despite the fact that it collects fingerprints like it’s being paid to. At the same time, they’ve worked in all the expected “modern” features like an LCD clock (with analog “hands”, yet!) with automatic timer, auto-shutoff, selectable brewing cycles, and a permanent nylon filter basket with a charcoal water filter.

I don’t usually get all that worked up over simple appliances, but I’ve always thought that the designs and finishes of the ’70s, with all the woodgrain and brushed aluminum and yes, even the peculiar color choices, just plain had more personality and charm than the sterile white or black everything sports nowadays...



MNBubba says:

June 17, 2009 at 9:56 pm

(With apologies to Dorothy Parker) the two most beautiful words are unquestionably.... “Check enclosed”



jamcool says:

June 17, 2009 at 10:23 pm

Add another passing in music...Bob Bogle, co-founder of The Ventures (Walk Don't Run, Hawaii 5-0)



Ross says:

June 18, 2009 at 12:45 am

“Add another passing in music...Bob Bogle, co-founder of The Ventures ”

Jeez, I keep checking in just in time to hear about another cool type checking out!

“DroptmaStyx Says:

I'd love to know what the schtick was with Keely and Louie ... why did she look so PO'd?”

As noted above by others, that _was_ the schtick. It became a game for Prima and the band to try & crack her up on stage. I've seen one clip where she started to, and there are several examples to be heard on various live tracks.

As for creating the lounge scene in Vegas, too right: when Sinatra, Martin, etc. started becoming regulars in Vegas, they became a regular part of the last show crowd(3am start time, IIRC), especially Sinatra. When he began to form the idea of The Summit(which was the official name of what we usually call the Rat Pack Show), his basic idea, as expressed to others, was “Let’s do something like

Louie and Keely ourselves.”
 And, Dear Host, did you notice the several “can’t kill it with a stick”
 comments about Krups? I’m tellin’ ya...



Gabriel Hanna says:
 June 18, 2009 at 1:52 am

Pick grounds off your tongue with every sip.

I would offer a small wager that you didn’t clean your coffee press
 very often.



RJ says:
 June 18, 2009 at 9:33 am

*I would offer a small wager that you didn’t clean your coffee press
 very often.*

You would lose that wager. Happened first time and every time until
 I gave up. Don’t see how it could not happen, actually. Some of the
 grounds are fine enough to get past the seal or through the screen.



LindaL says:
 June 18, 2009 at 10:20 am

Seriously, Bunn coffee makers are the best. I’ve had 2 since I moved
 out of my parents’ home in 1994. The only reason the first coffee
 maker died was that my sister-in-law plugged it in in our new house
 (ten years ago) without adding water first.

Besides moist, I nominate “crotch” as a truly terrible word. The two
 together – vile.



Charles says:
 June 18, 2009 at 10:07 pm

Hi James; yeah the constant partisan bickering on the Net is
 tiresome. But as much as I like your site and what you’ve created
 over the years, sometimes you encourage it.
 You often make petty remarks that seem lifted straight from FOX
 News, or some triviality from Drudge. Don’t know why that’s
 necessary, but it’s your site.

That said, I’m someone who loves and admires what you’ve done. I
 so appreciate your nostalgia, wit and humor, your Institute, all the
 work you’ve put into this site, the fact you’re a Mac guy, your
 generosity in sharing what you love with such cleverness, humor,
 and élan. We might disagree politically, but I agree we should all get
 over this. We Americans weren’t always at each other’s throats,
 arguing. At least not before the Intertube Superhighway.

You’re aces with me, Mr. Lileks, even though you’ve vexed me in the
 past. Oh well, let’s go on, and look at cool pictures, poignant scenes
 from old Minneapolis, all the great things you deliver with style and
 humor. Thank you, James- I so appreciate what you do.

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THURSDAY, JUNE 18

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Everyone in the house has a cold, and I suppose it's my turn now. Yes, I usually take Zicam. Yes, I read the stories. Yes, I took some again. Barring a return to a state of nature where I begin my day by standing on a bluff and sniffing the wind for the scent of wounded prey, I can do without a sense of smell.

DO NOT advise me to use a Neti Pot. There's almost no situation I can imagine where I would use a Neti Pot, and not just because it's the sort of thing you can guarantee will show up on BoingBoing: "Incredibly Cool Steampunk Neti Pot." I do not want to stick a horn in my nose and dribble fluid out the other nostril. It will not happen.

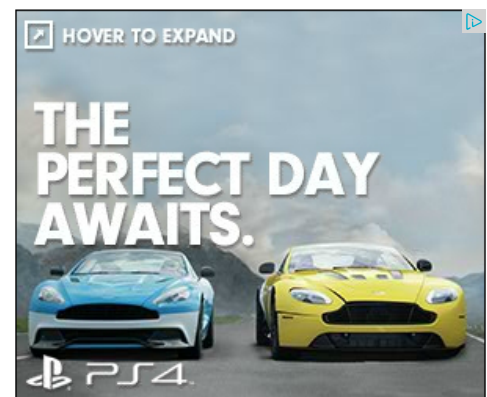
A light day, but nevertheless crammed with Exciting Things to Do. Number one: fix the internet, or "internets" as it, or they, are called. (Comedic pluralization FTW!) (Okay, enough irritating intertube mannerisms.) (Sorry, that should have been innarwebs mannerisms. FIFY.) Longtime patrons know I have struggled with the connection for a while, going through 3 ISPs, two routers, two modems, one inspection from a COVAD comedy team, endless "trouble tickets," and the rest. Things have been going well; switched to Qwest (Motto: "we own the damned lines everyone else rents, so what are you paying them for?") and had no problems. Until last week. Pages, they not load so well. Everything stalls out. hitting reload solves the problem 50% of the time.

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

Despair. But! Could it be on my end, instead of my long-standing belief that I'm just at the end of the loop and the lines are oversubscribed? Have I done anything different? Well, I put in a new hard drive. Yes! Of course! That's it! New drive cooties! Well, no, but dragging the enormous computer from its cubby means pulling a mass of cables that looks like you threw a grappling hook in the Sargasso Sea and trolled around for an hour. (Since it's a Mac, though, all the cables are white, so it looks nice.) It's possible the DSL phone cord isn't happy. I replaced it with another cord – also white, left over from the Apple router.

Everything works perfectly now.

So the problem was the color of the cord. After all these years, *it was the color of the fargin' cord.*

Aside from that, not much of interest to report. The waterfall has been running 8 + hours a day without breaking. The sun came, the sun went; the sun didn't seem interested in us at all, really. Read the wires, and had a brief spasm of dismay when I read that Eddie Bauer had declared bankruptcy. It's one of my favorite stores – partly for the 90%-off sales they have at the end of the season, but also for the durability of their goods. I could hose down my Eddie Bauer shirts with Ronson fluid and throw them in the firepit and they would spring out, shake themselves off, and hop on a hangar. I have several bags as well – computer totes, camera bags, Actual Adult Leather Work-Items Briefcases, and these things cannot be ruined by simple daily use.

They'll still be around – sounds like the usual reorganization of debts, facilitated by graveyard whistling about the soon-to-recover economy, coupled with firm faith in the company's Brand. Not to scoff: I like the brand. They've done a smart job of capitalizing on a retro resonance without driving it into the ground or turning it into empty graphics, like Fossil. I can't think of a mass-market clothier who's made fewer mistakes, really – they filled the niche with skill, and made a perfect appeal to the middle-aged boomer demographic.

GAP could collapse, and on one level I wouldn't care; they squandered their 90s vibe with year after year of dull lines trotted out with complacent pretension.

Anyway. I'm on a sort-of light vacation here – still doing the columns and NewsBreak on Friday, including a Thursday pre-shoot . . . so not much of a vacation at all, now that I think about it. Hope to get the First Day Covers up later today. A big Sunday Lance Lawson is ready to roll over at buzz.mn - that was 45 minutes of scanning and retouching this morn. Enjoy! See you later today.



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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Pass it along, if you wish



48 RESPONSES TO *thursday, june 18*



Ross says:
June 18, 2009 at 2:13 am

“A big Sunday Lance Lawson is ready to roll ...”
Ready to roll, she is not. HERE is merely capital letters. No doubt all will be well by the time I check in tonight. It pains me to think of you fighting with that beat up, old strip for hours, only to have the far end of the process fail you.
But, take heart! You could be me: as loathsome as the idea of using the neti pot is (to me as much as you), imagine having to answer their toll-free line. Yep.



GardenStater says:
June 18, 2009 at 5:07 am

Lance Lawson would never have used a Neti pot, either. He preferred the Tiny Pot.



KCSteve says:
June 18, 2009 at 5:16 am

ZiCam comes in a multitude of forms – it may be as protean as Captialism.

In our household we prefer the melts (me) or chews (the ever-indulgent wife), neither of which will affect your sense of smell and both of which work better for us than the nasal versions.



Cat Calloway says:
June 18, 2009 at 5:19 am

I hate to tell James but when he replaced the phone line on his DSL router, he reset his connection which was more likely the problem.

When I owned a DSL line I had to reset the connection on a regular basis or else I would hav the same problem he describes.



E says:
June 18, 2009 at 5:50 am

James, James.... one call to your local cable company and your internet and phone woes will be in the past. One cable. TV. phone. computer. I know troubleshooting your internet/phone/tv hookup provides an enjoyable past time, but it is time for this to end.



Moishe3rd says:
June 18, 2009 at 6:33 am

Neti pot works. Makes sense it should work. And, take into account that my 23 year old daughter had the exact same reaction when she called her daddy to ask how to solve her cold – “Ewwww... That’s gross!”
C’mon James. Man up! Try it, you might... like it?



Michael Rittenhouse says:
June 18, 2009 at 6:46 am

Agreed: Teapots don’t belong in nostrils.

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HOST WITH THE MOST

I have enough work convincing my three-year-old of what doesn't belong there, and I have no plans to regress in that area.



swschrads says:

June 18, 2009 at 7:01 am

James, honestly... it's a Mac. Stacey and Clinton will stand on either side of Steve Jobs and berate you if you don't use a white cord, it's gauche. it's so 70s to use a computer cord that isn't white.

yeah, sure, it could have been a bad connection at the RJ11 jack in the other cord.

we all know it was a MacFit because the machine had a white outfit, white accessories... and a freakin' GREY butt-ugly cord sitting there like a trash stamp on the forehead.

no wonder it didn't want to come out and mingle.



Tom says:

June 18, 2009 at 7:29 am

Without a sense of smell your sense of taste is crippled, too.



Nancy says:

June 18, 2009 at 7:31 am

Still hoping for a view of the Oak Island Water Feature. Unless that would jinx it.



Chaka says:

June 18, 2009 at 7:34 am

I'm not familiar with the Neti Pot, but my wife had a cold every other week until she started doing saline rinses. Salt water in a squeeze bottle, up one nostril and down the other. She swears by it—hasn't had a cold in months. I've given it a try; it's not unpleasant.



Kevin says:

June 18, 2009 at 7:47 am

I too felt that pang of potential loss at the Eddie Bauer bankruptcy notice. Love their stuff for it's simplicity and ruggedness. Bought my all time favorite hat there. Had a roundness to it, unlike most baseball type hats, it did not have the freakishly large forehead accentuator that most do and no button at the pinnacle. Sadly, I wore it too many times doing yard work, and the accumulated dirt and sweat destroyed it. As for the inner-tubes issues you've had. I have cable TV, DSL, and a cell phone. I'm all for redundancy. One cable? Putting all your services in one basket just seems like a really bad idea to me.....



Matt says:

June 18, 2009 at 8:03 am

Eddie Bauer stuff does last forever. I worked at Eddie Bauer for a two week period of time when I was in college in 1995. (Let's just say the job didn't meet my expectations). Using my employee discount, I purchased, among other things, a couple of long-sleeve t-shirts, a short-sleeve t-shirt, and a heavy winter coat – all of which

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are still in regular use to this day. The short sleeve tee is not long for this world, but everything else has years of life left.



steve h says:

June 18, 2009 at 8:05 am

I've been surprised too when a cable change fixed my networking problems. Apparently cat5 cables that worked for years, and have never been removed, or even *moved* at all, can go bad! A bit hard to believe if you haven't seen it yourself...



Scott says:

June 18, 2009 at 8:05 am

"...I can do without a sense of smell." WHAT? This from the man that makes sure that you have the proper seasonal candle aroma from B&BW wafting through the house at all times? Surely you jest. And surely you didn't think no one would call you on that.



Uncle Joe says:

June 18, 2009 at 8:13 am

A Neti pot is just too lo-tech. You need a nasal irrigator tip hooked up to a Water-Pik to pressure wash those sinuses.



rodander says:

June 18, 2009 at 8:49 am

Pournelle's Law: First, check your connectors.



Rob says:

June 18, 2009 at 8:53 am

Uh, that's correct, James, but remember: when Labor Day rolls around you MUST switch back to a non-white cable. Otherwise Miss Manners will be forced to degrade your connection once again.



Jeff says:

June 18, 2009 at 9:02 am

With electronics, color is everything! Just yesterday I started down the electrical fittings aisle in Home Depot just in time to hear a woman ask the clerk, "Do you have any grey conduit that's another color?"

The wave of the future: chameleon conduit that changes color to suit the signal passing through it. Or as my co-engineers would probably dub it, "Signal aware chromatic adaptation".

(Seriously for a moment, color does matter once in a while: a red ethernet cable with yellow boots is a "crossover", and will connect one computer directly to another without needing a hub or switch in between. Standard cables are wired "straight through".)



PatchtheBun says:

June 18, 2009 at 9:12 am

Eddie bauer is way overpriced. We never buy anything full price because we know that if we wait a couple weeks it'll be in the

clearance section for at least 50% off. Its the same as Ann Taylor Loft. I never see people browsing in the main part of the store in either of these places, they're all digging through the clearance racks.



Brian says:

June 18, 2009 at 9:27 am

Good call on Eddie Bauer, JL. Never paid much attention to it since I am far, far, far too young and hip and with it to like Boomer stuff. The clothes are actually cool. I was expecting a lamer version of LL Bean. 50% off is nice as well.



GardenStater says:

June 18, 2009 at 10:13 am

Well, let's hope that Apple doesn't start designing automotive parts. I can see it now:

"OK, it's red for positive, black for negative--or is it the other way around?"

"Waitaminnit--both of these cables are white!"

"Oh, well, I guess it doesn't make any difference, then."

"ZZZZZAAAAPPPPP!!!!!!!"



Kev says:

June 18, 2009 at 10:35 am

GAP could collapse, and on one level I wouldn't care; they squandered their 90s vibe with year after year of dull lines trotted out with complacent pretension.

I haven't been in a GAP or Banana Republic in years, but I'd miss Old Navy if the company went away. They're one of the few places whose jeans fit me properly (it's not like I'm disproportioned or anything, but some brands just don't work for me), and I like the flag T-shirts that come out for the Fourth. I started my personal tradition ten years ago, when I was in Switzerland for the Montreux festival, and spent the Fourth atop the mountain Rochers-de-Naye, wearing my flag shirt.

(The school kids whom I taught asked some funny questions about that trip when I was explaining why I'd be away for over a week. When I mentioned that it would be the first time I wasn't in the USA for the Fourth, several of them asked "Do they have the Fourth of July in Switzerland?" I had to explain that, while the calendar didn't skip to July 5 or anything, it was just another day over there. I also had a lot of kids ask me if I was going to have to "learn to speak Swedish." Heh.)



Spud says:

June 18, 2009 at 10:46 am

If you want to feel "vacation-y", then take (G)Nat to one of them thar water parks - go to the Wisconsin Dells if you have to. It could make for an interesting Bleat or two, as you report on the great swath of Midwest humanity hurtling down the slick tubes. Kids love the waterparks.

**Brian Greenberg** says:

June 18, 2009 at 11:26 am

Ah, James – white cables, grey cables, black cables – we’re all golden-brown copper underneath. Another step toward racial harmony (hey – you know what else you never see on Star Trek? Cables! What’s connecting up all of those computers? How come no one’s ever all, “We can’t go to warp, Captain! The cable that connects the warp core to the main computer is tangled with the food replicator! We’re working on the knot right now!” Must have solved that problem when they did away with bathrooms...)

Anyway, I’m with Cat Calloway up there. My parents’ DSL modem stopped working, and Verizon wound up sending them three new modems (long story...) until I realized that they never tried recycling the damn thing to pick up a new IP address...

**Kevin** says:

June 18, 2009 at 12:04 pm

as for Zicam...I used the up-the-nose stuff a few years back, and while it may have shortened my cold, I could taste that crap for days after using it. I have noticed my sense of smell is not what it was, but I chalked that up to *ahem* attaining a certain age, and my love affair with an evening stogie. now I find I may have an actionable claim! sign me up! sounds better than the mesothelioma option.....

**juanito - John Davey** says:

June 18, 2009 at 12:11 pm

Try dealing with DSL in over twenty locations. The bane of my existence is the DSL support call and the script readers. I feel like I know the scripts better than they do.

“It may be a line problem”. Blah. “I’ll have to create a ticket request for the Line Department”.

Cayman routers are teh suq!

Curse your black heart AT&T.

**Patrick** says:

June 18, 2009 at 12:15 pm

I hate nasal sprays. What’s the point of shooting them up your nose, trying to snort it further into your nasal cavities (and quite possibly into your brain, which might explain a few things), when said inhaling frequencies (Hah! Bit of a Star Trek joke) are down? I prefer decongestants in the form of pills. I remember as a kid my parents always gave me Sudafed. I insisted it never worked, that it was like taking a couple of red M&Ms. Probably would have worked just as well. Two things that have worked for me are DayQuil in the liqui-tab form, and Mucinex, in basic horsepill form. The latter seems to act faster, and last longer.

**GardenStater** says:

June 18, 2009 at 12:33 pm

I just use a healthy dose of Chinese mustard—that clears my sinuses in no time!

**LeftyRodriguez** says:

June 18, 2009 at 12:34 pm

Hahaha...nice Boing Boing/steampunk reference. I used to follow BB daily until I realized that almost every post had something to do with either steampunk crap or Cory Doctorow promoting his latest book. (Go search the site for "Little Brother Cory" and be amazed at how many pages of results you get!)

**Bizarcane** says:

June 18, 2009 at 12:52 pm

"Incredibly Cool Steampunk Neti Pot"!!

That's right up there with Amazing 3D Chalk Drawing Ear Candles.

**Trogdor** says:

June 18, 2009 at 12:55 pm

I mean, I knew that the Sargasso Sea was full of weeds, but how in the world does James pull it out of his firmament on such short notice? Amazing. Or what seems like short notice to me, maybe he spends days on these daily Bleats?

**Trogdor** says:

June 18, 2009 at 1:03 pm

I always was suspicious of those tan (re: 1960s Crayola Color – flesh) cords. Ugly, is the only word that comes to mind. White and black, that's all they should ever be, together in harmoneeey

**Michael Rittenhouse** says:

June 18, 2009 at 1:25 pm

My friend's parents showed him, as a boy, how to order his own clothes from Eddie Bauer. He thought that was a privilege.

Only later did they reveal it was their way of getting him to dress in such a way that drug dealers would avoid him.

**Teresa** says:

June 18, 2009 at 1:39 pm

In a world where people color coordinate their fly swatters and floor mops to go with their decor when the maids use them, I'm not at all surprised that an uncoordinated connection cable was giving you trouble.

I saw Rob's reminder about white after Labor Day... I think you should look into some color coordinated cables for winter. Now would be the time to get them, because you know after the Fourth of July all of the prices will go up when winter items take over the stores.

**Matt D** says:

June 18, 2009 at 1:43 pm

"Neti pot" sounds corny, and if you can imagine one steampunked out on Boing Boing, well, that's the end of that, I agree.

The modern version is the plastic Sinus Rinse thingy that seems less hippie because it's made of space age plastic, and the science behind it is actually pretty strong. And the plastic device lends itself to the term preferred by disdainful spouses: "the nose douche."



Grebmar says:

June 18, 2009 at 5:07 pm

White cords, black cords, matters not to me, it does. What is pleasing to me is the cord for my MacBook is highly flexible and acts like a rope, not a wire. I don't have to force it like a wire into a coil. Why can't all extension cords be made that way? And the magnetic charger thing is good design.



swschrads says:

June 18, 2009 at 5:36 pm

grey, brown, black, and navy cords are neutrals... they won't put any spin on your raw data.

green cords can't be used around any red/yellow cords, causes a flamewar.

blue cords are too downheartened to work with 100 Mb or faster ethernet.

white cords Just Work™.



ss says:

June 18, 2009 at 6:04 pm

On recommendation from my swammi or whatever, I recently got and used a Neti pot for colds and seasonal allergies. While I found it amusing and mildly pleasant to hose salt-water through my head, it seemed to have no effect other than to leave residual salt-water in my head. See, I desired to free snot-blockage by flow of water, but flow of water was impeded by sturdier-than-water snot-blockage. Now I had snot and salt-water in my head. I decided this was not a vast improvement over my original salt-water-free-head condition.



lanczos says:

June 18, 2009 at 6:04 pm

JAMES:

It's all about PAYMENT. The OneOfTheNet was not amenable to function until you had made the requisite PAYMENT: Equipment\$\$\$ + YourTime(\$/Hr).

As the I Ching says:

"Perseverance Furthers."



NeeNee says:

June 18, 2009 at 8:31 pm

No Internet connection, no DSL for 24 hours. Computer repairman took every filter off every phone hookup and diagnosed non-working router. Recommended calling Frontier (phone company).

Repairman here, repeated diagnosis to him and he said, "I'll be right back." Leaves in his van. Hour later we get a phone call. "You know, it was on our end, here at the office. Your port was no good. But we fixed it." So I gather there will be a bill from the computer guy,

probably not from the phone company. Oh, but the phone co. trouble shooter did ask if I wanted to buy inside line insurance: \$25 first time charge, \$3.99 per month ever after.

IMO, we are spending a LOT of our disposable income on technology in various forms.



swschrads says:

June 18, 2009 at 10:12 pm

if the DSL suddenly dies, frankly, there's good reason to suspect it's on the phoners' end.

if it's creepy for quite a while, best to chase things locally first... but I always start by getting into the DSL modem/router and seeing what it's got. crudload of errors, double check that everything that isn't a DSL modem has a filter on it. everything... water meter box, satellite/cable box, all of it.

try another cable if there are no nasty line error numbers. I've always thought, back through the days of 9600 baud lines, that 20 to 40 errors a day is nothing to worry about if service is good. it's high, but it's doable.

beyond that, it's the provider's issue most of the time. get to tier 2 or tier 3 support and work with 'em, by then there are no scripts left and they actually get to the equipment.

I say again, if you get "call-a me Bob," ask for a transfer Stateside. the overseas folks don't have the resources to really chase an issue. they're screeners using scripts.



juanito - John Davey says:

June 18, 2009 at 10:43 pm

AND like clockwork, customer calls me today at 2:30PM with, you guessed it, DSL trouble. Went through *my script*: Reset the Modem (yes a flippin' Cayman with AT&T), check the status on the linux firewall, call AT&T. AT&T does tests for 90 minutes, and calls back with "Has to be a line problem after the MPOE, 'cause it isn't on their side. They insist that they need to send an inside wire tech (at the customer's expense).

I *guarantee* that barring any work that might have been done by another tenant inside the MPOE, that it will be an AT&T line problem, central office problem, or a bad Cayman modem. Because my wiring vendor is just that good. And the firewall I built tests fine.



Irritable Bear says:

June 19, 2009 at 12:03 am

Suddenly, Irritable Bear is happy to live in the woods. Honey. Charmin. High Speed Cable Modem. (Oops.)



Trogdor says:

June 19, 2009 at 9:50 am

Love my high speed Cable access (Comcraptic). Last time I tested it I was getting 20 Mbs, that's 10-20 times faster than DSL.



juanito - John Davey says:

June 19, 2009 at 2:05 pm

Closing the ticket on the DSL issue at Customer site in Santa Rosa:

Craptastic Cayman modem was at fault.

And now my credentials as a soothsayer are firmly established.



Bill says:

June 24, 2009 at 7:35 am

It's not that the Air's charger really "freaks out" the laptop battery so much as it doesn't provide enough power for you to use your laptop AND charge the battery at the same time.

I do not know but suspect if you left the charger attached to the other laptop while closed, the battery would have charged, albeit slower than usual.

That having been said, it's always best to use the proper output charger on the proper machine to avoid situations like the one you mention.

Oh, and yes, if the battery's power drops low enough, it CAN lose its mind as can the PMU, but it's not usually unrecoverable.



Bill says:

June 24, 2009 at 7:35 am

Crud, wrong day. 😊

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Thursday, June 18

First Day Covers: this week's batch

FRIDAY! FRIDAY! JUNE 19

on JUNE 19, 2009 · 70 COMMENTS · in [COMPUTERS](#), [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

Still on semi-sorta vacation. Not sick; zinc uber alles. Nose still operating at 95% on the Durante scale, so Zicam hasn't obliterated my schnozz yet. My father lost his sense of smell many decades ago – either from a blow on the head or constant exposure to petroleum fumes, I'm not clear. It didn't affect his appetite, though – apparently enough remnant cells were left to enjoy Salt and Pepper, which is really all a man needs. Everything else is lace and pretense.

Just kidding, of course, but I've never put tremendous stock in the sense of smell. Today on the way into the office, though, I was struck by a combination of inputs – a cloudy day; warm; humid; the sense of summer comfortably enthroned; cigarettes. Something about the blue tang of the nails and the cast of the sky brought up a file from college, and it triggered a cascade of vague recollections that vanished as soon as I tried to identify them. I was remembering a day that had been remembered for no reason. It's all Debussy and Monet in the end, I suppose.

It's odd what you do remember, though. Once or twice a year I walk around Dinkytown by the U, and I pass a bridge on which someone wrote in the early 80s "Reagan is a vegetable." At the time we knew what it meant: a response to the classification of ketchup as a vegetable, something that just said EVERYTHING about EVERYTHING to us at the time. The remark resisted rain and snow, and perhaps remained long enough to inform students who had no idea of the original objection. The number of details you recall sometimes

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

just makes you angry you don't recall them all, though, and the idea that everything is locked up in that grey water-soaked potato behind your eyes makes you wish there as some disk utility you could run to remember it all. Maybe the files have extensions your current OS doesn't recognize, like .chld.

I remember things about my dad my dad doesn't remember. One morning he sat at the breakfast table, faced his usual bowl of Corn Flakes, and informed us he had dreamed he'd sprouted a horn of corn on his forehead. It was the only time he ever mentioned a dream. I've no doubt the dream is still somewhere in his head, archived, forgotten.

For that matter, the use of the term "Potato" for one's brain comes from a poetry teacher I had in college, an Englishman who was utterly loathed by a rival poet of early middle-aged vintage who frequented the same coffee house where I wrote daily. We had a difficult relationship, mostly because he was a strenuously unpleasant man most of the time, but he had a gruff acerbic uncompromising style that impressed me. He was poor! He lived for poetry! He put out a magazine that published once every four or five years! He hated my teacher, seized on the "Grey Potato" line for the brain, snorted that the jacket photo of his book showed him twiddling his thumbs. Hack!

He was hard on my work, but handed out praise when he thought it was due, and I had an odd admiration for him – right up until the moment when I sold my first book, had some measure of success as a published writer, and he threatened to punch me in the head because I said the wrong thing during one of his epic, gonging hangovers. Never spoke again. Wonder if he's still around. Googling . . .

OMG.

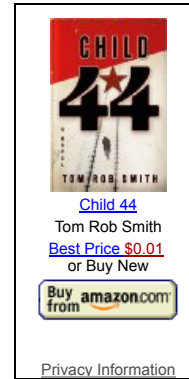
Local guy with same name convicted of using the internet to entice a 14 year old girl to come to town for sex. Age is right. Same fellow? The court case says he gave her *a book of his published poems*. Fifty-four months in the slammer.

Wow.

Random stuff:

Watching "Taken," a Spielberg-produced show about alien abduction. It's a long mini-series, ran on the Sci-fi channel, and covers some very well-trod terrain; I can't imagine anyone sat up in their chair when someone says "we're going to do a show about a conspiracy to hide the existence of aliens, and Roswell is involved, and there's implantations and a bad government guy who smokes," but I'm glad they did. In terms of period detail, it's the "Crime Story" version of "X-Files." Almost nothing about it surprises me. It has a teeth-grindingly annoying voiceover by Dakota Fanning, intoning the Wisdom of a Child to get us in and out of scenes. I really like it. Available on Netflix.

[The theme is interesting](#) – it's ersatz John Williams, which serves as a reassurance to the viewer that this is a Spielberg gig. It manages to capture



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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THE DISTANT PAST

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something ineffable in William's 70s-80s work – I'm probably overreaching like crrrazy, but it's a sense of wonder, decency, and mysery, wrapped in something reassuring. It's going to be okay. If John Williams is scoring this, things will work out.

How did I live without this before? It's called [Evernote](#), and it's . . . I'm not sure. It's a bin for clips that lives up in the cloud, and can be accessed on any computer, either in a browser or a separate program. I'm always moving things between machines and the phone, and while I've used remote disks for this purpose, it's never been a particularly elegant solution. (That's one of the words you have to use in a positive review of software: elegant. The other is Robust.) I like the fact that it has absolutely no social-media integration whatsoever, because I'm getting a little tired of reading that this new can opener integrates with Facebook, somehow.

I'm still waiting for someone to invent anti-social media, like some form of Twitter where everyone blocks everyone else.

I'm also waiting for someone to tell me that I don't need to have all my notes and clippings synced, and that I should also invest in whalebone corset stays.

Speaking of whalebone-style old-think: I was at the video store today, because I needed something Netflix didn't have, and was behind a woman who had \$30 in late fees. The clerk asked her if she wanted to take care of them now; she did not. He said, not unreasonably, that she had to make a token down payment before they'd let her leave with \$120 of merchandise, so she paid down ten dollars. Then gave him a hundred dollar bill for the \$20 total. The clerk said he couldn't break a hundred at the moment, so she said she'd go elsewhere, buy a cup of coffee, then come back. The next customer in line was a kid renting a video game, and he sauntered up with slouchy cool, snickering at the lady.

The clerk explained that "DISPLAY BOX ONLY" meant there was no game inside. He shrunk a little and went back to get another.

My turn. Went well. When I left I considered posting a tweet, but I knew I'd get someone saying "What's a video store?" I understand the joke, but it's like the comments you get when you talk about writing a check. What's a check? It's a thing that came from a world that preceded the moment in which you happen to live; you might want to take a look into that big storehouse we call THE PAST, because it's full of interesting, useful items.

I'll be working this weekend on a new site devoted to the 1930s – no general theme, just stuff I have. I will also be at the Back to the 50s car show, doing some radio on the Mitch Berg / Ed Morrissey joint; I do not expect to find this car present. It's a grim day when the second item you mention in the list of features is "Auxiliary audio input jack." I want tailfins. Why can't I have tailfins? Or turquoise? I've said this for years: bring back the '57 BelAir and they'd sell ten million in a month.

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Later today: First Day Covers, and "100 Mysteries" later. [Startribune.com](#) column up, as well as Lance Lawson at [buzz.mn](#). See you soon.

Pass it along, if you wish



70 RESPONSES TO *friday! friday! june 19*



AnnaN says:
June 19, 2009 at 11:22 am

@bgbear re: "James N.'s appealed was based on the idea that he knew it was not a real teenager, which seems like a good defense to me and why I don't understand why this police tactic works."

Well, he actually didn't KNOW, he just had an inkling on the basis of the police officer's writings.



GardenStater says:
June 19, 2009 at 11:29 am

HT: Get thee behind me, Satan! I just looked at grandwagoneer.com, and now I'm lusting for a GW!

As you say, though—that's a lottery fantasy. And I've got a ticket for tonight's drawing in my pocket. You never know....



Everyman says:
June 19, 2009 at 11:31 am

I used to go parking – not that you young people would know what that was – in just such a car.

Worked fine for the purpose.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:

June 19, 2009 at 11:32 am

@AnnaN

True, that is probably why his appeal went nowhere.

My point is that this is a crime fighting technique that is dependent on the criminal being dumber than the cops or the criminal believing he is smarter than the cops. Thank goodness that is the case with most criminals.

**GardenStater** says:

June 19, 2009 at 12:08 pm

@Everyman: Good point re: parking. Maybe I should wait until after my (now) 13- and 15-year old boys are out of the house to buy that Wagoneer....

Of course, when I was a young man, I managed to "park" in a 1970 Karmann Ghia, which goes to show you what a powerful flood of male teenage hormones can do for your determination and ingenuity!

**Drew** says:

June 19, 2009 at 12:53 pm

When my five year old was still an enfante, I remember waking up for those 3am feedings and trying to watch "Taken" with a kid in my lap . . . so my memories are a haze. But I remember not thinking much of it. Even though I still have the tapes.

**Jon** says:

June 19, 2009 at 2:51 pm

I know you're busy with myriad other stuff, but Fridays are Diner days for me, and I'll be going through past June Diner podcasts on my MP3 player when my time is my own, and I hope you'll grace us with another one some time.

On another topic, I noticed that you put up a green version of your Mr. Speedy icon in Twitter, no doubt in solidarity with the people in Iran, getting Richarded around with yet again with popular elections by the oppressive regime that rules over the elected officials, religious despots that can never be politely removed. I'd love to know your thoughts about switching to the green icon, and the obvious follow-up question would be your reasoning in now reverting back. Has the moment passed? Was it a problem that Mousavi was no Lech Walesa?

**Warren** says:

June 19, 2009 at 3:30 pm

I'll be working this weekend on a new site devoted to the 1930s

What's the 1930s?

(Had to. Had to.)

**Headless Unicorn Guy** says:

June 19, 2009 at 3:42 pm

I remember things about my dad my dad doesn't remember. One morning he sat at the breakfast table, faced his usual bowl of Corn Flakes, and informed us he had dreamed he'd sprouted a horn of corn on his forehead.

Is that why they call them UniCORNs instead of UniHorns?

What's the 1930s? — Warren

Check out a book called *1939: The Lost World of the Fair* by David Gelertner. (Written while he was recovering from one of the Unabomber's little surprise packages.)

**SeanF** says:

June 19, 2009 at 4:05 pm

@bgbear re: "James N.'s appealed was based on the idea that he knew it was not a real teenager..."

So – he knew it was a non-teenager pretending to be a teenager, but didn't realize it was probably a sting? Even if that's true, he needs to go to jail anyway just for being an idiot.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:

June 19, 2009 at 4:47 pm

@SeanF re: *So – he knew it was a non-teenager pretending to be a teenager, but didn't realize it was probably a sting? Even if that's true, he needs to go to jail anyway just for being an idiot.*

So true. I think it does start out as fantasy and they know it is fantasy but, for some unknown reason, they hold out a small bit of hope that it is real and make a real "date." It was honest fantasy, there would be no real rendezvous point given. But alas, another mouse goes for the promise of cheese.

SNAP

:p

**KBoom** says:

June 19, 2009 at 6:00 pm

My old boss used fancy words all the time, including "robust." I always played stupid and asked him what them big-ole words meant and he'd give me some definition from outer space. It was my main source of entertainment at that job.

**Rev. Dr. E. Joe Buzz Biden-Miller, PhD, DO, MD** says:

June 20, 2009 at 8:37 am

RE: memory...

I have been thinking that the reason why we have poor memory, or get alzheimer's for that matter, is so that we do not remember, or know, the beginning of life, and the end of it...

Nature gave us protection against knowing those two things.

Just a thought I had, if we can't remember anything, then we don't

have consciousness.



Les Mommsen says:
June 20, 2009 at 12:29 pm

I'm surprised all you sharp followers of our host failed to point out that a new 1957 styled car is impossible due to Gubment over-regulation passed long before Obama and his 'Czars'. Cars have to be shaped so as to not kill the hapless pedestrian who happens to wander in the space we usually reserve for driving our cars. That's why all the sloping hoods, plastic bumpers and soft, round-ness. Regulation and unimaginative, beaten-down stylists are what makes cars all look the same. Then there is the Pontiac Aztec.....



Bi-Coloured-Python-Rock-Snake says:
June 20, 2009 at 12:41 pm

@Michael Rittenhouse Re: "Let's start a new Renaissance Faire for people with a heightened enthusiasm for the mid-20th century U.S."

I'm totally in. I mean, you've got RenFaire, SCA, [Steampunk](#), [Oilpunk](#)... what would mid-20th century be? Electropunk? Atompunk? {googling...} Yep, electropunk's a music genre, but Gizmodo gives us Atompunk as the name for enthusiasm toward the "cultural period (mostly of the United States) of between 1945 to 1965".



HelloBall says:
June 20, 2009 at 1:41 pm

At last my two years of college Latin pays off: the "corn" part of unicorn is from cornus, (horn). Now that I've mentioned it, it makes just as much sense in English to use unihorn. Now back to planning my vacacione to Nee-ca-rrrra-hwa.



Shaky Barnes says:
June 20, 2009 at 1:47 pm

Yep Evernote is awesome. The combination of Evernote and Microsoft Live Mesh has changed my life. In a minor way. But changed nonetheless. Work, home, at the coffee shop with my netbook, three separate computers in three different places, no matter. I have my various active files and tasklists and saved clips and whatnot with me.



Tom Beiter says:
June 22, 2009 at 1:51 pm

>I've said this for years: bring back the '57 BelAir and they'd sell ten million in a >month.

I've also said the same thing for years. Sales of the retro Thunderbird and PT Cruiser bear that theory out.

I've also said for years they need to sell "Classic Crackerjack" featuring reproductions of the toys found in Cracker Jack from the 20's and 30's instead of the paper crap they include these days. Charge a little more. Hell, charge a lot more. They'd still move like hot cakes!

**Ross says:**

June 24, 2009 at 2:32 am

HelloBall Says:

“At last my two years of college Latin pays off: the “corn” part of unicorn is from cornus, (horn). Now that I’ve mentioned it, it makes just as much sense in English to use unihorn.”

Well, no—you’d have to say “one-horn”(if you’re going to translate one element, you’d do both—as in the German “Einhorn”).

Jeez, now all I can think of SCTV’s hysterical “Firing Line” lampoon, with Joe Flaherty’s Wm. F. Buckley, Jr. just shredding the spirit of Dave Thomas’ faux-intellectual rock guitarist over his attempt to stump Buckley with “cornus cornu”.

Makes me snicker just describing it...

**D T Nelson says:**

June 29, 2009 at 1:09 pm

(Just got back from a trip to the mysterious East [Illinois and Indiana] and am catching up on the Bleat, so I may be the last comment here.)

Gee, I’m sorry — I didn’t know you didn’t know about Evernote, or I’d’ve told you about it long ago. I type my grocery list into it on my computer and the list is magically on my iPhone when I get to the store. Any web page that says “Print this receipt” gets the “Save PDF to Evernote” Print option. Train tickets, scans of my mileage club cards, it’s all in there. (I have yet to get a bar code scanner to read a bar code off the screen of my iPhone, but I keep trying.)

Tying together my trip to the east with old cars with things you may or may not know about, I just went to the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Museum in Auburn, Indiana, and I think you would like it, James. Lots of beautiful cars from the 20s and 30s. It took me five or six hours to get through it, but about one hour of that was spent standing in front of a 1929 Auburn Boattail Speedster and getting verklempt. (Gordon Buerig’s 1935 restyle of the Speedster is very beautiful, and is the iconic Auburn — the museum has one of those, too — but the original Al Leamy design does it for me.)

And I’ll throw in here that every person in the Midwest (at least) should take two days and visit to the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan.

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MONDAY, JUNE 22

on JUNE 22, 2009 · [37 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#), [RETRO DELIGHTS](#)

Typical phone call to dad on Father's Day: he'd been riding the Harley. Took a 150-mile spin on his birthday last week. It's a nice bike; I remember how we all gave him Harley gear three years ago on his birthday after he bought it. Yes, we indulged him, but that was the big 8-0. At 83 when your Dad says he's going to hit the highway for the rest of the day, you give him a Vaya Con Dios for his birthday, because the man obviously has everything else he needs.

Anything else going on? Well, the heart thing worked out, so they don't have to open him up. Also, his hand was bandaged. Why?

"A fish bit it."

This required additional details, as you might imagine. Every year he flies up to a remote island with some cronies, and they fish. (I believe he used to fly the plane himself in the past, since that's one of the things he did. Fly.) This year he brought in a 12-pound northern, but dropped the pliers when he was trying to take out the hook. Tried to get the hook out with his fingers. The fish came back to life and sunk its teeth into his finger. "It's like a nail going through it," he said, and he comes from the era when people had regular experience with such things; you knew guys named Stumpy who'd nod sagely when someone said "felt like my foot was caught in an augur." Stumpy knew the guy had no idea what that really felt like, but you didn't contradict a man describing the sensation of stepping on a bear trap.

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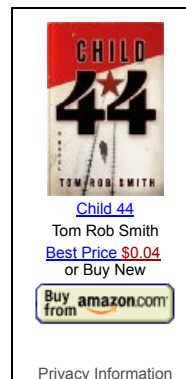


A BOOK I RECOMMEND

He threw the fish back. It's the law, but I can't help but wonder if he did it with both hands, slam-dunk style.

What a guy.

Here at home: For Father's Day we did ordinary things, which is just how I like it. We don't need any bonding time, or Cats-in-the-cradle-style cram sessions.



First exciting step: We went to Best Buy to exchange the coffee pot; to my amazement, I had the receipt and the proof of the replacement policy from two years ago. The unit isn't made anymore – from what I gather by reading various reviews, the designer was hung by his thumbs, smeared with honey and consumed by wolverines a year or so ago – so I got something that looked as good. Twenty dollars left over: bought kid the Sims2, which she's been dropping hints about for some time. It's so detailed! (Her experience after a few hours: a bunch of adults standing around in their underwear, too stupid to cook, and unable to buy a fridge even though they have enough money. They keep ordering pizza, and Mom greets the delivery person in her underwear. Voted the family most likely to appear on COPS.)

We looked at birds at the pet store, petted the kitties, then went to Sonic for a slush. Or a slushee. (Which suggests the person who makes it is the slusher.) Target, where we killed a lot of time. It a moment of unspeakable cruelty, I pointed out that the school supplies would be taking the place of the summer stuff after the Fourth. "That's mean of them," she said, and I couldn't agree more. In the cereal aisle she promised to eat nine boxes of Corn Flakes if it meant I would get a Star Trek T-shirt, and I said that was sweet, and – hold on, a red shirt? Is this some plot to get your inheritance? Whereupon I had to explain about Red Shirts.

Every so often my iPhone would jingle to announce new tweets, and so many were about the young woman shot dead in Iran. In America you get to walk around with your daughter and enjoy your vast and unnumbered freedoms. On the sidewalks of Tehran a man from the government drives by and kills her. Apparently it had no motivation, but you can guess: you marinate in misogyny all your life, you get rewarded by the twisted men whose desiccated hearts have been bowing in thrall to this tripe all their lives, and shooting a girl who has the gall to stand in the sun is the least you can do.

It struck me while watching one of the many videos from Tehran: yes, they do have enough lamp posts. I assume they have enough rope.

–

THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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Saturday I went to the Back to the Fifties rally at the State Fairgrounds – was a guest on the NARN radio show, which was great fun. Eleven thousand cars. Some details:



O the drab repressed 50s:



An Old Warrior:

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HOST WITH THE MOST



I found my dad's old car, an Impala. He had it in turquoise. The seats:

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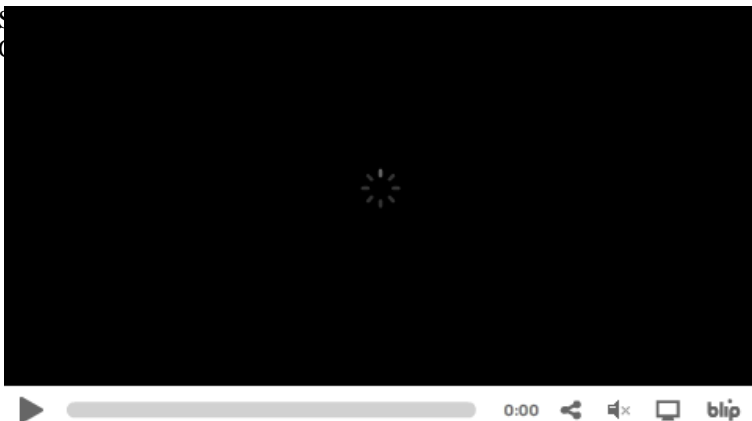
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I remember two things: how hot they were when you came back from a day at the lake, and way they seemed almost three-dimensional when you stared at them and let your eyes focus on the pattern. Hadn't seen them in decades; never forgot them.

Well. One more thing: a little video.



(Music banged out in Garageband late at night, so it's keyboard guitars, not the real thing.)

Later: Matchbook museum, and buzz.mn right now. See you soon.

Pass it along, if you wish



37 RESPONSES TO *monday, june 22*



Algen 500 says:

June 22, 2009 at 1:20 am

James, A great video of the 50s car show. What kind of camera did you use ? The music was the perfect accompaniment. Do you have more video of the car show ?



shesnailie says:

June 22, 2009 at 1:22 am

_@_v - it'll probably turn out that all those ufo sightings in the 1950s were actually on account of time machines from the future entering their dimension.

i figure richard branson's future clone will luck into time travel when a pilot on one of his virgin trans-planetary flights from a terra-formed mars screws around with the warp drive and pioneer krono-tourism...



Chris says:

June 22, 2009 at 2:51 am

'felt like my foot was caught in an Ancient Roman priest who read the omens by studying the flight of birds?' That would have been painful for the both of them, i| should think.



ExGeeEye says:

June 22, 2009 at 6:03 am

James, I wanted to read your "screwdriver" column today, and couldn't. The number of ads and menus that grow or slide open over it seems to have grown. A tantalizing glimpse of your first paragraph was repeatedly blocked by an offer to let me solve my problems with a "decision engine". I "decided" to give it a regretful miss this time, and hope that future columns are not so abused.



Michael Rittenhouse says:

June 22, 2009 at 6:46 am

Screw the law: Eat the fish.



Nancy says:

June 22, 2009 at 6:54 am

Love the cars in the video. The paint! The chrome details! The curvey-sleekness! A nice edit too. All you need.



Nancy says:

June 22, 2009 at 6:54 am

And your Dad is a prize!



swschrads says:

June 22, 2009 at 6:55 am

if the fish eats you, eat the fish.

fathers day here, as a second-string off the bench sub in the 4th quarter, was spend buying plants and buttoning up speaker cabinets. first coat of poly is on; they're for the shed. the waterproof ones in the shed go into the garage.

and then I fix the HVAC in The Great White Whale, maybe the EGR, and learn dovetailing before theyput my eye out. professionally.

I'm told there will be flashes and wild lights and stuff until they slip in the new lens.

ooh, my first trip. dude.



Patrick says:

June 22, 2009 at 7:05 am

[Those unlucky Red Shirts...](#)

As far as your dad describing how it felt when the fish bit up, ayup, I know how that feels. Probably a modernized version you would use would be something along the lines of "I was putting a new modem in the Mac and when I accidentally hit that one screw, a jolt of electricity went right through me. It was like bumping into the electric fence after feeding the cows during a thunderstorm."



Chas C-Q says:

June 22, 2009 at 7:48 am

No blame to the fish. Fighting for its life, as far as it knows. Hope your dad put it back gently, for next time. (I fish, BTW.)



juanito - John Davey says:

June 22, 2009 at 7:54 am

It struck me while watching one of the many videos from Tehran: yes, they do have enough lamp posts. I assume they have enough rope.

Yes.

We are *simpatico*.

My Mom drove our 66 Impala SS (with the 350bhp 327) – ours was blue. I always loved the Speaker Grill. That car was a boat, but it moved with authority! The mechanical throttle linkage would bind up on left turns occasionally, so my Mom would exhibit the most awesome burnouts!

Then, tragedy befell me. My Dad sold the Impala, and his 32 Ford Lowboy Roadster when I was 15, just prior to getting my learner's permit.

The Injustice of it all!!

Weep not for me, I'll get over it.

Someday.

Maybe.



MikeH says:

June 22, 2009 at 9:55 am

Why why why did you have to have a video of the car show? I felt frustrated enough that you got to go to a show that had 11,000 vehicles and i didn't (our local car museum has monthly shows, but usually no more than 20-30 cars) But to show video of this, especially when you passed by the 58 Edsel, my hear jumped out of my throat. I love old cars and getting my 6 year old into them too.

Sims 2. My wife plays that all the time, and we agree, they are all dumber than a bag of hammers, They starve to death right in front of the fridge, piss themselves in front of the toilet. It is fun to watch them die though with the grim reaper coming to take their souls, but yes they are all stupid. Maybe they're a little smarter in Sims 3.



DryOwlTacos says:

June 22, 2009 at 10:26 am

(Sigh) They don't make 'em like that anymore.
Cars OR Dads. Although you come pretty close. Happy Father's Day, James!



Trogdor says:

June 22, 2009 at 11:12 am

A Pike fish bite and Star Trek reference to red shirts. I finally went and saw Star Trek Sat. Green Red Head, boy they sure didn't think too long and hard on that fantasy did they?

I on the other hand, the left one, on father's day I was fixing a small stapler and managed to drive a staple right into my finger, was not my finest hour, nor is admitting it to total strangers.



teach5 says:

June 22, 2009 at 11:15 am

Love those glittering details of 50's cars. Everything from the steering wheels to the grills-stunning. Our Corvair was a hoot- couldn't get up a hill on a snowy day, but we had fun before Ralph Nader saved us from the lil' deathtrap. Terrific video as well.



Dave says:

June 22, 2009 at 11:38 am

Didn't make the show this year, but have other years. It's amazing how many people our there have restored cars. If you ever hit a farm show, you'll be amazed at how many people our there do the same thing, but with old farm machinery.



Lileks says:

June 22, 2009 at 11:59 am

That's all the video I have – I only had an hour, and didn't want to spend every second looking through a viewfinder. 😊



Shari says:

June 22, 2009 at 12:10 pm

Saw this headline on Drudge after reading this post and for a minute there I was worried for your dad: Man, 83, Lands Plane on Expressway

but it was in Florida – <http://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/Man-Lands-Plane-on-Expressway.html>

P.S. It was a homemade plane. Don't make 'em like that anymore – men, I mean.



DensityDuck says:

June 22, 2009 at 12:10 pm

Love the sun-flare at 00:50.

You know...hood ornaments are really cool. Why did they go away? To paraphrase Our Host: Hood ornaments, like round-cornered appliances, are something that they're just never going to let us have again.



John Robinson says:

June 22, 2009 at 12:18 pm

My God, James, what lovely cars. And to think we'll never see such mass-produced beauties again. It is to weep.



Kurt says:

June 22, 2009 at 1:07 pm

Love the video and photos – it's pure eye/ear-candy. Over the weekend I came across a 1953 Pontiac Chieftan 2-door for sale – completely unrestored, but with all its bits and pieces present and undisturbed. Sort of a light bluish-gray with a white top. I really love the restored and shiny old cars, but this Pontiac had a patina that was unbelievable. It would almost be a shame to restore it.



Kristen says:

June 22, 2009 at 1:37 pm

“Maybe they're a little smarter in Sims 3.”

The sims are much better able to take care of themselves in Sims 3. In the Sims 2, you do have to exert quite a bit of control over their lives... but if you decided that it's no longer amusing to have them ordering pizza in their underwear, it's not too hard to tell them to get dressed and make themselves a grilled cheese sandwich. It's not a game flaw 😊.

In a lot of ways, Sims 2 seems to be a richer game than Sims 3, because the amount of control that you have over the sims makes it a better story telling tool.

**richard brian penn** says:

June 22, 2009 at 2:15 pm

those are some beautiful cars. Makes me wish I was born in the 40's or 50's to be able to have enjoyed them in their prime.

**Wramblin' Wreck** says:

June 22, 2009 at 2:25 pm

Mr. Duck,
"To paraphrase Our Host: Hood ornaments ... are something that they're just never going to let us have again."

Lets examine this from an engineering perspective. 100 million automobiles with hood ornaments would produce an additional 317 tons of carbon dioxide per annum. But these 317 tons of carbon dioxide have already been earmarked by Algore for air conditioning his outdoor heated Olympic swimming pool. Guess which use has the priority?

**RWH** says:

June 22, 2009 at 2:28 pm

I'm sure a lot of the hood ornaments went the way of non-padded dashboards...too many bad examples of what people looked like after being impaled on them after an accident.
 The last car I had with a hood ornament was a Cadillac, and I got tired of having to buy replacements when people would keep breaking them off to turn into Jewelry.

**Charlie Young** says:

June 22, 2009 at 2:48 pm

Mercedes still has hood ornaments...and they are prime targets for Hip-Hoppers.

**Patrick McClure** says:

June 22, 2009 at 3:18 pm

Am I the only one who thinks exploding hood ornaments would be a good idea? Just have them rigged so if the ornament is broken off, rather than removed properly from under the hood, a small explosive charge embedded in the ornament goes off. What a way to discourage ornament thieves and clumsy mechanics. (I had a T-bird hood ornament broken in two by a clumsy mechanic. He put it back together w/ two big lumps of bondo. Then said it was that way when I brought it in. He was my then bro.-in-law's brother, so I didn't make a fuss. But it was in 1985, and I still haven't forgotten.)

**iowahawk** says:

June 22, 2009 at 3:26 pm

I attended a car show in Detroit Sunday where I saw what is arguably the single finest hood ornament ever concocted — the mighty frosted glass eagle head of the 1930 Cord L-29. Pic here:

<http://iowahawk.typepad.com/iowahawk/2009/06/cant-forget-the-motor-city.html>

If ever I achieve my lifelong dream of becoming a heartless industrialist plutocrat, I want that thing atop my elephant ivory

swagger stick.



jeischen says:

June 22, 2009 at 3:27 pm

Excellent car show footage and even better music. You say you “banged” that out? You must have a Bigsby tremolo bar on your keyboard. I anguish each time I look at our old family photo album and see the black ’63 Chevy Impala two-door (with 4-year-old me in cowboy hat, boots and six-shooter standing in front). Dad was never a car keeper, always traded them in for the next model every couple of years.



Kristin says:

June 22, 2009 at 5:52 pm

Abrams could learn a lesson on the appropriate and proper use of lens flare from the video. Beautiful.



NeeNee says:

June 22, 2009 at 7:31 pm

For some reason, the musical audio sounded like the first measure of “Silent Night” —then again, I have a sinus infection that’s migrated to one ear. Listened again with the good ear only and yup . . . still Silent Night.

Blame it on good German Lutheran stock. L-o-o-o-o-v-e-d the cars. My dad kept & drove the same car forever. A 1954 robin’s egg blue Ford, with the gas cap hidden under the back license plate.



Dick Hassing says:

June 22, 2009 at 8:31 pm

James,

Tremendous video from the car show. I revisited “Happy Guy”, now I can go to bed!

Goodnight from the Otherapolis!



Stephen B says:

June 22, 2009 at 8:43 pm

You made my day. My favorite was the service station “ding ding” when the wheels go over the hose.



greg zywicki says:

June 23, 2009 at 7:43 am

Sounds like you had fun. Along with my semi-annual invitation to the GM tech center (see it while you can, or, “Hey, you own it – why not see it?”) I wonder; Are you familiar with The Henry Ford Museum? Lots of 19th and 20th century industrial design. It’s part of “The Henry Ford”: Note the poor grammar. It’s not a river fording, it’s a collection of attractions that includes the museum, Greenfield Village (Hank F bought and reconstructed famous buildings like the Wright Bros. store) and a tour of an operating automotive assembly plant.



Maria Beebe says:
June 23, 2009 at 9:24 am

Shame...cars today just do not have the same personality or really any personality. The colors and details are just...so...yummy.



Mike says:
June 24, 2009 at 10:00 am

Weren't most of us conceived in the backseats of those "drab" 50's cars?



DensityDuck says:
June 27, 2009 at 12:42 am

RWH: The new trick is to rip the maker's badge off and turn THAT into jewelry, or another badge for your own car, or just...I dunno, people collect the things, I guess? Anyway, this seems to be the thing to do here in California. Lots of Hondas and Acuras driving around with two holes in the back trunk deck where the badge used to be.

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Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

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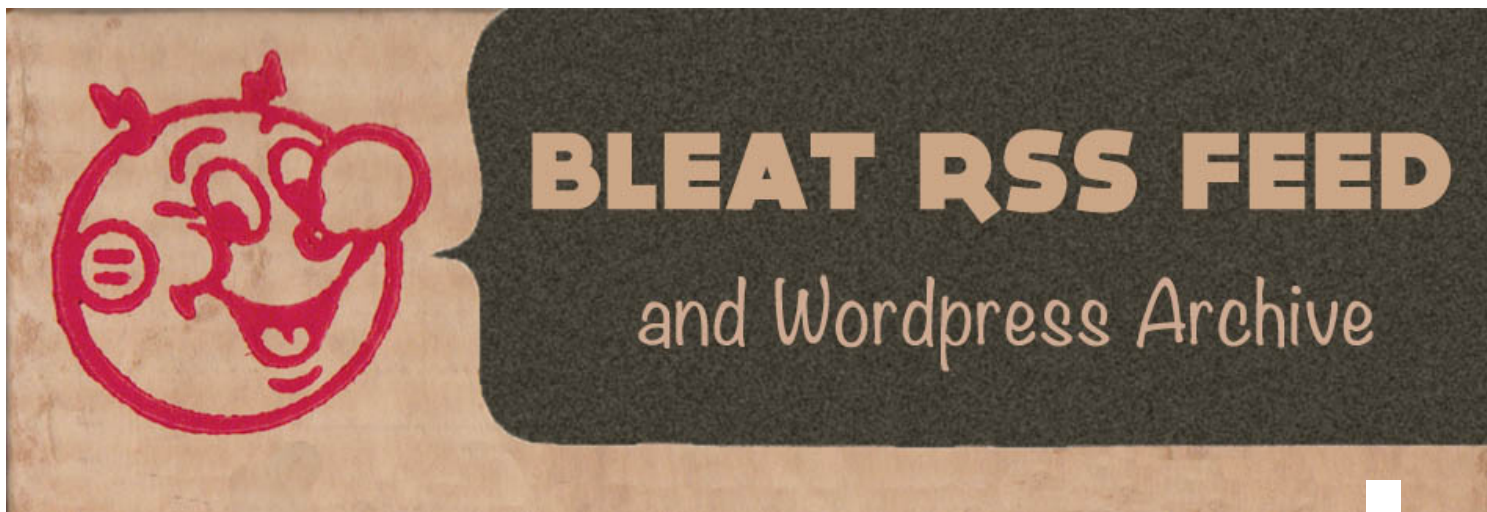
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something more, later.
Who cares? You're
reading this? Really?





ABOUT

Monday Matchbook

Comic Sins: Eeek! My DIARY!

RECENT COMMENTS

TUESDAY, JUNE 23

on JUNE 23, 2009 · 78 COMMENTS · in [COMPUTERS](#), [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

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](#)

I'll call Monday the first true total day of summer. Hot, torrid, blaring sweaty sun in the AM, blast-furnace hallo when you open the door to fetch the paper. Mosquitos whining like slow-motion bullets past your ear. Decrescendo sunset, a day that can't bring itself to end. Enough stuff to do so it didn't seem like an actual day off, but close. All things considered: perfection.

140 OR SO

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

Daughter is now utterly engrossed with the Sims, despite the wretched aesthetics. I believe the overall ugliness of the furniture and other items is designed to get you to buy the IKEA expansion pack, so everything doesn't look like someone's Grandma backed up a U-Haul to your house and poured in everything she'd bought in her lifetime. So far she's done a nice job of crafting a little life for a creature who never gets dressed and starts a grease fire every evening, but at least she's gainfully employed. It freaks her out when the Goth girl from next door walks over and rings the door, though. That chick is weird.

I woke this morning to find her at the kitchen counter, playing. She'd been up since 8, playing with great care: if the power cord is dislodged, the computer DIES. This means the battery isn't charging, right? So I reset the PMU last night. No good. So the battery's dead, right?

CLICK - AND SAVE!

Safari Power Saver
Click to Start Flash Plug-in

A BOOK I RECOMMEND

Opened my laptop later that day: it didn't turn on. It would not turn on. It had no intention of turning on. Reset the PMU. No good. So the battery's dead, right?

Two? At once?

Blame the charger, you say. And I would. A week ago her charger got a short in the cord, and didn't work. So I gave her the one for my old main laptop, and we swapped back and forth. When my old main laptop was dry, and she was deep in some project – animation, video, story, Sims, she lives on that thing, always creating (well, that's not entirely true; she likes to watch hideous animations other people have made on YouTube, or those interminable “These are my 47 WebKinz” videos kids put up.) – I would use my Macbook Air. You roll your eyes: you have an Air. Typical. Let me put it this way: I used a ton of Amazon credit & accumulated gift certificates last year to get one for the conventions, because I knew I'd be running around everywhere, and the old laptop was a monster that weighed sixteen tons. The Air is my favorite laptop ever. We go everywhere together. And since it has the same charger input as the other laptops, I could use the charger on daughter's laptop and my old one.

Somewhere, one or two of you are sucking in your breath in horror.

Well. I went to the Apple Store tonight. You needed a cattle prod to get through the store; 7 PM on a Monday night, and it was packed. I went to the charger aisle, and noticed that the Air charger was different from the other ones. 65W vs. 80W.

Uh oh.

I asked the clerk if this might have been a problem with the batteries, being different flavors and all.

Oh my yes. “I asked a genius,” he said after consulting with someone else, “and he said it freaks the battery out.”

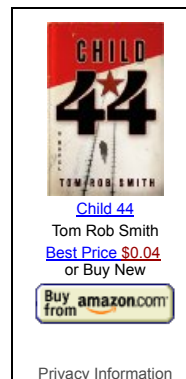
Define *a freaked battery*.

“Well, it either kills the battery, or the PMU.”

So I walked away with a new charger and two new batteries. To my immense relief subsequent tests seem to indicate that the batteries are not killed deader than dead, so I dodged that expense. I mention this only to show how the mind – specifically, the endlessly-self-justifying mind – works. Since the cost of the batteries exceeds the cost of the new iPhone, I could buy a new iPhone, and I'd get money back.

“Do you *need* a new iPhone?” my wife asked. I just looked at her. Twenty years of marriage, honey, and you use the word “need” when your husband is talking about something that plugs into a wall?

It helped that I was wearing a shirt I've worn every summer for five years. If you know what I mean. I don't get a summer wardrobe. I don't even like this



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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THE DISTANT PAST

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shirt anymore. I laugh when I take it out of the closet every May: oh, you. Good Lord. Today I wore a tank top I've had for 20 years; a strong breeze would make it evaporate. I think it was made by a company whose executives rode a brief vogue, cooked up the stock price, did some insider trading, got caught and went to jail – and they've been out for ten years, and I still have the tanktop. For that matter I have 3 T-shirts with which I cannot part, and have been carefully archived. One is a Minnesota Daily T-shirt as thin as a gambler's justification; the other is a tie-dyed Batman shirt I wore the evening of my wedding – under the tux, I wasn't that much of a vulgarian – and the third is my T-shirt from Klingon language camp. That needs no explanation.

Which reminds me: Daughter went off to camp today. Just a short one. We went to get the bus around one, kicked around outside while everyone assembled. The bus was an oven, but the kids were in high spirits. When it finally pulled away we'd been making faces at each other through the window for five minutes, and I ended with a solemn expression, and gave her the Vulcan live-long-and-prosper salute. She returned it, without having to fix one hand with the other. Big grins. *sob* *pride*

It's not important that she like the same things I do when she grows up, but on the off chance she does, that'll be fine, too. It's all cake. Any icing is just a bonus.

With no specific work agendas – aside from buzz.mn, which will have the small-town website of the week update today – and no child-related care objectives that usually mark the hands of the clock, it's felt strange, like a Friday delivered ahead of schedule. So until the Tuesday Comic Sins and B&W World update, and until buzz.mn is up around noon, a question:

What item of clothing do you hang onto for stupid sentimental reasons? I should note I have one other item I can never abandon: my dad's white bowling shirt from 1964, complete with the Texaco logo on the back and RALPH written in script over the pocket. It's almost like a holy vestment. He gave me another one from the early 70s, and it sums up its era – it's dry-puke green, made of some fabric that feels like sodden canvas, the logo is dull, and it screams 1972. I'd probably get \$50 for the thing on eBay. Possibly more.

Nothing cures inordinate nostalgia like the realization that kids today think the seventies were cool. Every time I think I want to go back – to anywhere, any time – I look around and ask what I'd want to give up for the sake of fonts and graphics. Not much. Put me in a time machine, send me back, I'd be miserable. It would only take a few months before I ruined a tiki party by saying that I enjoyed the chance to wear a floral-patterned shirt and black-frame glasses without manifest irony, but I missed having a UNIVAC on my lap and a computer in my pocket and robots on Mars and no Commies, okay? Punch my ticket, I'm heading back.

Oh, you kidder! Here, have another hot dog.

No seriously. I'm heading back. It's where I belong. Rather feel out of joint

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HOST WITH THE MOST

there on occasion than sit here with mildewed sci-fi mags and dream of the future, y'know?

Besides: my Sims have to go to the bathroom.

Pass it along, if you wish



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78 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, june 23*



Jennifer says:

June 23, 2009 at 11:24 am

Back to the 70's? Oh, no way! My favorite outfit consisted of purple psuedo-Cons, purple jeans and a purple hand-me-down turtleneck. Yes, yes I was a fan of the Osmond Variety Hour—why do you ask? I only have my memories, however. I'm not really sentimental and the only piece of clothing that I haven't parted with is my wedding dress. Well, and my son's baby blankets!



juanito - John Davey says:

June 23, 2009 at 11:33 am

Crikey, I also have 4 years worth of "Holy Bowl" shirts (81 – 84) Christian Brothers vs. Jesuit. Somewhere. Now I'll have to go look.

Tragically, the Marauders have had their way with the Falcons in the following 24 years... but not when I played!



Marjorie J. Birch says:

June 23, 2009 at 11:33 am

A Marine's dress blue jacket with the red piping and gold buttons, even though I know I'll NEVER fit into it again. \$5 at Goodwill in the 70s. (The garage sale/yard sale phenomenon killed Goodwill stores — they haven't had really cool stuff in years, in my humble though biased opinion.)

People would ask me why I was wearing part of a Marines uniform and I'd say "Well, like the Marines, I'm looking for a few good men."



Rhonda G. says:

June 23, 2009 at 11:51 am

I was never into saving my clothes. OK, I was at one time, but I've finally reached the age where I can let go and just remember. However, my husband saved ALL of his old tshirts. He has Zappa, Yes, Jethro Tull, etc. etc., 'cos those are the bands he has loved (and he also used to get all sorts of comp merchandise and tickets because he used to work in a record dept...yes...record). The best part of this is that my 15 year old son loves the music, and has taken over the verrrry old tshirts. I can imagine that the thin material is great in the summer!

I will admit that I've saved all of my son's tshirts from baseball, football, fire-safety camp, etc., and plan someday to make a quilt for him. Of course, he may be 60 before I make it...but I have good intentions!

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](#) for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

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

**RPD says:**

June 23, 2009 at 12:01 pm

I wonder about Buzz. What were the original plans for it? Now it seems to be just one host who make a couple obligatory posts per day (weekends off) to justify it's existence. The links are so hopelessly out of date.

Is it still there out of simple inertia? Does its readership grow, or is it as I suspect, declining?

**AnnaN says:**

June 23, 2009 at 12:21 pm

My grandfather's garrison cap from WWII.

**swschrads says:**

June 23, 2009 at 12:26 pm

the Buzz... between business products at the Strib and the pending any-day-now nuking of the site, which has been so for over a year... and rumored to be coming again Monday... a formal admission was made yesterday by Our Gracious Host that only the outside is painted and picked up, so to speak.

at least the police don't come by almost every night, and it's not an abandoned webbery.

**Vlad the Impala says:**

June 23, 2009 at 12:33 pm

I had a T-shirt I won from an alternative paper in Boston called the "Real Paper". IT was because I solved one of the Real Paper Puzzles in college in the early 80's.

Don't know where it went, I might still have it in the one (1) tote in the basement that my wife lets me keep my old stuff in.

**MikeH says:**

June 23, 2009 at 12:36 pm

I've got two of my dad's Bugle Boy polo shirts he owned for who knows how long before he passed away 10 years ago, still look nice.

A shirt from the Holy Cow Brewery in Las Vegas, purchases in 1996

Several various Hard Rock Cafe t-shirts, the newest from Honolulu in 2001

New York Public Library from 1999

And several others from years ago, can't throw them out unless I get big bleach spots or tears

**Lisa says:**

June 23, 2009 at 12:38 pm

My favorite t-shirt (Navy blue Jackson Browne, The Pretender) literally fell apart at the seams after about 5 years of wear, and the propensity my best friend's baby daughter had for puking on my shoulder whenever I held her while wearing it.

About a year ago, I found a replica of that same exact shirt for sale

on Jackson Browne's website. Needless to say, I bought two. Now that the aforementioned baby is over the age of 30, I think it should be safe.



Kathy says:

June 23, 2009 at 12:45 pm

Sister in law gave me a box of my brother's old tee shirts. I turned it into a great quilt but when he opened it at Christmas, he gasped "I wonder what had happened to these". I would never have cut relics without his permission. Now I have a sack of his son's shirt to likewise turn into a quilt. Me? I have my wedding dress balled up in a cedar chest.



Brian Greenberg says:

June 23, 2009 at 12:48 pm

I've got the High School *and* College Marching Band jackets, as well as every t-shirt from every pit orchestra or small group performance I ever did at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn was a great source of t-shirts). I also have the tacky Hawaiian shirt, purchased on our honeymoon for the express purpose of wearing it off the plane when our parents picked us up at the airport (the things we thought were cute back then...)

But the one that's got you all beat is the "I survived the World Trade Center Bombing" T-shirt that I bought in 1993 after the first bombing, back when that was considered ironically funny in some way. I'd never wear it today, of course, but at the same time, I can't bring myself to throw it away.

Ed Driscoll » Off To The Great Talk Show In The Sky says:

June 23, 2009 at 1:07 pm

[...] return to that era? That's the push-pull dynamic that AMC's Mad Men traffics in, and as James Lileks wrote last night: Nothing cures inordinate nostalgia like the realization that kids today think the [...]



juanito - John Davey says:

June 23, 2009 at 1:18 pm

Brian Greenberg Says:

June 23rd, 2009 at 12:48 pm

But the one that's got you all beat is the "I survived the World Trade Center Bombing" T-shirt that I bought in 1993 after the first bombing, back when that was considered ironically funny in some way. I'd never wear it today, of course, but at the same time, I can't bring myself to throw it away.

Don't you *ever* throw that shirt away.

Frame it.

Even if you just put on a shelf in the garage.

And weep once a year, every September.



Headless Unicorn Guy says:

June 23, 2009 at 2:20 pm

Nothing cures inordinate nostalgia like the realization that kids today think the seventies were cool.

Time to give them a dose of your *Interior Desecrations*.
Or screen the ORIGINAL filming of *The Taking of Pelham 123* and make sure they know the fashions and hairstyles weren't spoofs.

It would only take a few months before I ruined a tiki party by saying that I enjoyed the chance to wear a floral-patterned shirt and black-frame glasses without manifest irony, but I missed having a UNIVAC on my lap and a computer in my pocket and robots on Mars and no Commies, okay? Punch my ticket, I'm heading back.

Though I would like to see a revival of plastic modeling, slot cars, and full-size pony/muscle cars.

No seriously, I'm heading back. It's where I belong. Rather feel out of joint there on occasion than sit here with mildewed sci-fi mags and dream of the future, y'know?

"Mildewed SF mags" as in Sixties-vintage *Analogs*? Like the ones that started my longing for that Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow of a Future, just in time to see it flushed down the toilet so we could screw in the mud at Woodstock?



Patrick McClure says:
June 23, 2009 at 3:51 pm

juanito-John Davey- "Crikey, I also have 4 years worth of "Holy Bowl" shirts (81 – 84) Christian Brothers vs. Jesuit. Somewhere. Now I'll have to go look."

We very modestly refer to the Trinity-St. X game as the SuperBowl of High School football. It has attracted as many as 39,000 people, usual number somewhere between 30,000 and 35,000. Great times, tail-gating beforehand and another chance to see old friends from both schools.

Where are Christian Brothers and Jesuit located?



juanito - John Davey says:
June 23, 2009 at 4:03 pm

Holy Bowl – Sacramento, CA.

From wiki – List of high school football rivalries (less than 100 years old)

"The "Holy Bowl" these two teams meet annually at the Sacramento City College to play in the the largest high school sporting event in the county. Christian Brothers won most the early meetings, but Jesuit has had a "decade of dominance", and have not lost this century. The meeting can draw as many as 15,000 spectators."

Also mentioned in this screedy-Sacramento List (You know you're in Sacramento when ...

—<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2234998145>

What kills is at one point one of our old time star players went on to Coach the Marauders! Betrayal!



nevicata says:
June 23, 2009 at 4:26 pm

Mr. Lileks, thank you; you may just have solved my current iBook problem.
A freaked-out battery. Honestly.

**Kim says:**

June 23, 2009 at 5:59 pm

Huh. Lileks in a tank top? There's a visual I never expected. : D

I still have my cheerleading sweaters from 1975. And my sleeveless T-shirt from my first Journey concert (Mt. Aire, 1987).

Also, my son's Ghostbuster jumpsuit. He wore it daily. Through three sizes and then wore a Star Trek Next Generation jumpsuit through three more sizes. I kept the smallest one.

It's not a piece of clothing, but I have his Roger Rabbit sleeping bag, too. His grandmother gave it to him just before she passed away. He was five when she gave it to him and I can't bear to part with it! The pillow is Roger's rabbit head! : D

**Lily says:**

June 23, 2009 at 6:41 pm

Ah, the Vulcan live-long-and-prosper-salute. The memories.

My 25 year-old hipster son texted me the other day and invited me to go on a date to the new Star Trek movie. Just the two of us went and we had a great time. Then he went back to pretending he had never heard of Star Trek. But he's been able to do a flawless salute since he was three. Our little secret.

A couple of days ago, I told my 18 year-old daughter that one of the people she hangs out with acts like a rogue hobbit with a negative charisma and badly rolled intelligence levels. I got the rolled eyes treatment. But she knew what I was saying and even smiled when she thought I wasn't looking.

They never forget those early lessons.

**Andre says:**

June 23, 2009 at 7:05 pm

Nostalgic piece of clothes? My orange sweatshirt with the "Wheaties" logo on it. It's almost see-thru now.

This isn't me, but that's what the shirt looked like when it was young:

http://image48.webshots.com/48/2/57/39/318425739FfkjrL_ph.jpg

**NeeNee says:**

June 23, 2009 at 7:58 pm

I have a Mr. Bill black tee shirt from the early '90s . . ."Oh, n-oo-o-o-o-o-o-o"

Saved all my son's '90s cross country & soccer high school tees and like others, plan to have them made into a quilt.

Said son has a vintage Kiss tour tee and somewhere we have an 80s Def Leppard.

**bgates says:**

June 24, 2009 at 12:34 am

Nothing cures inordinate nostalgia like the realization that kids today think the seventies were cool.

That may or may not be enough to cue more whining from the new “dissent is the highest form of doubleplus ungood” crowd, with its veiled suggestion that there were any problems during the Age of Carter.

no Commies, okay?

But that’s going to set them off for sure.



Dana W says:

June 24, 2009 at 1:39 am

Admittedly I loved the 70’s and unlike said kids I was there! I’ve done some thinking about your distaste for the 70’s and I have a theory, you grew up in the polyester 70’s, not the denim 70’s. After I convinced my grandmother somewhere in 1974 that jeans were not polyester nor plaid I rather liked the 70’s, being covered in oil based pseudo-fabric for a decade would sour anyone. To this day if it isn’t denim I’m not interested. A friend once suggested making me a bridesmaid. I told her “unless her bridal theme was denim, she was in for a bitter disappointment”.

Clothes I must keep, my Rocky horror coat from 1980 is the standout, an ancient coat even then, a musty, mildew stained and torn tailcoat with a tear under the arm, “originally stolen from Teeners by a friend” but its a good memory of more innocent times. What I’m bad about is my 1974 Beetle. Its outlived a marriage, two engagements and three partners. people keep telling me to give it up, parts are mail order, I work on it as much as I drive it, and I swear its looking more middle aged than I am. But I never will, its like bottled teenager, I drive it and I’m nineteen for a little bit.

Lastly watches, ESPECIALLY techy 1970’s ones, TI, and Accutron especially.
http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3661/3608838339_bf1c040e17.jpg 1973!
 My little piece of 70’s so I don’t forget. I’d go back sure, but the iPod goes with!



Bill says:

June 24, 2009 at 7:36 am

It’s not that the Air’s charger really “freaks out” the laptop battery so much as it doesn’t provide enough power for you to use your laptop AND charge the battery at the same time.

I do not know but suspect if you left the charger attached to the other laptop while closed, the battery would have charged, albeit slower than usual.

That having been said, it’s always best to use the proper output charger on the proper machine to avoid situations like the one you mention.

Oh, and yes, if the battery’s power drops low enough, it CAN lose its mind as can the PMU, but it’s not usually unrecoverable.



AA says:

June 24, 2009 at 3:49 pm

I’ve got a highschool football jersey from ’78. No real attachment but it’s still in the drawer.

But all my daily wear T-shirts are from the blood donation center.

Give a pint, get a shirt.

But even those I have a 50 shirt backlog I've never put on. I wear "around the house work T-shirts" until the surface area is 20% or greater holes.



Doug C. says:
June 25, 2009 at 7:36 am

My favorite shirt is a dark blue sweatshirt that says Binford on the front and "Real Men Don't Need Directions" on the back. It started falling apart at the cuffs about six years ago, then the elastic band at the bottom started failing, then finally this year I had to take drastic action and cut off the sleeves and the failing elastic. The collar is starting to go now and pretty soon it will be gone for good, but I'll still wear it. I think the only person who would understand this strange male behavior would be Jimmy Buffet, who despises suits and neck ties in favor of t-shirts and shorts and bare feet. He's my hero.



Capt_57 says:
June 25, 2009 at 11:27 am

Sorry, I'm a bit late on my response, but I find it surprising that you would be "miserable" after a few months of living in the post-war era. You of all people!

If I could go back and live through (oh, lets' say) 1954-1968, I could then happily shuffle off this mortal coil. Except for the ubiquitous air-conditioning on days like this, there's nothing about modern life and times I would miss.

[← Older Comments](#)

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B&W World: Monolith Monsters

Out-of-Context Ad Challenge

RECENT COMMENTS

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

on JUNE 24, 2009 · 32 COMMENTS · in DOMESTIC LIFE

My mind has gone completely to seed; two days of sort-of vacation, and I have a mush noggin that couldn't come up with a bon mot if you . . . gave me one for free. See? Nothing. It's been hot here – 90s, humid, oppressive and wonderful. But you can't stay outside and read news all day; there are things to do. I promised my wife I would get to the storage closet, the Closet of Shame, the space downstairs that's supposed to house all our seasonal decorations, spare cooking implements, seldom-used kitchen appliances (like the vole squeezer, and the beet-mincer) as well as a portion of my archives.

Those are the things I'll never use and look at only when I'm cleaning out the Closet of Shame. Stuff I can't throw. My Cub Scout uniform, which my mother apparently pressed with industrial equipment. I have one recollection of Cub Scouts: using macaroni letters to write a bromide on a piece of wood. No idea what it said. Possibly BEAT ME DADDY EIGHT TO THE BAR but possibly not. I did not advance beyond Webelos, which is an Indian word meaning "one who wets himself," although one of my childhood friends advanced to Eagle status. He was the kid whose father woodburned and made his own radios from Heath Kits. Figures. The box also has Hot Wheels, which I loved, even though the pieces that connected the strips of runway plastic always got lost and the strips stopped making smooth joints after a while, and you ended up vaguely disappointed in Mattel. (Mattel ruled; though; Kenner came next. Wham-O was in a different league – those guys got their ideas from super-aliens, or something.)

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

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

There's also a box of embarrassing journals from college I wish would just vanish in a puff of shame, since it's one long whine punctuated with endless sophomoric expanses of Writerly Writing. Oh, but you'll love to read them when you're old and grey!

No. I can sum it up. I met a girl / it's great / she dumped me / waa / despair (1979-1981) / oh boy this looks great (April 12 – 19 1981) / Criminey, how am I going to get out of this one (1981-1983) / Free at last / hey, she's hot / woohoo / oh, she didn't / waa / despair / (1984-1987) / Meet wife / grow up.

I have no desire to revisit the particulars. They depress me. That's why the box is the most inaccessible. Now, This stuff is different from the other archives, which is really an impressive piece of work: everything I've written, printed off and sealed in plastic, arranged by year, with another crate containing mementoes from daily life since Natalie was born, winnowed down into jumbo Ziploc bags, by year. Each bag contains a CD of all the pictures taken.

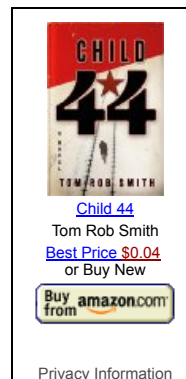
It's as close as anyone around here will get to scrapbooking. I don't expect Natalie to remember the items when she finds them some day, but I hope she'll consider why I kept them.

So the first thing I see when start the chore: a spindle of 100 CDs, all backups of something or other. I cut those down by half, since most were backups of pictures I know I have stored in 38 other venues. (One of the curses of iPhoto: it integrates with all the other media apps, so when you open it up in, say, iMovie to find a picture you took yesterday, the first thing you see is the first picture in the program – which, in this case, is my wife in the maternity ward with nineteen sensors attached to her stomach. I have about 14,000 photos, and yes, they all have keywords. Insanity.)

Ah! Making progress. Next: decide that I will not, after all, start a museum devoted to electronics packaging. This means all the boxes I saved in case I had to send something back will be put in the trash, and this frees up a nice chunk of space. I spent some time rearranging the spare party party materials – every time we have a big party, I buy a jug of Vodka, and no one ever drinks it. Down in the basement it goes. I could keep six Russians happy for a year down there.

All in all, a success; tomorrow I sort the spare foods and paper goods, and rearrange up the emergency supplies in one spot. I'm well-prepared, theoretically, but when the power goes out all I can find are the ornamental candles, which are decorative and hence cannot be used. But if Crate and Barrel sold big fake candles with labels that said WARNING WICK WILL NOT LIGHT no one would buy them. I think we actually have backup Ornamental candles we install for social events in place of the good candles, which live their lives in serene contentment, like guest-bathroom soap.

Oh: I found a small collection of motel soap in the basement, too. My mother



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

OCTOBER 2013						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
« Jul						

THE DISTANT PAST

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had a substantial reserve, neatly stacked in the closet in the bathroom, never to be used UNLESS THE DEPRESSION CAME BACK, and even then I suspect we would have been making bars of lye-based surficants in a tub in the back yard. At least I did not inherit her enthusiasm for saving plastic margarine tubs. They have a way of rejecting your objectives – the lids wander off, never to be paired again. Every so often I buy a batch of identical tubs with identical lids, and six months later it's the United Nations of Small Tubbs in the cupboard, with 38 lids that match nothing.

I did find eight giant foil cooking trays in the Closet of Shame, which my wife saved from her trips to Let's Dish. I asked her about these, and whether we need eight, and she said, quite sensibly, "They stack." She has two hoarding flaws; that's one. The other is plastic bags. We have enough to lift the house off the foundation "Up"-style if we filled them with helium. Periodically I stuff them all into one bag, press out the air, tie it with a rubber band, and put it in a box. *The bags are in the box.* I'd point out that we do not have a dozen dogs with a thrice-hourly need to excrete a yard of metabolized Purina, but I know better.

When I was done I laid down for a nap, but no nap happened. Got up and made supper: since Natalie's at camp, I figured I'd make some Indian dish from a Target box. It looked good. Inside were three packets of liquid, one having the chunky consistency of baby spew, and about 47 grains of rice. I was not going to spend 35 minutes boiling 47 grains of rice. Not when I have a bag of microwavable rice. I added some pre-cooked chicken, and hoped my wife didn't ask "is this precooked chicken?"

"Where did you get the chicken?" she asked. "From the box?"

"No," I said, leaving it at that, but the mystery was too great.

"So where . . ."

"It's from a bag."

"Oh! Just wondering."

"A bag is better than a box."

Unless it's a box full of bags, I wanted to say. And on that thought, I leave you. Later today: Out of Context Ad Challenge around 10:30 AM, a Mpls update, and Miscreant Roundup if the source material posts on time. See you soon!

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Pass it along, if you wish



HOST WITH THE MOST

32 RESPONSES TO *wednesday, june 24*



blognerd says:
June 24, 2009 at 3:34 am

Okay. I get up at 4am to write my dissertation. I have a 2-year old and a 9-month old. If the stirring I hear actually rouses to a full state of wakefulness, I shall hunt you down, found those journals and publish them.

Why, are they stirring, you ask?

Because I'm laughing so friggin' loud.

And btw, I burned my 32 marbleboard crazy person notebooks from college. It was very cathartic. Think about it.

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EG says:

June 24, 2009 at 6:24 am

Oh, old journals are the worst. Torture. But you'd feel guilty to throw them away. But mortified if someone else read them. Mortified when you re-read them yourself, as a matter of fact.

And yet we store them.



kc says:

June 24, 2009 at 6:29 am

I'm a nomad who married a Sailor. Every few years, I purged, just before the next transfer. We now live in a very small house. My shopping/ hoarding is limited to 1) what I have the cash to pay for 2) what I have NEED for 3) what I have room for. If I really really want something, it means I have to give something up to make room, since I dislike clutter.

Plastic bags are wound tight & stored in milk carton. Till it's full, then they go to the recycle bin. Same with margarine tubs, of which we use very few (I usually buy stick margarine) – some may go to my garden barn, but most go the way of the pop cans.

Keeping almost anything not used for more than a year is sorta 'off', but in the case of college-age writing kept into the 40's or longer, it's really kinda pathetic.



Rob Miles says:

June 24, 2009 at 7:01 am

Now, this is just getting too scary. Week before last two of my MacBook batteries failed at the same time (I replaced the PSU last year). And I spent all of the weekend taking old boxes out of the loft and dumping them at the tip.....



Nancy says:

June 24, 2009 at 7:30 am

Re: college journals

Picture Natalie perusing your angst-ridden musings. Will she connect with it? Will she laugh her keester off? More importantly—is this a perspective that you would appreciate having of your father once he has (perish the thought) left us? If not—I say burn or shred them.



Bill says:

June 24, 2009 at 7:40 am

The real fun is when you get to copy media to new media.

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](#) for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

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

Like all the home movies you “archived” to VHS tape back in the day and now the VHS tape barely plays but the film is still in decent shape.

Exhibit 2: The load of Zip disks I need to archive to CD before my last functional Zip drive dies.

Thankfully even the latest Blu-Ray drives can still read CDs...



Mr_Lilacs says:

June 24, 2009 at 7:52 am

College journals make me glad that my penmanship has always been atrocious.



John says:

June 24, 2009 at 7:55 am

I'm trying to remember what I was doing April 12-19, 1981. Hitchhiking around west Texas with a leaky inflatable canoe, I think. I never kept a journal; I wrote letters, many hundreds of them. We must hope their recipients threw them out. I am 99% sure that they have. What were these letters like? Well, I would not consider going into politics unless I was *100%* sure.



wiredog says:

June 24, 2009 at 8:54 am

April 12-19, 1981. Studying for my drivers license exam. Which I took on May 9, or 10 if the ninth was a Sunday. Which I [passed](#).



Mike Kriskey says:

June 24, 2009 at 9:22 am

“I could keep six Russians happy for a year down there.”

And how many Giant Swedes?



gmann63 says:

June 24, 2009 at 9:46 am

Thanks for the reminder that I need to dig that box out of the garage with my college journals and destroy them. My son doesn't need to read that crap when I'm gone, and I don't need to keep reminders of my past idiocy and ineptitude for posterity. How embarrassing...



Mark E. Hurling says:

June 24, 2009 at 10:11 am

Missing lids . . . Maybe they're hanging out with the socks?



Stan Smith says:

June 24, 2009 at 10:17 am

Re: journals. Keep them. When my mother passed away at the age of 92 last year, we found her college diary, in which she mentions the three men she was most interested in, one of whom was my father. The chaste story of the romance was one of the sweetest things I've ever read.

Keep them. Natalie will be the loser if you don't.



swschrads says:

June 24, 2009 at 10:23 am

major mistake.

Closet of Shame, full of kerrappe... oh, yes, and part of my archives.

fool! you have mixed Valuable Historic Papers of An Artiste with kerappe.

you need to make a sacrifice to the gods of karma at once.

duplicate another CD six times and put a note in the archive.

otherwise, somebody will take you by the ear, rent a dumpster, and you can imagine the horror that comes next.



hgbear (roger h) says:

June 24, 2009 at 10:36 am

Kind of like the idea that the length of time task takes expands into the time allowed, my theory is that if you have space, you will use it.

We live off a semi rural road on a few acre of land with a garage, two out buildings and a barn. The temptation to fill those buildings with junk is tempered not by any internal discipline on my part but, rats and mice. Like James, I also have the grave yard of empty electronics boxes that make excellent habitats for the up and coming suburban rodent.



jeischen says:

June 24, 2009 at 10:40 am

I kept all of the cards, letters, party pix from my college-era girlfriends in a box. Not that they were especially sentimental but so that I could read them later in life and they would jog memories of what was going on at that time. Wife stumbled upon them about two years into our marriage and threw them in the trash without telling me. It was the first time I got absolutely furious with her. Then, just a month or so ago, my mom was cleaning house and found another box of stuff (photos, cards etc.) from the same time period (including a film canister with cannabis seeds she thought must have been a leftover project from my plant biology class). I have not told my wife about this new find and have stored it away from her prying eyes. I also have all the pictures (sorry, sketches) I drew from college art classes. They are much better than my writings from that time, which I did not keep much of. The youthful pretentiousness of my college writing makes my skin crawl.



MMW says:

June 24, 2009 at 10:50 am

I made the mistake of asking my wife (when we were newlyweds) about her stash of bags- not just the plastic bags from the grocery store, mind you, but the metric ton of 'shopping' bags. We had a entire cabinet devoted to them.

It was a sore point until we moved a few years ago and yet she still has her stash: I just have no idea where. Every time we go somewhere that requires her to take something a paper bag with handles appears from the ether and reverses when we get home. It

seems to be working for us, at least until I slip through the temporal rift in the dinning room and stumble into a warehouse full of shopping bags in a parallel universe.



Charlie Young says:

June 24, 2009 at 11:14 am

I must have upwards of 5 or 6 thousand photos and negatives from when I got my first SLR in high school through the early 2000's, possibly more since I don't have iPhoto records of them. I haven't taken on the monumental task of scanning all that old film. Too daunting. Now that I've gone digital, the number has increased exponentially. In 1/3 the time, I have generated over 20,000 images I can't bear to delete. Bigger hard drive time.

BTW James, its "surfactant" not "surficant" unless you were coming up with a new word for a SoCal kid who can't surf.



Bonnie_ says:

June 24, 2009 at 11:34 am

I have all my stories and poems from the earliest horrible attempts at prose to my first drafts of the novels that never made it into publication, and the ones that did. (My latest is published by Random House, so I guess I got better.)

I cannot bring myself to throw away my stories about me and Tarzan of the Apes. I turn bright red at the very thought, but they were my first stories and they are awful, awful, and hilariously funny. Though not intentionally so, of course.



Teresa says:

June 24, 2009 at 12:10 pm

While I can blog, I have never been able to write a journal on paper. Looking back at my dismal growing up years, I can only be thankful for this.



Judge Crater says:

June 24, 2009 at 12:55 pm

It's not very hard to cook real chicken. Cheaper and better, too.



teach5 says:

June 24, 2009 at 1:24 pm

Wham-0 was the greatest for cool toys and gizmos. I still want to know what makes a SuperBall bounce so high. They were the best. Ask any dog worth his drool about a Frisbee! Creative geniuses there-probably still copying the colored comics onto Silly Putty.



Dave (in MA) says:

June 24, 2009 at 1:44 pm

90s, humid, oppressive and wonderful.

Ugh.

People who like H+H weather should be put in charge of peeling my

s***** off my leg every 5 minutes.

Hot Wheels, which I loved, even though the pieces that connected the strips of runway plastic always got lost and the strips stopped making smooth joints after a while

You must be an only child; otherwise the anti-brother weapon aspect of Hot Wheels™ would have not gone unmentioned.

UNLESS THE DEPRESSION CAME BACK

Um, “UNLESS”?



Dave (in MA) says:
June 24, 2009 at 1:45 pm

(the Hot Wheels™ tracks, that is.)



Larry in CO says:
June 24, 2009 at 2:13 pm

Lileks, get out of my basement!



SullyAg says:
June 24, 2009 at 2:33 pm

Talismans of a 1960s childhood: G.I. Joe, Major Matt Mason, and Hot Wheels.

My thrifty Depression-era parents sold all of mine at garage sales when I outgrew them. Consequently, I've devoted considerable time to replacing them as an adult.

Little by little, I'm reassembling my Hot Wheels collection: \$25 for a pristine Jack Rabbit Special, \$10 for a banged-up Silhouette, \$40 for a gorgeous orange Custom Nomad, \$30 for a middling Red Baron (but the initial casting, complete with pointy picklehauser). I'll pass them along to my own boy, eventually. Oh, he'll want them; he already does, to add to the 100-or-so modern Hot Wheels he's accumulated, just short of four years old.

For G.I. Joe, I make due with a replica released a dozen years ago. If only Mattel would have released a replica Major Matt Mason; that would have saved me the \$100 I spent on a vintage figure (complete with space sled and jet pack).

Relics from a very happy childhood ...



curtsnide says:
June 24, 2009 at 4:15 pm

“Vole squeezer” is quite good.



cnyguy says:
June 24, 2009 at 7:10 pm

Vodka is a good eyeglass cleaner, in case you ever run out of Windex, and those six Russians never show up.



Jen says:

June 24, 2009 at 7:42 pm

When I first “discovered” you, I remember writing you and offering my meager collection of motel soaps in hopes of spurring you into creating another section in the Institute. Why was I not surprised when you wrote back and (perhaps somewhat sheepishly?) admitted to having your own collection of motel soaps. I’m glad to see I’m not the only one who has little collections of rather worthless things. Drives my husband crazy . . . and not in a good way.

I too cringe when I read the journals I kept from age twelve until mid-twenties. I have often thought about how people would react if/when they read them when I’m gone. I’m not sure I like having a written account of my stupid mistakes freely available for interpretation. They’re there, though, sitting in my basement, and they make for great reading every now and then.



Mikey NTH says:

June 24, 2009 at 8:03 pm

In my twenties I kept diaries, written with a fountain pen (Samuel Pepys, here I go!). In my early thirties I reviewed them (N.B.: do not write while drunk – it is obvious.) I burned the lot for various reasons – such as I will die and anything on the internet is only to be located if anyone wants to find that; but a mass of diaries in my physical possessions? Someone WILL find that.

So hubris went to the fire before nemesis got her hands on them.



Phouchg says:

June 24, 2009 at 10:57 pm

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZv6hL6aYfQ>

great boogie-woogie reference!



jamcool says:

June 24, 2009 at 10:58 pm

I always preferred Matchbox cars over Hot Wheels, MBs were actual replicas of real cars while HWs were mere characters. And I did have the MB build-a-road set...plastic road and sidewalk panels that could be interconnected into a number of shapes.

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THURSDAY, JUNE 25

 on JUNE 25, 2009 · [94 COMMENTS](#) · in [ADVERTISING](#)

While daughter did karate I had supper at the authentic, i.e. filthy, burrito shop in the strip mall. The guy behind the counter had the exact expression you'd expect of a man who worked in a place where everyone had the beans. I sat next to four of the loudest, dumbest people I've met this week – it takes a special kind of illiteracy to be unable to read HOT and MILD, and hence be chagrined by your choice of salsa. One of the guys went outside for a smoke in the middle of his meal, which was either a testament to the size of the burrito or the rich, full-flavored experience you get from a drug-store cigar with a wooden tip. The deafening conversation consisted mostly of the word “ass” applied to various adjectives, and the occasional appearance of the word “manslaughter.” One of the women gave off a six-foot-circumference odor of generic moisturizer, too. People! It takes all kinds to make a world. I just wish sometimes they'd go off and make one of their own.

It's always interesting how two guys being loud and vulgar make everyone else get very quiet. It's an old story; in the ancient times, it would take a John Wayne to stroll over and tell them to *keep the talk clean, there are ladies and children present*. But that probably never happened, either. Only in the movies. And only in the old movies; the new movies made sure we sided with the free-expression types, not the dried-up old men afraid of some straight talk. *They're just words, man*. Yes, but you appear to have only six of them at your disposal.

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THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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THE DISTANT PAST

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There's been some discussion of this ad and its crude implications, and how Western Civ is gurgling down the drain, et cetera. It's not the only recent ad to use sex to sell hamburgers. As I may have said before, I have no problem using sex to sell something; it's how it's done. This is crude, but it's not really crude; it's a sophisticated attempt to be crude, which is another thing entirely. Great care went into this. The photography, the makeup, the retouching, font choice, design, copy – people with no small amount of talent labored to produce something that basically apes old Roman graffiti. Like all of Burger King's recent ads, it aims to be "edgy" and hence "different" and lodge the brand in the forebrain of the dullards who roam the edge of town looking for logos on poles that indicate FOOD. The creepy Burger King. The horrible Spongebob rap ad. So much time and creative energy!

Result: "World's cleverest ad campaign is a big failure." As it turns out, people don't necessarily want to think of a nightmare monarch with a plastic face when they're in the mood for supper. Or, if they think of it, they turn

away.

But Burger King is a brand mess anyway. The logo looks like Speed Racer's gallstone. The old logo got stale, but I'll bet they want it back, because it would look totally old-school on one of those pre-distressed-for-your-convenience retro T-shirts that use lousy 70s graphics to indicate your hipness quotient. Compare all this flailing and "repositioning" to the competition: McDonald's ads have always been bland and corporate and stuck in the soft-focus world of happy people having happy burgers; BK has had to take different tacks. Here's a big-budget feel-good campaign from the days when a company wanted to influence more than the "under 27 with no girlfriend but mad Xbox skillz" demographic:



Here's the original King, in lame cartoon form that would be lampooned endlessly with flat rote irony by subsequent generations of animators eager to prove they are cooler than stupid dispensable ads from the past:

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This fellow's palsy was later found to result from formaldehyde in the carrageenan additives. Look at the FEAR on his sad face. Reduced to this!



Every attempt BK made to come up with a character failed; *every* attempt. There's a reason McDonald's doesn't run ads with John Wayne Gacy as Ronald, no matter how much people don't like Ronald. You feel sorry for the shaking guy and you wonder why a King is capable of magic. And why he looks like someone from a Scottish Monarch Pride Parade.

Then there's this. I'm pretty sure everyone involved knew, and enjoyed, the ridiculousness of it all, but compared to the BK ad that started all this, it's the difference between a Vargas and something Larry Flynt would reject. Carl's Jr is noted for their overtly sexual burger ads, to use four words you don't always see together, but this one goes for International Classiness:



Why is that different than the BK ad? The former is sexual – sniggering 9th-grade stuff – and the latter is sensual, if over the top. I'm waiting for the perfect combination of Comstockery to raise an alarm – it implies cultural superiority, it objectifies women, and it promotes unhealthy habits. The last one is the only one that really has sufficient traction, since what you eat, drink and otherwise ingest is now a matter of public interest. I read a story today about the Hav-A-Tampa cigar factory [closing down](#) in Florida, due to taxes leading to decreased consumption. (Increased taxes on my own favorite cigars led me to look around for something to cancel; I chose a magazine, and of course I'll order less from the small mom-and-pop online store from which I get them. This will average out my costs, but produce a net drop in tax revenue. Sorry!) [Another site](#) noted something about the increased cigarette regulation I hadn't heard before: in-store displays will be forbidden to use color and pictures. They can only have black-and-white text.

We can argue about the effectiveness of advertising, the messages it sends, the propriety of advertising cigarettes in general, but I don't believe it's an extreme position to say I long for a day when the state did not regulate the hues that can be legally used to promote a particular product.

I'd like to know if black-and-white means greyscale is out, because I'd love to learn that someone was fined for using a logo that had a drop shadow.

By the way: Saw this on the way to Karate.



No doubt with finest Turkish-blend Virginia tobacco.

Lance Lawson has been delayed until Friday; First Day Covers up around three or so. See you then!

Pass it along, if you wish



94 RESPONSES TO *thursday, june 25*



Doug says:

June 25, 2009 at 11:52 am

What Sir? No link to your cigar brand or the fine folks you order them from?

tut and tut.



Jennifridge says:

June 25, 2009 at 11:52 am

BK has better burgers and better ads, James' current print example above notwithstanding. Maybe I'm the only one, but I liked the BK ads with Whopper Dad and Whopper Jr. (You know, the ones with the man and the teenaged kid wearing plastic burger suits.) I also enjoyed the ads where BKs around the country were out of Whoppers for a day. Or how about the "Whopper virgins" one, with Inuits and babushka ladies from Moldova eating their first burger, and preferring BK's? I thought those eminently enjoyable as well, but apparently those were cause for offense by people who felt it was insensitive to people in poverty-stricken parts of the world.
sigh



Paul says:

June 25, 2009 at 11:55 am

I recall a scene from Thirtysomething (a high point of western civ, I'll have you know) where Michael and Miles, the wicked genius ad dude, were looking at some weird, edgy ad for copier machines.

He asked Miles, "How the hell will this thing sell copiers?"

Miles responded, "It won't. We'll just put a few print ads in the trades to get sales. This thing is designed to win advertising awards... you know why?"

"To get more clients."

Miles nodded. "I'm glad you understand."

So BK, where are the print ads in the trades to increase sales? Oh – you sort of forgot that part of the equation. But you probably did manage to get Mr. Edgy Ad Guy more clients. Way to go, BK.



hpoulter says:

June 25, 2009 at 12:10 pm

Taco places – there was one in Falls Church, Virginia in the 70s that I went to regularly from work – it was called "Taco Bueno", so we called it "Taco Malo". Pretty bad, but I could eat and drink anything back then.

Anyway, it has a special place in my heart, because of the decor – a big black velvet painting of Snoopy as a bullfighter. That's kitsch gold.



hirudo says:

June 25, 2009 at 12:21 pm

Just curious Jim, What brand of cigars do you buy?



DroptmaStyx says:

June 25, 2009 at 12:24 pm

Did somebody mention Herb? This was the other BK campaign that bombed .



DroptmaStyx says:

June 25, 2009 at 12:25 pm

Sorry – video won't embed.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2DyziBEPyA>

**EmGee** says:

June 25, 2009 at 12:42 pm

Doug C. Says:

June 25th, 2009 at 7:40 am

“Personally I think all such ads are an affront to the male intelligence, but they seem to work (probably because the majority of males have no intelligence).”

Indeed, I find it amusing that most men apparently can't think with their brains long enough to realize their intelligence is being insulted by ads like these. Why anyone would think the Carl's ad is somehow 'classier' than the BK ad is beyond me. Ask yourself if you'd be proud introduce her to your daughter, as she licks ketchup off her elbow. She's like a Bratz doll all grown up. Classy, yeah.

**swschrads** says:

June 25, 2009 at 12:56 pm

Herb for BK. that's what's been wrong with their advertising, if you know what I mean.

**LindaL** says:

June 25, 2009 at 1:12 pm

Cigarettes were regulated by a different agency (ATF) until last week. They do not make health claims and are clearly labeled with the surgeon general's warning about causing ill-health. Same as wine and other alcohol. No claims, just warnings.

Items regulated by the FDA document health claims via indications, contraindications, and warnings. Supplement health claims are not analyzed by the FDA, because the manufacturers do not claim them as indications for promotion of health or treatment of disease.

I do agree that it isn't a free speech issue.

**DryOwlTacos** says:

June 25, 2009 at 1:20 pm

BK: I don't want the word "butts," square or otherwise, used in a commercial for a food product. Bleah.

That Carl's Jr. ad really put the B back in subtle. But I would totally eat that burger. The implication is that you can pound down that gutbomb and still look like Padma Lakshmi. (We are about to get a Carl's Jr. in our town. The dearhusband CAN'T WAIT to eat at the house that Paris Hilton's Car Wash built.)

**ERL** says:

June 25, 2009 at 1:35 pm

About 15-20 years ago, BK came up with a cast of child characters that came straight out of a focus group: The Girl Jockette, the Skater Dude, the Brain (named "High Q" of course), the Smart Girl, the Photographer, and "Kid Vid," who was apparently the leader because he liked video games and stuff. I think Kid Vid (or maybe "Snaps" the photographer) was in a wheel chair, which is at least a recognition of the disabled.

I remember seeing the characters in the restaurants off and on

through 1990s, but the company never promoted them as far as I can tell.



ChuckC says:

June 25, 2009 at 1:49 pm

“Hey all you pedophiles, come to Burger King, have our new sandwich and get the same feeling you get when you dream of having an overly made up 14 year old girl perform oral sex on you!!!”

That wasn't my response to this ad. My responses were:

- 1) what heterosexual guy is going to buy something called a “Seven-incher”?
- 2) what heterosexual guy is going to eat something called a “Seven-incher”?
- 3) what exactly do they make those sandwiches out of, anyway?



suciareef says:

June 25, 2009 at 2:12 pm

Concerning the 1977 ad – Lileks, was that you appearing 46 seconds into it?



Lileks says:

June 25, 2009 at 2:14 pm

Panters – the small ones in the small yellow tin. Delish.



cgm says:

June 25, 2009 at 2:14 pm

That Padma babe–wow.

Wait, there's a hamburger in the ad?



jeischen says:

June 25, 2009 at 2:56 pm

D Palmer, I was thinking the same thing – blow-up doll. And Padma Lakshmi? Married three years to author Salman Rushdie (although they are divorcing). Yes, I said Salman Rushdie. That's a celebrity sex video I never hope to see.



Dr. Spyn says:

June 25, 2009 at 3:09 pm

Someone had their head up their exhaust port when they dreamed up that Burger King ad. What nominally heterosexual male would be attracted to the idea of “eating” a phallus analog? What female would want to risk being seen as a strumpet by ordering such a sandwich?

Yes, the Carl's ad was in better taste and more on-message, but it takes more than decolletage for me to pay \$6 for a hamburger when Rally's has a couple of mushroom Swiss burgers for \$4.



Tony Dickson says:

June 25, 2009 at 3:54 pm

The “Six Dollar Burger” only costs around \$4. It got its name because it’s supposed to be as good as a \$6 burger at a regular restaurant.



JohnMM says:

June 25, 2009 at 4:41 pm

ERL- that campaign was from about 10 years ago, my kids were the age group being marketed to. The spokeskid in the wheelchair was named Wheels, and he was a two-for, black and disabled. The whole gang were members of the BK Kids Club, your kid can join too, just sign up and be part of the cool group.

I didn’t google any of the above, I’m ashamed my brain holds this stuff.



JohnMM says:

June 25, 2009 at 4:44 pm

I guess my brain doesn’t store as much crap as I thought. From Wikipedia:

The Burger King Kids Club Gang

In 1989, Burger King re-launched its kids’ meal program as the Burger King Kids Club meal across the United States and in New Zealand. The Burger King Kids Club Gang, a group of multi-ethnic fictional characters, were created to promote the Burger King Kids Club meal by providing a group of stylized characters that most kids could associate with, e.g. the brain, the artist, etc.

The members of the gang were:

- * Kid Vid, a Caucasian male who loves video games and technology (leader of the group);
- * Boomer, a sports loving Caucasian tomboy with red hair;
- * I.Q., male nerd who wore red glasses, a green lab coat, and a pocket protector;
- * Jaws, A tall African-American male with an insatiable appetite;
- * J.D., a dog and the group’s mascot;
- * Lingo, a multi-lingual, Hispanic male who likes art and carried an easel;
- * Snaps, a blonde Caucasian female who always carries her camera;
- * Wheels, a paraplegic male in a wheelchair.

Jazz

In the early 2000s a new female character was added to the group:

- * Jazz, an Asian girl who loves music and sports a beret.



Patrick says:

June 25, 2009 at 4:44 pm

ERL – I think the kid characters may have been created to promote Burger King’s new “BK Kids Club” (or words to that effect) meals, which was basically a mockery of McDonald’s Happy Meal, but was supposed to be aimed at an older set, and that there was something for everyone, and that everyone could choose what they wanted, down to the toy.

**Patrick** says:

June 25, 2009 at 4:47 pm

Dang...looks like JohnMM beat me to the punch. Didn't have to look it up, but a hunch told me it was to promote the new BK Kids Club. Part of a whole fad of joining clubs and groups back in the 80s and 90s. I remember wanting to join the USA Kids Club, and there were a few other "clubs" tied in to various restaurants, cable networks, or even single food products (why is my brain telling me there was a Cheerios Club?)

**kahall** says:

June 25, 2009 at 5:31 pm

Bamm, Lileks hits em right in the kisser. Great post.

**D'Angelis** says:

June 25, 2009 at 5:48 pm

Commenters on Flickr recognized the ad as a product of Photoshop.

**Bridey** says:

June 25, 2009 at 7:04 pm

Well, yes, I would say Photoshop was very likely involved in the production of that ad.

The point is, is it a genuine ad produced for mainstream media, a real but intentionally "underground" ad, some agency amusing itself with a spec "viral" ad, or simply a hoax?

I have no idea, myself.

**Robert** says:

June 25, 2009 at 7:58 pm

My husband and I have successfully indoctrinated our two sons into the idea that most fast food is simply too unwholesome to eat. The only kind we ever get is In-n-Out Burger (we're in California), which has the advantage, as I like to say, of being made out of food. Their french fries, alas, are almost inedible. The impression is that they don't double-fry them. However, a double-double animal style and a milkshake is a full meal in itself, so not a problem.

And In-n-Out doesn't even advertise on TV that I've seen. The one here in Oakland is EXTREMELY popular.

Instapundit » Blog Archive » JAMES LILEKS LOOKS AT Burger King commercials through the ages.... says:

June 25, 2009 at 8:40 pm

[...] JAMES LILEKS LOOKS AT Burger King commercials through the ages. [...]

**harmon** says:

June 25, 2009 at 9:15 pm

A few years back, my wife & I took the kids to a White Sox game. Behind us, several guys were f-wording away. I John Wayned them, & they apologized. Turned out they were off-duty cops...

**JD says:**

June 25, 2009 at 9:15 pm

That sauce is what is grossing me out about the ad. Gah.

**JorgXMckie says:**

June 25, 2009 at 11:28 pm

The major problem with franchise fast food restaurants is that they're designed to be run by morons and still make a profit. Therefore, they're incredibly uneven, even the corporate owned ones.

I worked (night mgr) at a college BK about two decades ago, and trust me the food that came in the door was top quality. However, the moving grill had to be adjusted just right (which most mgrs couldn't do) and the prep staff had to care about making good food. Many didn't.

My numbers (sales, profits, labor, waste) were easily 3X as good as any other manager because it was easy to do it right if you cared, and we got the reputation of being the place to go late nights for good, cheap food.

Stores can get looking run-down for sure, but keeping them clean and neat inside is a matter of caring, once again. Our restrooms were clean because I took my turning cleaning them and insisted everyone else cleaned them as thoroughly as I did.

Anyway, creepy ads aside, BK or Carl's Jr or whoever is as good as the management, mostly. And remember when it comes to managers and staff, "first raters hire first raters, second raters hire third raters, and third raters hire fifth raters." (Don't ask me about fourth raters, I don't know.)

**Shaky Barnes says:**

June 25, 2009 at 11:58 pm

There is a McDonald's close to my place. About 2 years ago I went thru the drive thru, ordered a quarter pounder, drove home, hungrily opened the burger-box, and saw a perfect semicircular bite bitten write out of that sucker.

Needless to say I stormed back, got a refund, and have never been back to that McDs. Actually I haven't been to any McD's in a long time except to get coffee when traveling; probably the last one I went to was one in Berlin last year.

**Steven E says:**

June 26, 2009 at 12:54 am

"Did you cry foul at the advertising prohibitions placed on those?"

Um, yes.

See, the amendment that starts "Congress shall make no law" doesn't have a "regulated product" exemption anywhere in it.

(That's even before we fight the old battle that the Constitution doesn't allow Congress to regulate products in the first place. The general police power of the states and the power to regulate commerce between the states were deliberately made mutually exclusive. Any reading of the latter that allows Congress to regulate

a transaction must prohibit states from doing so under the former.)



jamcool says:

June 26, 2009 at 1:34 am

Jack in the Box has the best commercials and one of the only fast food restaurants I'll go to.

The new "Jack" logo has a cool retro googie look.

Some of us remember the original Jack of the 60s/70s-with the creepy goat eyes-and "Jack Cola"...don't think they'll bring that back!

Then there was the cartoon "Jack" of the 70s and the disturbing sight of the Purina checkerboard on the food wrappers.-Ralston Purina owned JITB during the 70s



Dave (in MA) says:

June 26, 2009 at 1:50 am

Grab a bucket and mop
Scrub the bottom and top
There is nothing so clean
As my burger machine!



epobirs says:

June 26, 2009 at 3:16 am

Aw, I like the Burger King ads. I don't make my fast food choices based on ads but rather on proximity + what coupons make for a good deal. For instance, Carls was recently issuing B1G1Free coupons for their \$6 Guacamole and Bourbon burgers. I was working a job that had me installing new computers in bank branches until the early AM, so a 24 hour drive-in was essential to getting fed on the way home. I'd eat one burger en route and the other for breakfast. A great bargain.

Ads don't get me to buy products but they can get me to avoid a product if the ad annoys me. I'll never buy a Tom Tom navigation device because I hated their original ad campaign so much. I felt vindicated when a friend asked me to help him with his and found it had a wretchedly bad interface design.

So I enjoyed the BK ads because they messed with heads. Just like I enjoy their in-store signage goofery. But I only actually go there when it is the best deal to be had via coupons. Or if I have a great yen for a proper fast food shake. All the other chains have gone to making ice cream parlor shakes instead of the tradition type I associate with a fast food joint. BK still has the proper go with a meal shakes.



Dathu says:

June 26, 2009 at 8:58 am

Looks like the meat in that burger has been darkened; a la Time's photo of OJ.



Mike Devx says:

June 26, 2009 at 9:01 am

>> However, "the nightmare monarch with the plastic face" creeped

me out from day one.

I used to eat at Burger King a lot, before the plastic faced monarch ads. They disturb me to the point where I have a negative reaction driving past Burger King now.

I joke about it: If I pull into the drive thru and order my Whopper and large fry, when I pull out, will that plastic-faced freak suddenly be sitting in my back seat, looming in the rear-view mirror, smiling at me with that horrifying serial killer smile? Having taken possession of my car, will he then take possession of my house, my life? Turn on the bathroom light – there he is! Sitting on the toilet, nude, smiling up at me! Open the closet door to grab a dress shirt, but before I can reach the string to pull on the closet light, that cold hand grasps my wrist and my death by hacking ensues.

That is a joke, of course; but the basic nature of my paragraph joke is that the plastic-faced freak IS disturbing, and I don't like it, and I've got no use for Burger King anymore.



Roberto says:

June 26, 2009 at 10:36 am

Burger King loses market share not because their ads are ineffective, but because they are offering an inferior product. They simply have too many poorly managed stores. I'm a burger maniac. I'm not tied to any particular store – I like Whoppers, Big Macs, Jumbo Jacks (bring back the Bonus Jack!), et al. I frequent Whataburger, Sonic, Dairy Queen, etc. I'm from Texas, but I still like White Castle, Carl's Jr, Hardees, Crystal Burger, In-and-Out – you name it, I like it. But Burger King continuously disappoints when I give them *another* chance. They should spend less on adverts and more on training...

But their ads are kinda lame.



formersmoker says:

June 26, 2009 at 11:12 am

Classic tobacco cigarettes are so pass?, hooray for the revolutionary electronic cigarette and e-cigar! ^^



AnnaN says:

June 26, 2009 at 12:20 pm

“See, the amendment that starts “Congress shall make no law” doesn't have a “regulated product” exemption anywhere in it.”

LOL – the First Amendment right is not an absolute right. Advertisers are not allowed to lie about their products in ads. Are you going to say that is also a restriction of freedom of speech?

If so, fine, the government just wants to own your soul. The only thing left to do is bunker down with the bottled water and canned food and wait for the Rapture.



harmon says:

June 26, 2009 at 10:04 pm

AnnaN – of course advertisers are allowed to lie in their ads. Or do you believe in the existence of a “Burger King” ...?



gk1 says:

June 27, 2009 at 12:57 am

Speaking of creepy, does anyone remember the Duracell Family? Think plastic people x 4. I still laugh at Norm McDonald on the fake news of SNL Thanking the Duracell family for “Creeping out the entire country whenever we think of batteries”

As far as the “King” in Burger King turning off americans, in Australia the restaurants have been renamed to “Hungry Jacks” with the same design motif only different spelling.



Fred says:

July 2, 2009 at 12:38 pm

I always had a soft spot for the “200 million people, no two are quite the same...” jingle and kinda sorta hoped that it would be revamped when they announced that the population of the US had topped 300 million. Ah well I guess I can hold on til it hits 400 million and see if they’ll redo it then...

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RECENT COMMENTS

FRIDAY! JUNE 26

on JUNE 26, 2009 · [87 COMMENTS](#) · in [POP CULTURE](#)

Hot, busy. Heading towards a Friday night that seems utterly unearned, but I'll take it anyway.

It's expected that you should comment on the passing of famous people if they're high up in the pop empyrean. I think I'd have more to say if Jackson's music made the same sort of elemental connection I felt with other pop of the era, but it was like a well-thrown stone that skipped off the surface a few times before it sank. I worked in a bar whose jukebox played MJ all the time, and after a while you cease to think of "Beat It" as a cross-cultural masterstroke and see it as the endless soundtrack for putting up the chairs and washing down the pinball machines.

Oh, speaking of which. At the Back to the Fifties rally last week, what did I behold but this: *The Secret Map, Baron*.

polymathamy on [06.14.12 Bleat](#)

[Amanda from Michigan](#) on [Boo. Hiss](#)

[Julie](#) on [Testing the new RSS feed idea](#)

[shesnailie](#) on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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THE DISTANT PAST

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One of the purest tables ever made. Ride that A-B slot all day, make it knock up the free games. (Literally: the software triggered a hammer that rapped the inside of the machine when you won a game.) Mata Hari had a long tenure in the Valli Pub, and was only dethroned by the most perfectly difficult pinball machine ever, 8-Ball Deluxe. But that's another Bleat.

Michael Jackson. Oh, I don't know. Some of the songs were nifty little pop classics; "Thriller" really had it all as a work of Pop in the Warhol sense – Vincent Price narrating, a long-form video that made that brought that new art form up to a dee-luxe level, and a great deadly beat. But after that the videos got bigger, the hooks got smaller, and the idea that each new song / video was somehow a cultural event overshadowed the shrinking ideas and insular, off-putting persona. I had to watch a few tonight to put together a bit for tomorrow's NewsBreak at startribune.com, and saw "Scream" – MJ and his sister in a white spacecraft, walking around and looking angry. So *angry*. Rich successful people snarling and sneering and kicking the camera and breaking things.



Charming. Apparently her previously cheerful persona was insufficiently REAL, and REAL is the thing that WE MUST BE KEEPING IT. I actually remember when the video premiered, back when they had premiers, and we all looked at each other and thought: more good hooks in a Nerf tackle box.

Then came the scandal years – the lawsuits, the hideous surgeries. It was almost like watching the Joker carve up his face in the mirror, without the Joker's delight in his own depravity. He thought he was sculpting something supremely beautiful, but to the outsider who watched his face change as the stories of his personal life came out, it was like watching Dorian Grey walk around holding the picture from the attic before him, convinced it was lovely.

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HOST WITH THE MOST

I debated his influence on the Hugh Hewitt show with Jude Thursday night, and I wondered how influential he was – no one else could do a moonwalk, after all, and while a few artists grabbed their crotches after he did (something that never seemed convincing; more than anything, he seemed to be reassuring himself that there was something there) I can't say he influenced Dance. Don't know enough to say, to be honest. But musically? As I said, Terry Lewis and Jimmy Jam had a far greater influence, and Prince a greater talent. Yes, he's odd – a smaller, more agreeable set of demons, though, and he has an inexhaustible desire to create without freeze-drying every note into a crystalline framework, with every manufactured Yelp and Yip dropped in at the expected perfect moment.

I wouldn't have felt any of this if the event wasn't being treated as a near-fatal blow to Western Culture in some quarters. He called *himself* the King of Pop – after which fame and sales ebbed. Of the many lessons in his life, that may be the oldest.

That said: it's no shame to have your best work behind you. It's a pity to die young. It's a testament to the work you did to be mourned by millions.

—

You could say that about Farrah Fawcett, too.

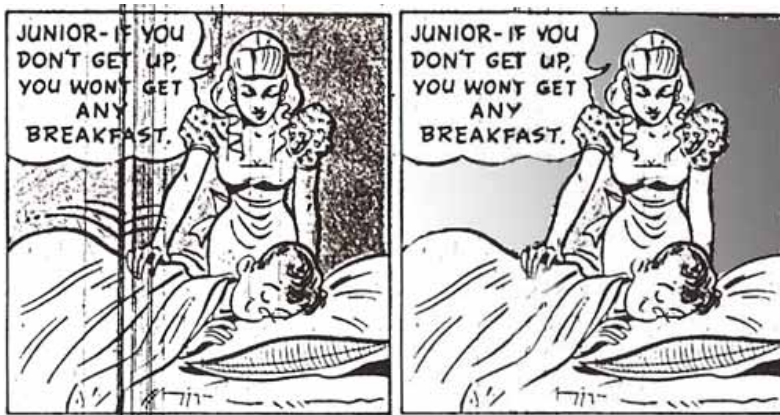
If they'd invented cheap scanners in the 70s, they would have been big enough to handle a poster.

—

Odd: all the other death reports that hit later in the day. Harrison Ford and Jeff Goldblum. As though there was some smiting going on. As if it's the rapture of the celebrities.

—

Relaxed tonight by starting the Mahler cycle, which I'll yammer about next week. While I listened I did some reconstruction of an old ad I believe was done by the Lance Lawson artist. Here's what I go through to clean this stuff up:



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Who You Know Deal

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UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](#) for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

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

You can see another cleaned-up old newspaper comic here, at buzz.mn.
Lance Lawson Sunday strip for your enjoyment! Later today, much later: 100
Mysteries. Enjoy your day; see you around. And of course on Twitter.

Pass it along, if you wish



87 RESPONSES TO *friday! june 26*



Bridey says:

June 26, 2009 at 10:08 am

Jackson produced some pretty good pop, but seemed to keep trying to make it happen again like it did in 1982. Lethal to creativity — and you only get once around on that particular ride anyway, as many a pop god has discovered. But “Billie Jean” is an amazing record.

And @JoAnne: There may be questions of proportion, I guess, but I don't know that it says anything very bad about the culture that people are sad about the death of someone whose work meant something to them. Nor does the lack of wall-to-wall coverage on CNN mean “nobody cares” about quieter deaths. I mean, plenty of people work to help the homeless, and I have no doubt some of those people are distressed, even distraught, over the death of Michael Jackson. I guess I don't see the tradeoff here — people not mourning a pop star won't get anyone off a park bench. Just imho.



swschrads says:

June 26, 2009 at 10:17 am

the Jacksons, singly or not, have made no impression on me. go away. shoo.

Stevie Wonder, now... there is a musician and a creative talent. the Tempts, Smokey Robinson... whipped up Jackson arse without raising an arm. then there was jazz and blues and Sam and Dave and the Moodies and Handel and Mozart... lots of great stuff that was not two chord rockers and fronted by rhinestones and wiggles.

and if you wanted two chord rockers, the Beach Boys and Bo Diddley and about a thousand artists on Chess did a better job.

Bye Michael, leave the cherubs alone.



hgbear (roger h) says:

June 26, 2009 at 10:25 am

Here is what I was thinking, when Elvis was to get a postage stamp, the choice was whether to go with young rock-a-billy Elvis or older Vegas Elvis (skinny or fat). What will the choices be for MJ: Jackson 5, The Wall, Thriller, Dianna Ross, Freakazoid?

I go with the kid I remember on the Ed Sullivan show so many years ago.

It the last few years I could thank MJ for putting my home town into the news for all the wrong reasons, where he brought kids to buy toys and where he went on trial for same.



MikeH says:

June 26, 2009 at 10:48 am

Back when Thriller came out, I was in high school and was probably one of 20 other people who didn't have the album or didn't like Michael Jackson. I guess he was a good pop musician, but can't see what was so special to elevate him to superstar status. What was worse was his long slide downhill from there, mostly self inflicted.

The only that sucks now is real news will be pushed in the background while the media obsesses over MJ. This is the best time for North Korea to get away with all of their schenannigans and tomfoolery.



Barb says:

June 26, 2009 at 11:07 am

Thanks for writing down some honest thoughts; a lot of this media coverage is really off-putting. Jackson wasn't ever going to come back, and they shouldn't try to spin a story in that direction; they should also give equal time to the scandals that ended his career. We all know about it; by not mentioning it, that sort of coverage just weakens the already seriously feeble credibility in those corners. One just has the suspicion that they're cashing in early by praising him up to the stars today and will cash in later by tearing him to pieces after the coroner's report comes in (who knows what caused his death, but it probably wasn't natural causes).

Let's just look at him honestly. It's tragic, because MJ's life was so wasted. In memoriam after first hearing the news, I thought of the lovable little kid on Ed Sullivan, the Motown special where he just really blew the world away (and I wondered what Adam Ant thought on hearing the news), and, for some reason, hokey as it is, "Thriller." I guess that's shot up to #1 over on Amazon again; others must feel the same way. He could have done so much good, but it was beyond him. And I'll bet he knew it, too — that's got to be hell. Rest in peace, Michael.

You know what I thought about Fawcett's passing: that it was really nice to see Ryan O'Neal hanging in there. That's a tragedy, too, though of a different sort. Not that my opinion matters one bean, but he should have asked her to marry him a long time ago, and the two of them should have made the commitment and enjoyed it. JM2CW.

May Goldblum and Ford live long and prosper. And Lileks.com, too. 😊



Pam-EL says:

June 26, 2009 at 11:18 am

Michael Jackson: Sometimes you were interesting in various ways. Bye.



SullyAg says:

June 26, 2009 at 11:59 am

Mata Hari, one of the true classics, very pure. You could really

hammer the flippers on that one: <http://www.ipdb.org/machine.cgi?id=4501>

In one day, we lose the Face of the 70s and the Soundtrack of the 80s. The past is a lie, and the future is a myth.

BTW, I think you're all assuming that Moishe3rd meant to say he was unimpressed instead of nonplussed. Better to take him at his word, literally. His use of "nonplussed" could just as easily signal that Jackson left him bewildered.



Craig says:

June 26, 2009 at 12:01 pm

So, the first spam of the morning was a Nigerian bank scam with the title: "ABOUT MICHAEL J. JACKSON FUND IN OUR BANK!!!!"

They don't miss a trick, do they?



Ben Boychuk says:

June 26, 2009 at 12:09 pm

Mahler's untimely death bothers me more than Michael Jackson's. Who knows what his 10th symphony would have really sounded like? Or his 11th?



Dick Hassing says:

June 26, 2009 at 12:16 pm

As a Quincy Jones fan from way back, I don't think he gets enough credit for what he did for Michael Jackson's career.



juanito - John Davey says:

June 26, 2009 at 12:20 pm

swschrad Says:

June 26th, 2009 at 10:17 am

and if you wanted two chord rockers, the Beach Boys and Bo Diddley and about a thousand artists on Chess did a better job.

The Beach Boys were two chord rockers? Really? I'm pretty sure that they threw in an A9#5 on occasion.

Bo Diddley: Agreed. But so expressive and heartfelt. Whereas the Beach Boys were all about PRODUCTION!

But there is nothing wrong with two chord rockers as long as *you mean it!*



Stone says:

June 26, 2009 at 12:53 pm

ha. "Mata Hari?" "8 Ball?" BAH! For sheer fun, you just can't beat the view from my very own basement:

<http://stonestead.com/images/taxitaxitaxi.jpg>

Won it on Ebay and drove all the way to Fort Worth to pick it up. Worth every penny quarter.

**Bridey** says:

June 26, 2009 at 1:51 pm

That is a truly fantastic machine, Stone. That thing has soul.

(And indeed, why can't Moishe be nonplussed by Michael Jackson? I imagine the late K of P had that effect on many people.)

**swschrads** says:

June 26, 2009 at 1:54 pm

juanito, the first couple BB albums were pretty musically sparse, in terms of tricks and techniques. it was all the harmonies at that time. and rush to get something into the studio while they were hot. but Brian started slipping in little things here and there and before you know it there was a war on inside about "messing with the formula."

at which time he freaked out and got off the road. it got worse, but everybody else was happy to record the stuff and cash the checks when it got down to business.

"The Lonely Sea" on the second album absolutely starts marking increased complexity.

anyway, I just preferred BB to much else when I discovered them a couple years later, around 64-65.

**Pat In Colorado** says:

June 26, 2009 at 1:54 pm

Ryan asked Farrah to marry him many times. It was she who always turned him down.

**DryOwlTacos** says:

June 26, 2009 at 2:02 pm

Interesting MJ fact on Wikipedia: He held the patent for the mechanics of a stage illusion described as "gravity defying." Evidently he had done such a trick in a video, which was actually created in post-production, and he wanted to be able to reproduce it onstage in the live show. He got with a couple of technical advisers and worked it out. There's a link to the actual patent documents with drawings in the Wiki entry.

MJ was crazy clever as a showman, had moderate skill as a songwriter, but he was a pitifully dysfunctional adult human being. I really think that he never considered himself an adult, and that his interaction with children seemed to him to be on a peer level. I desperately hope that someone with a lick of sense will take his three kids under their wing and give them something of a normal life with a toehold on reality.

**Lou Shumaker** says:

June 26, 2009 at 2:38 pm

The things you remember at a time like this:

IIRR, the "Black or White" video debuted on TV in 1991 with a sequel. After the happy, happy morphing of the world's population (pretty cool, that), Jackson is on the street, at night, alone. He moves among the vehicles, and he takes his fury out on them, screaming and smashing the cars, grabbing his crotch, all aggression and anger

and pain.

Amazing stuff, and it's been censored since, either cut up or the walls are overlaid with racist graffiti (to explain why he's so angry). Wiki mentions it gets rerun occasionally. But it occurred to me at the time that Jackson meant what he said, that was him, pissed at the world, and then he had to get put back in the box. Can't disappoint the fans or look too weird, man. No wonder he ended up cutting himself.



Paul says:

June 26, 2009 at 2:55 pm

I think the comparison of two photos tells me a lot about MJ's sad life.

Check out his visage on the cover of Off The Wall. It's not a stretch to think, "he's quite a handsome young man."

Then look at the photo of him at Liza Minnelli's wedding:

<http://i.timeinc.net/people/images/features/magstories/020401/liza3.jpg>

Good lord. He's terrifying for many reasons, but one thing stands out – he's the whitest person in the photo.

RIP



Moishe3rd says:

June 26, 2009 at 3:09 pm

Well, yes and no.

I did indeed express "nonplussed" incorrectly. I am somewhat nonplussed at the hoopla surrounding Michael Jackson. Or, to put it, as I did, obtusely, I am nonplussed at most celebrities.

I understand the thrill of being somehow associated with the Famous, but I have always been bewildered at the vicarious pleasure that many people seem to get from worshiping the Famous. That was my inept comparison with Princess Diana. I haven't a clue as to why anyone would thrill at that poor woman's life and death. On the other hand, I do understand why someone would be interested in what happened to Elizabeth Bowes Lyon, who died at age 103 after accidentally becoming the mother of the Queen of England. That is fascinating "history" to me.

Nevertheless, to be perfectly accurate, I was using the word nonplussed obtusely if not downright inccorrectly.

Would that I were a writer and could actually express myself... Sigh...



Mjx says:

June 26, 2009 at 3:17 pm

Well, this is interesting: I was about to rush to moishe3rd's defense, regarding his use of 'nonplussed', but decided (being a copyeditor and all), to recheck this in the OED. Which, for 'nonplus' (v.) gives '1. surprise and confuse; flummox 2. [as adj. nonplussed] unperturbed'. The first definition was how I understood it (and it made sense, at least for later-stage Michael Jackson), but that second definition is a new one, for me. And wouldn't make any sense... and I don't think I've ever come across that usage, either. Maybe the OED isn't so hot when it comes to N.A. usage. And yes, I need to get out, but it's been my busy season, and I don't

have a chance to not copyedit for long enough to snap out of that mode.

I have to admit to a far stronger feeling of relief (following my initial 'oh NO...' and subsequent research scramble) at discovering that neither Ford nor Goldblum was dead, than to any feeling I might have had regarding Michael Jackson and Farrah Fawcett. They were always very peripheral figures in my life; I vaguely remember noticing, at one point, that Farrah Fawcett had taken serious acting roles, and that Michael Jackson was doing more and more insane things, until he finally became close-to-convincing evidence that the undead do exist, but honestly, both deaths seem like merciful releases from terminal disease, even if in one case, the trouble was deep in the sufferer's psyche.



Frank says:

June 26, 2009 at 3:26 pm

This whole MJ thing is really getting to me. One is supposed to not think unkindly toward the dead, if not for their sake then for the sake of their loved ones, but this outlandish idol worshipping is making the ol' bile rise up.

The galling bits of course are the references to the icon that he was, while glossing over the "personal legal issues."

The self proclaimed "King of Pop" was a pedophile

Both sides of his persona HAVE to be taken into consideration when assessing his legacy. The boy-man (as McCartney described Jackson) was a great artist, fabulous dancer and philanthropist to many causes dealing with children. He also used these talents to molest children.

To honor one aspect of his life while completely ignoring the other is ridiculous!

It is irrelevant that he gave generously to children's causes all his life, or used his talents to entertain children, if at the very same time he was offering others children alcohol, drugs and pornography in his bed. Synthesizing these two facts about this boy-man's life ought to be fairly easy. He was a great talent with a very dark and disturbing soul.

The media had NO problem highlighting the dark side when it profited them, why now promote the othe...nevermind, I just answered my own question. Profit.

Anyway, having these thoughts in my head have led me to conclude that the evil far outweighs the good...because he used this good to conduct the evil.

I cannot in good conscience honor such a person.



FreeState says:

June 26, 2009 at 3:29 pm

Moishele: "I haven't a clue as to why anyone would thrill at that poor woman's life and death."

Neither do I, but my life is now tangentially intertwined (if that's even possible) with her death. I got married on the same day Princess Diana died, so it was all over the news. I was up late the night before, so I knew about it, but my wife missed it. People at the wedding were trying very hard not to let her know, trying not to

upset her. What they didn't realize is that my wife didn't care at all, so knowing wouldn't have made any difference.

But, for a long time, it was very hard to forget my anniversary, since the stories about the anniversary of her death would pop up on TV in the week or two before hand. That seems to have, pardon the expression, died down in recent years.



slarrow says:

June 26, 2009 at 3:59 pm

For my part, I am saddened and somewhat bemused by Michael Jackson's death. Part of it is age-related. I'm 34, so while Thriller isn't in my memory's sweet spot, some of the Bad songs are, particularly "Smooth Criminal". I'm still awed by the full version of that song in his vanity movie "Moonwalker". When challenged by younger people about actually liking Michael Jackson, I have to tell him the old joke about how good he was as a black man before he became a white woman.

I liked several of his songs, I really enjoyed many of his videos, but I was just struck by how the man could dance. You could turn off the sound and still see the music flowing through his body. I especially liked anything that showed a sense of humor; I liked it when he let the cocky kid shine through. With his passing as well as Farrah Fawcett, it's like a little bit of the 70s and 80s died on the same day.

But ultimately, Michael Jackson became a pathetic creature—more to the point, a creature of pathos. I felt contempt for him, but also pity. He had everything that we claim to want: fame, wealth, acclaim, and to a large measure, freedom from consequences. He lived in a place where reality could not touch him. And as a result, he warped. He became a perversion, a distortion of what ought to be. He became that oxymoron of celebrity, the one known and adored by all who is utterly, utterly alone.

So rest in peace, Mr. Jackson, a peace I doubt you ever knew in life.



HunkyBobTX says:

June 26, 2009 at 4:34 pm

Mjx: "They were always very peripheral figures in my life"

Isn't this is the appropriate position for ALL celebrities? Exception: If you know one personally, or importantly, one that knows you.

Unfortunately, our society is obsessed with celebrity; it's unhealthy. Many people think because they see these people on TV or hear a playback of their voices that that person knows them. They think they have some kind of a relationship with them.

Wrong.

Sorry. These people never met you. They never met me. (unless they did, and I'm not talking about sending you an autograph) We watched their TV shows, we bought their records (CDs, posters, etc.) But they did not know who we are.

These peoples' images appear on TV or their voices are recorded and broadcast to us and its for entertainment purposes only. They made a living this way.

One of the two provided desperate teenage boys with a fantasy, and later acted in movies that at best made people realize there's some scummy people out there who beat their wives and hopefully get their comeuppance. The other sang and danced and produced music videos that struck some deep chords in our collective psyche.

I'm sorry they died early in their natural lifetimes, but many people do. I had a cousin my age who died of cancer before she was 40. She was far more important in my life than these celebrities. I feel bad for these celebrities' families, because they knew the real people. All we knew were the images and caricatures of them. Those images remain; the songs are still played. We've lost nothing. The families and friends who that person knew have lost.

For us, these celebrities are not really people, despite what others may argue, because they don't know us. There's no two way human contact. It's an entirely one way road.

If these people or any other celebrity is more than peripheral in your life, then I pity you. You need real friends. You need real family.



madCanada says:

June 26, 2009 at 5:11 pm

HunkyBobTX, you don't understand. Celebrities are pagan idols. And America is a pagan country.



Brian says:

June 26, 2009 at 5:27 pm

Won't say what I think about MJ.

Eight Ball Deluxe was a great machine, but my fave was Lost World.



Joe the Painter says:

June 26, 2009 at 6:19 pm

Huh... Funny, in a sad kind of way; There are thousands if not tens of thousands of better people than Michael Jackson who died or were killed yesterday on Planet Earth... And Jackson seems to be getting all of their recognition.



zefal says:

June 27, 2009 at 1:43 am

wiredog,

"Narcissism and self-indulgence" are two things andie sullivan knows a lot about.



Joe says:

June 27, 2009 at 2:38 am

I do not think people are mourning the death of Michael Jackson as much as they mourn another reminder of the passing of their own youth. Michael Jackson became a freak and everyone knows that, but he was the soundtrack of every party and "drive-time" of our youth and his passing, along with the passing of every male fantasy of "Farrah" reminds us that we getting friggin' old! 😊



Mjx says:

June 27, 2009 at 4:50 am

HunkyBobTX, I agree with you, BUT, in case my reaction regarding either Ford or Goldblum was understood as indicating a sense of closeness to them, I just want to clarify: it isn't that.

Still, I've enjoyed some of the things they did, and, even if I have no idea of (or any particular interest in) their personal lives, I'm fairly glad to know that they may show up in another piece of entertainment that I just may enjoy.

So, although they too are peripheral to my life, I'm more familiar with their work than with that of Michael Jackson or Farrah Fawcett, since my only direct exposure to either was a September 10, 2001 Michael Jackson concert, to which I was taken by a boyfriend who mistakenly thought I'd enjoy this. In addition to the concert being interminable and numbing, I didn't get home until 2am the next morning; I had to go to work the next day, and the combination of concert plus sleep deprivation made QUITE a prelude to coming out of the 49th Street subway entrance, and seeing the second tower of the World Trade Center collapse in a heap of dust... Very surreal sequence.



MarBee says:

June 28, 2009 at 12:04 pm

So, growing up in the same atmosphere... why did Janet turn out fairly normal (for a celebrity) yet not Michael? I am dreading (and will be avoiding) the next few months of media coverage and fallout. Seriously aren't there more important things going on in this volatile world than the death of a bizarre has-been debt-ridden pedophile (alleged...)? Liked him in the 80's, not so much since then, but I'm sure you could probably tell.



MarBee says:

June 28, 2009 at 12:20 pm

JUST IN:

“By MITCH STACY, Associated Press Writer Mitch Stacy, Associated Press Writer – 7 mins ago

TAMPA, Fla. – Billy Mays, the burly, bearded television pitchman known for his boisterous hawking of products such as Orange Glo and OxiClean, has died. He was 50.

Tampa police said Mays was found unresponsive by his wife Sunday morning. A fire rescue crew pronounced him dead at 7:45 a.m.”



Joe Sixpack says:

June 28, 2009 at 4:22 pm

Michael Jackson was handled. How much was really him after the age of 30 isn't really known. It appears to be a lot like Elvis, where folks kept him 'where he needed' to be in order to profit from him for the duration. One imagines that MJ might have been a loss or a break even proposition for his 'handlers' or may have seen fit that the overdose happens.

Michael Jackson's music was **very** good. Lileks may not realize this, but there are a few musicians who you can immediately tell by their sound who they are. He may be too feminine to pick out a few of these names, given his proclivity for Pet Shop Boys et al. but you know when you hear a

Michael Jackson song
an Eddie Van Halen guitar riff
a note sung by Ronnie James Dio

etc.

So there's that.



madCanada says:

June 28, 2009 at 6:50 pm

Jackson will continue to be parsed on 1000 levels for many years to come ... And is that not the measure of a truly significant artist? ... RIP, MJ. Poor man.



Mike Gebert says:

June 28, 2009 at 10:24 pm

Jackson is probably the youngest celebrity left whose death means everyone recognizes his name.

Angelina Jolie, say, may be all over tabloids but I bet half of America has never heard of her. The top black music stars of today– 75% of America no more knows who Alicia Keys or 50 Cent are than black America knows who Perry Como was.

It won't be the last universal celebrity death– there's always Paul and Ringo– but it is one of the last times we'll all share the shock.



Ramona Cunningham says:

June 28, 2009 at 11:41 pm

I feel you and your readers are a little to blase about the passing of Michael Jackson. I would argue that he made a bigger cultural imprint than, say, Princess Diana, about whom people were hysterical 12 years ago. I did not own any of his albums, but thought he was a terrifically talented singer as a child. I think the big reaction that plays out is also some collective guilt.

I remember being in a department store at about the time "Scream" came out, and it played there. For a few moments I forgot who the singer was and enjoyed it for what it was–an edgier follow-up to "Leave Me Alone." You are correct about the self-mutilation through surgery and the irritating personality. There was a lot of self-righteous clucking on the Anderson Cooper show about how all of Mr. Jackson's famous friends had deserted him. However I believe lonely people are often alone for a reason. As Prince said at his Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction "Anyone on your payroll is not your friend."



Emm says:

June 29, 2009 at 10:14 pm

For the record, Mata Hari didn't have much actual cleavage.

Just saying.

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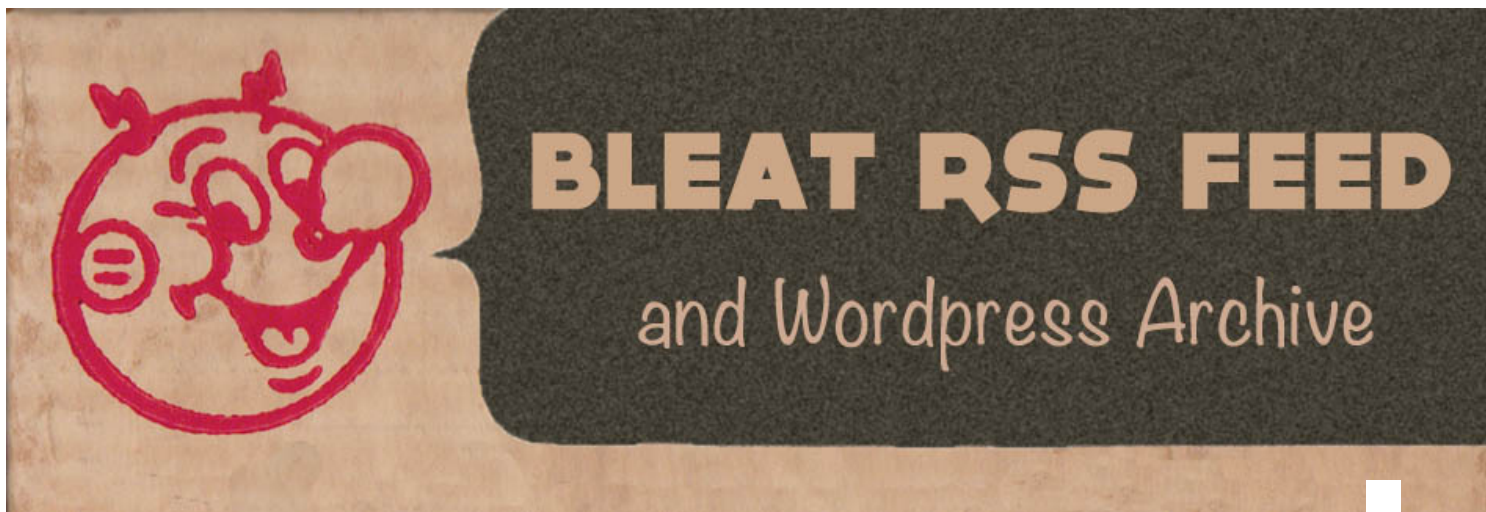
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MONDAY, JUNE 29

 on [JUNE 29, 2009](#) · [36 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

Sitting outside, nursing sore muscles. Just heard the screech of a bottle rocket blocks away, a bright white fingernail on the Chalkboard of Night. (Capitalization to indicate overwriting.) Now and then the scent of gunpowder wafts in, and it's lovely. But it means we're coming to the second great tentpole of summer; after young June, it's bluff cheery July, and the great long yawn of August. At some point I'll hear the sound of the first cicada, the Langoliers of summer, drilling holes in the season until it all collapses in the glorious ruin of fall, and I will be reminded that every year I use the same tired metaphor. Well. It's not like the year is inventing new seasons to describe.

I mulch therefore I am. Well, not true; I don't mulch. I put down mulch. And by "put down" I mean I swear at every bag in the most humiliating, derisive fashion.

This weekend saw the last of the mulch-endumpingment at Jasperwood. Takes about fifty, sixty bags to cover everything, and since the Element only holds 20 at a shot – well, you do the math. There are four areas that need mulch, including a satellite garden at the bottom of the hill that has the same relationship to the house as the Virgin Islands to the continental United States. As I have noted before, due to the original design for the neighborhood and the long sloping hill on which nothing can be built, I have a preposterous front yard, and the garden waaaay down at the bottom of the hill was put in years ago to amuse people who might walk past and wish

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

someone would put up a stone wall for their dog to urinate against. It was easier to drive the car around to the bottom of the hill and unload the bags than drag them out of the garage. Lazy? Yes. Yes, I am. But the mulch-dispersal is an ugly job, scratchy and hot – but oh so aromatic – so any shortcut, yes, I’ll take it.

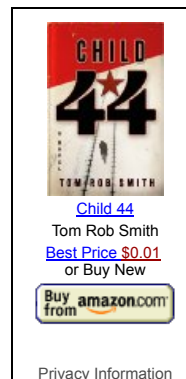
My efforts hardly compare to my wife’s efforts, which involve weeding and planting, also known as “editing and rewriting.” St the end of the weekend she’s able to enjoy the fruits of her labor for 12 minutes before the sun goes down. It makes her happy, though; when all is in bloom, it’s a reminder why we live here, how these few clement months drive away the memory of the barren interminable winter, how it wouldn’t be the same to look at cactuses all year.

Come January, I long for cactuses. And they’re perfect plants for people who are sick of tending a garden. *Oh Hell No you’re not pruning me.*

I dumped out the bags while listening to “Suspense” radio dramas, periodically interrupted by my daughter and her friend. They were playing Sims, and needed my help on this or that. At one point I was at the bottom of the hill, listening to Agnes Moorehead shriek 62 years ago, and my daughter was standing at the top: DAD, she shouted. WHAT DOES WOOHOO MEAN?

Made it up the hill in record time. Happily, they were content just to build and design houses, thank God. I’d showed her how to do that Saturday night: we stayed up late working on houses, she on her computer, me on mine. I think Feng Shui is bunkum, but I had to point out to her she’d built a house where the front door gave a view of the bathroom, which not only had no door but had the commode positioned so any new arrival would see it. Her house had the dark, twisty feel of the apartment building constructed by the murderer in “Devil in the White City,” and was redeemed only by a bowling alley in the living room.

Aside from that? Media was consumed, unconsciousness was enjoyed in the usual rations, bacon was sternly dealt with. Friday was the most creative evening, with scanning galore; as you might know, it’s difficult to get a good digital representation of galore, but if you press down it flattens out nicely. I finished watching “Lolita,” a Kubrick movie I’ve always avoided for the uber-ookie subject matter – never read the book, having concluded from the plot description that Humbert Humbert should be sent to prison prison, but the movie is very very good. James Mason is just sympathetic enough so you don’t hate everyone in the movie – interesting how the movie makes you dislike him for being foolish, though, not for being a perv. Peter Sellers plays several parts, which was a revelation – “Strangelove” much have built on the gosh-wow buzz he got out of masquerading as different characters in “Lolita.” The girl who plays the title character is a natural, but also a hateful little scheming minx. What you remember is the dreariness of it all – the grey rainy highways, the mean shabby towns, the tiny musty apartment, the drizzle and delirium and desperate delusional fatigue.



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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Glad I finally watched it, but it's one of those movies that gives you a greasy feeling from the first image, and leaves you wishing none of it had been necessary.

This would be a thin offering for a Monday morning, but you'll find something interesting over at [buzz.mn: the Curious Case of Dr. H. S. Tanner, Starvationist](#). Enjoy! Matchbook up around noon, of course.

Pass it along, if you wish



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HOST WITH THE MOST

36 RESPONSES TO *monday, june 29*



KMcC says:

June 29, 2009 at 5:04 am

you must read Lolita. It is wonderful. Don't deny yourself the pleasure because its subject is so crushingly awful. You must read Lolita



THX 1138 says:

June 29, 2009 at 5:52 am

I'd also highly recc. you try to get your hands on radio mystery theatre w/ E.G. Marshall narrating. I listened to the suspense shows (or at least 8 cassettes or so of them), strangely enough on a drive up to Minneapolis... IMO radio mystery theatre has better stories. But suspense had better commercials.



hpoulter says:

June 29, 2009 at 6:25 am

Nabokov is a brilliant writer, but I too have avoided Lolita because of the ooginess. I think I'll re-read "Transparent Things" instead.



hpoulter says:

June 29, 2009 at 6:41 am

CBS Radio Mystery Theater broadcasts are available for free download from the internet archive (archive dot org) . So are CBS Radio Workshop shows (an earlier, also interesting series) and much, much more.



Mark O'Polo says:

June 29, 2009 at 6:50 am

Peter Sellers was really into multiple roles. He played the entire royal family of the Duchy of Grand Fenwick (if memory serves) in the Mouse that Roared.



Bill Hensley says:

June 29, 2009 at 6:58 am

From memory, the opening paragraph: "Lolita. Light of my life; fire of my loins. My sin; my soul. Lo-li-ta. The tip of the tongue taking a

trip of three steps down from the palate to tap, at three, the teeth.”

Alliteration for days!



Patrick says:

June 29, 2009 at 7:01 am

I can't believe some people still pay for mulch, unless it's the only way to get it. A lot of cities or counties have town dumps/recycling centers with piles of mulch that would make Mt. Everest seem like nothing more than a handful of gravel. You just have to bring your own vehicle to haul it away and a way to load it onto said vehicle. Most won't charge you a single cent or dollar if you get it yourself. If you ask them to load it up, they'll charge you, or if you ask them for a truckload (their own trucks), they'll charge you.

Of course, I don't think you'd want to toss loose mulch into the Element, which would stand to reason for visits to the big orange home improvement retail concern.



Nancy says:

June 29, 2009 at 7:28 am

Started to watch "Lolita" because I felt I should. Got further turned-off (in addition to my natural antipathy to the subject-matter) by "the dreariness of it all – the grey rainy highways, the mean shabby towns, the tiny musty apartment, the drizzle and delirium and desperate delusional fatigue." So I quit watching. Maybe I will read the book.

As for mulch, the stuff from the dump is fine for big areas but when you are dressing down your wife's hard-work for appearance-sake (in addition to water conservation) the bag stuff is cleaner, more uniform and not riddled with weed and tree seeds. Just my opinion of course.



Patrick McClure says:

June 29, 2009 at 7:47 am

Well, I realize we all come here to see how James spent his weekend, but I've got to chime in also. Saturday morning I canoed a short trip down the Green River in Mammoth Cave National Park. My 10 yr old's Cub Pack was having a summer trip. To my 10 yr old's great delight, my 20 yr old son joined us for the trip. It was just hot enough to remind you it was summer, but not heat stroke level hot. The water was cool, and the scenery was beautiful. Saw a couple of deer along the river, not the least bit scared of us. We stopped to wade in some shallow sections, and stopped to fish in some backwaters. The wading was successful, the fishing wasn't. All in all as great a weekend as one could ask for.



juanito - John Davey says:

June 29, 2009 at 8:09 am

As I had tisk – tiskd James on Twitter when he notified of his trip to fetch 20 bags of mulch, two weeks ago I returned from a lovely vacation at Avila Beach on a Thursday evening, and was greeted by 15 YARDS of shredded cedar mulch Friday morning.

Hills.

1/3 of an acre.

One. Wheelbarrow. At. A. Time.

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20 Bags? Sissy stuff.

Much mulching ensued.

We can get away with a “freshening” (re-mulchification?) bi-annually. But the kids like to see the dump truck back down the driveway and then unload (truck’s dump bed almost tacks out an oak tree every time).

In all likelihood, its possibly more economical to have the mulch delivered in bulk. I understand the challenges of your yard – uphill – but bark is light stuff compared to the 10 yards of topsoil, or the 5 yards of decomposed granite that I seem to have to move every two years or so.

They also have trucks with big reverse Hoovers on them that have a sewer-pipe sized hose that can “spray” the mulch in about a tenth of the time it takes to lump bags (or wheelbarrow) loads about the yard. And if you opt for synthetic mulch (infused with cedar scent, no less!) it can be a more permanent solution.

With all that said, the end product delightful. The process – *teh blech*.



Gibbering Madness says:

June 29, 2009 at 8:11 am

That’s Roma, R – O – M – A.



Kat_in_Ossining says:

June 29, 2009 at 8:12 am

I concur w/ KMcC–get over your reluctance/revulsion and read Lolita. One needn’t love or even like every narrator. It’s one of the most amazing and beautiful novels of the twentieth century. It is not a novel about pedophilia, and it is not an erotic novel in any way. (And I don’t think Humbert belongs anywhere other than prison, either.)



erp says:

June 29, 2009 at 8:44 am

We just laid down almost 400 bags of cypress mulch. Looks great! It’s a lot easier working with bags than a wheelbarrow and shovel especially if it rains before you’re done.

Lolita? Dreary and disgusting — I don’t care how well it’s written. I didn’t finish it and didn’t see the movie. James Mason is creepy enough just generally.



Suellen says:

June 29, 2009 at 9:00 am

Never read Lolita, never going to–nor, after James’ review, will I ever watch the movie. But my son read Nabokov’s autobiographical Speak, Memory in high school, and said, “Mom, you’ll love this, read it,” and he was right. Childhood in pre-revolutionary Russia, and very evocative.



Les Nessman says:

June 29, 2009 at 9:09 am

Mulch? pffft. Forget the short-lived biological stuff.
Use a nice river rock or other stone. It's better than having to add mulch every year or so.



Acidophilus Rex says:

June 29, 2009 at 10:02 am

My neighbor's house is just like that... you walk in the front door, and THERE'S THE TOILET. The house is about 60 years old, so it can't be blamed on the Sims.



Gina says:

June 29, 2009 at 10:03 am

Do you have the "Suspense" episode called "Consequence" with Jimmy Stewart? An amazing piece of work. The ending could give you chills in the middle of August.

Regarding "Lolita" — which I had to read in college, and raced through as fast as possible because the subject was so icky — I don't quite understand the school of thought that dubs the girl hateful or scheming. We're talking about a kid. A molested kid. A badly brought up, molested kid. None of those qualities confers sainthood on a person, I'll grant you, but surely they can garner her a little sympathy and understanding!



Andrew says:

June 29, 2009 at 10:17 am

Part of the point of Lolita—the book at least—is to drag you into the child molester's viewpoint and see him as charming and urbane, and then to pull the rug out from under you and remind you that he was an evil man from the very beginning. Lolita's name wasn't even Lolita, after all—that was bestowed on her by Humbert as part of his effort to change her reality into his fantasy. It's a great book.



swschrads says:

June 29, 2009 at 10:34 am

interesting first day back at Bleatage to discuss Lolita.

it fits, however. there is much more important stuff in the news to think about.

such as, what really killed Billy Mays?

Lyric for the day..

"Where does the sun go
when it does not shine?"



JoAnne says:

June 29, 2009 at 10:41 am

Old Time Radio is a subject near and dear to my heart – have you tried Rocky Jordan – WONDERFUL! You can download the eps for free on the Internet Archive site. Jack Moyles began the series as Rocky, but it was then rebooted with George Raft in the title role. Sound effects and the wonderful, atmospheric music (the show is set in Cairo, post WWII) really make this series stand out. 😊



Lou Shumaker says:
June 29, 2009 at 11:19 am

Double what Andrew says. It's fascinating to read Humbert's self-justifications and see through him to the horrors he's inflicting. The tension lies there, and in the heart-breaking ending, when you sympathize (a little) for the pain the monster gets.

If adulthood is defined as holding in your head two diametrically opposed ideas, then "Lolita" would be the test. It's not graphic, it's not gross, it's beautifully written (and I would recommend the Library of America volumes highly), and you could empathize without condoning man's better and worse nature.

If you can comprehend Humbert Humbert, you can comprehend Michael Jackson.



Lou Shumaker says:
June 29, 2009 at 11:20 am

Sorry, I should have written "empathize man's better and worse natures without condoning evil."



wendy gunther says:
June 29, 2009 at 11:56 am

"Peter Sellers plays several parts, which was a revelation – "Strangelove" much have built on the gosh-wow buzz he got out of masquerading as different characters in "Lolita." "

Could be, but I wonder if it built on the gosh-wow buzz he generated for several years playing nearly two-thirds of the characters in the Goon Show. Spike Milligan played about a third of them, and Harry Secombe played only one. It was Peter Sellers who took up the slack.

A friend of mine's mother, who lived through the Second World War in England, said she remembered the years when the Goon Show came on everyone's radio on Monday evenings, and for half an hour the streets of every town in England would be deserted, with only a blue glow showing through the windows.



Capt. Queeg says:
June 29, 2009 at 12:17 pm

Despite its oogy subject matter, Lolita is a must-read for no other reason than to experience one of the great wordsmiths of all time. It is not an easy book to read, but is chock full of such wonderful little syntactical gems. Recommended season for reading: summer.



Petronius says:
June 29, 2009 at 12:27 pm

HBO or Showtime did Lolita a few years ago. It wasn't as funny as Kubrick's version, but it was closer to the book. Yes, you always sympathize with the narrator, but just as in the book they lead you along until you realize that Humbert has ruined this girl's life. Highly recommended.



curtsnide says:
June 29, 2009 at 1:52 pm

I'm with Queeg (and the others), reading *Lolita* is to experience a true craftsman. The actual story is incidental to the book.



HT says:

June 29, 2009 at 4:43 pm

"It's a smutty book."

Eulalie Mackechnie Shinn



Noel Davis says:

June 29, 2009 at 7:53 pm

'*Lolita*' is even more amazing when you realize English is not even Nabokov's first language. Imagine learning another tongue, then writing one of the best novels ever written in it. Combine that with the time period he published it in and you have a man with massive chutzpah.



Ben says:

June 29, 2009 at 8:41 pm

One of the highlights of my recent birthday was receiving my wishlist-ed copy of "The Annotated *Lolita*". I think it's the first book I read with an unreliable narrator. You feel a bit of sympathy for Humbert without ever forgetting he's an awful human being. In an somewhat similar vein, I can highly recommend *Tomcat In Love* by O'Brien.



Jose says:

June 29, 2009 at 8:54 pm

The 1997 remake of *Lolita* with Jeremy Irons and Dominique Swain had a hard time with finding sponsors and distributors — interesting the way perceptions change after 4 decades. I can't help but think that part of the problem was that people, sight-unseen, expected it to be extra salacious and exploitative, but that other part of it was that by now there's an expectation that the depiction of the molester be always in B/W as an obvious monster from the get-go. The thing is, to this very day, a large number of pedophiles DO delude themselves that what they're doing to the kids is "love" — part of the point in the book is that you can be tempted to sympathize with Hubert if you're not careful, hearing only his side of the story. The book itself has also been described as Nabokov's love letter to the English language because it's so beautifully written.



gottacook says:

June 29, 2009 at 10:45 pm

I also own "The Annotated *Lolita*." Not only is *Lolita*'s name not really *Lolita* (except in Humbert's retelling), as noted above; "Humbert Humbert" is also a false name the narrator gives himself, and he describes how he arrived at it. This aspect is unavoidably lost in Kubrick's movie (and, I assume, in Adrian Lyne's 1997 version): Everyone calls them *Lolita* and Humbert.

In Kubrick's *Lolita*, Peter Sellers doesn't play multiple roles as such; he plays a character (the playwright Clare Quilty) who likes to adopt different personas to keep Humbert off balance. Quilty in the novel doesn't do this, although both Quiltys ultimately steal *Lolita* away

from Humbert.

Although Nabokov wrote a screenplay for Kubrick, very little of it was used (although he's the sole credited screenwriter); his screenplay was published in the mid-1970s and has an interesting preface about the whole process.

A few much-loathed stage adaptations were also attempted that some here may have heard of: the musical "Lolita, My Love" by Alan Jay Lerner and John Barry, which closed in Boston in 1971, and the 1981 play "Lolita" by Edward Albee starring Donald Sutherland (see Frank Rich's New York Times review, still available online).



James Vaughan says:

June 29, 2009 at 10:54 pm

the Langoliers of Summer- WOW



Ross says:

June 30, 2009 at 2:58 am

"Despite its oogy subject matter..."
Oogy? Was ist dis "oogy"? Der Fuhrer never said "oogy"!



Marjorie J. Birch says:

June 30, 2009 at 5:27 pm

Noel Davis: I think English was Nabokov's simultaneous second language — he grew up in an aristocratic family and it was a standard practice to have an English governess — he was probably taught French from an early age as well.

I reread "Lolita" for the chapter describing their long road trip, visiting all the tourist traps, describing diners and motels, and even sending up Burma Shave signs. "The bearded lady read our jingle/ and she is now no longer single."



Medbie says:

July 1, 2009 at 1:41 pm

You really REALLY should read Lolita. I know the subject matter is icky but Nabokov is so stunning a writer. . . I was blown away, totally blown away. I still felt a bit "greasy", yes, but he intends the reader to feel that way. In case you are interested, here is my review of Lolita, back when I read it 5 years ago. It's too long to reprint in a comments, but gives a more detailed idea of why the book is so darn good. LOL <http://medbie.blogspot.com/2004/05/lolita.html>



Angie says:

July 2, 2009 at 2:54 pm

Another vote for reading Lolita, and I must say it's heartening to hear from so many Lileks followers who admired Lolita enough to find out more about Nabokov, who indeed learned English at a very early age. Lolita is gorgeous, brilliant, heartbreaking, and I will just add, as I didn't see anyone mention it yet, incredibly funny.

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A lost cultural reference,
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ABOUT

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Comic Sins: the original Bulls-Eye

TUESDAY, JUNE 30

on JUNE 30, 2009 · 40 COMMENTS · in DOMESTIC LIFE, POP CULTURE

Monday was one of those days that felt off and wrong from the start, and never lost the off-kilter feel. Five hours of sleep will do that to you, I suppose. Cool day, which was part of the problem. Breezy and cloudy and moody; the sun had no heft. You hate to spend a June day on such weak beer.

Early in the evening I got a call from a robot asking if my phone books had been delivered, and it mispronounced the name of Edina, one of the surrounding towns. Called E-Dine-A like the AbFab character: “E-deen-a.” More proof robots will do a lousy job of running things – even if I’d been able to correct him, his apology would have been excessive, polite, but rote. No shame. No long brooding episodes of HAL-like self-analysis. He asked if I got the books; press one if yes. Then: did I get the yellow pages? Yes. Did they come in a plastic bag? Oh for heaven’s sake, yes, they came in a plastic bag. Have the delivery people been keeping the bags and selling them on eBay? GENUINE MUST SEE. There was no option to tell them to come and get the stupid things, although I believe we do have an opt-out process in place. Should be opt-in, as few people ever think “I should cancel the phone book this year” and set about finding the means by which the useless bricks can be kept from the door.

To make matters worse, we have a competing phone-book company that also drops off 20 pounds; perhaps we should bring them to the company’s parking lot, soak them in gas, set them alight and loft them via trebuchet into their HQ. It might take a few years, but they’d get the idea.

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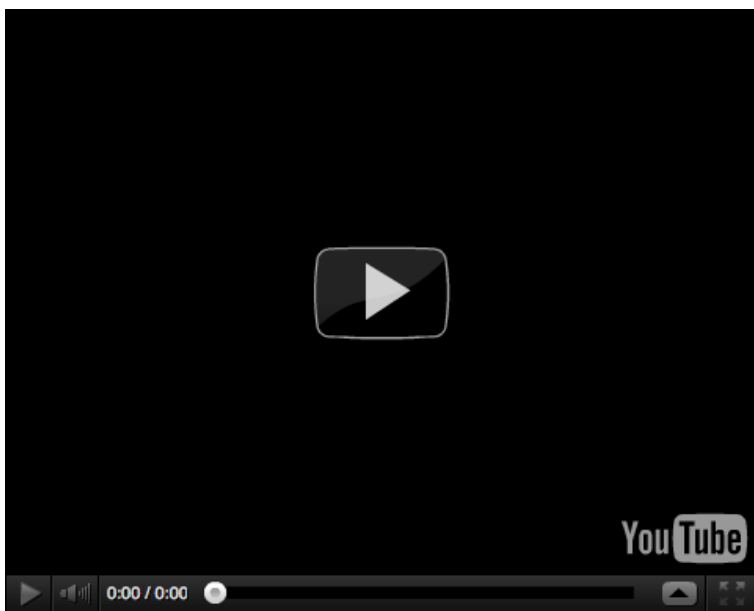
A BOOK I RECOMMEND

Watched part of “The Island” last night – a remake of “Clonus” by Michael Bay, the Billy May of directors - and it wasn’t that bad. The first half, anyway. I’m not a Michael Bay hater – I loathed Armageddon, because he didn’t hold a single shot longer than 1.5 seconds, but as loud empty garish noise-movies go, they fill the bill. I’m almost tempted to see Transformers, because it seems to set new standards for nonstop pyrotechnic violence on a scale unseen since the Normandy invasion – which, come to think of it, would make an AWESOME Transformers movie, because the ships themselves would sprout legs and walk on the beach and they’d be just as tall as the cliffs and they could punch the pillboxes, and it would be like BANG, then BANG, then BANG, and Nazi juice would squirt out the slits and they’d all die. Except for [Pluskat](#); we like Pluskat. In “The Longest Day” he was one of the Nazis you’d give a pass, because he didn’t seem to be a real Nazi, and was furious with other Nazis.

(Hah: according to wikipedia, Pluskat was played by someone who had a perfect Mad Magazine name for a Danish children’s author: Hans Christian Blech.)

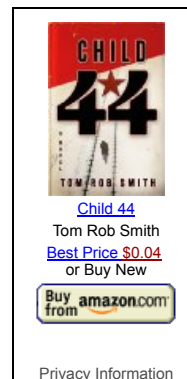
Anyway, it can’t be worse than Orson Welles’ aborted version of Transformers. He only shot one reel before he had an argument with the producers and the financiers, and the project shut down. (Terry Gilliam was trying to make a documentary about Welles’ Transformer movie, but he had an argument with the producers and the financiers, and one of his actors died.) Just kidding. All that is nonsense.

Except for the Orson Welles – Transformers connection.



Anyway, “The Island” isn’t that bad, except that Scar-Jo has never struck me as All That; she looks like someone who is getting over an allergic reaction to shellfish.

Best part of today: going to pick up daughter and friend at a summer-school



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

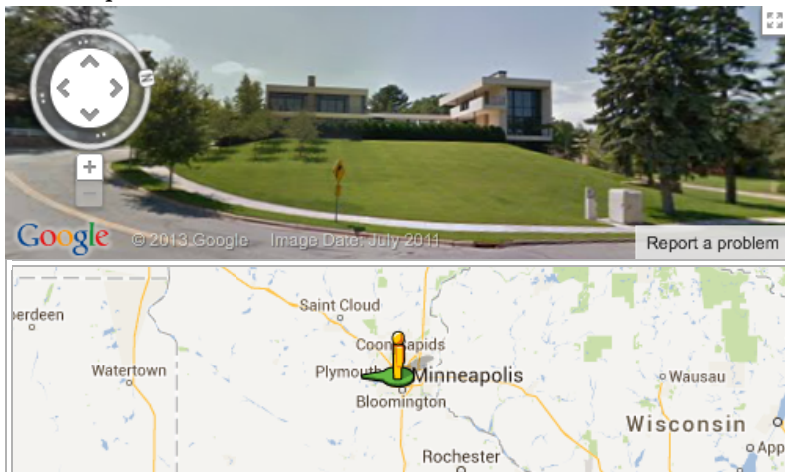
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THE DISTANT PAST

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event in the north-west part of town. Went through the tony neighborhood along the northern lakes; I'm sure they view those of us in Southwest as trendy fools who have to live by the cool lakes. The houses are magnificent – saw one modern structure under construction that looked like something out of a 1970s film about The Future, the sort of house with mod plastic furniture and men in jumpsuits with sideburns, drinking scotch, talking on chunky CRT “videophones.”

The first part, before the addition:



Workmen swarmed over the place, and I'd bet every one of them would choose something more homey and traditional. It wasn't supposed to be so – the great early modernists were convinced that the Prole would be happy to insert himself into his cube in a great glass hive, sit in a rational chair and study a Mondrian before going down to the Worker's Center on the ground floor and hear a lecture.

The bourgeois desires of the Lower Orders must be such a disappointment to their betters. If only they knew!

Later today: Comic Sins around 11; B&W World in the afternoon, and Small Town Website of the Week at buzz.mn in the early AM. See you soon.

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Pass it along, if you wish



40 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, june 30*



just Ken says:
June 30, 2009 at 6:01 am

If Scarlett is the result of a shellfish reaction, I'm serving grilled lobster tail this weekend.



Moishe3rd says:
June 30, 2009 at 6:37 am

James. Welcome to the 'hood.

HOST WITH THE MOST

That corner lot that you saw was originally sold to build 3 of those block houses. That one, the first one, was built and was on the market for about 5 million dollars around 2005. It finally sold for around 3 million. Now, that owner has bought the lot next to him and is building the “addition” you saw. I don’t know if he bought the front lot on which they could theoretically build another 3 million dollar house.

Based on Mr. Lileks description of Jasperwood, this whole corner lot, also on a hill, now divided up into 3 multi-million dollar properties, is smaller than James’ whole yard...

Now, the houses in that side of my neighborhood are admittedly expensive, but to put it in perspective, the big Lawyer who won the Tobacco Lawsuits way back when, bought a beautiful old house about 1/2 block away with the same hillside view, on a large plot of land, for about 1.5 million.

My mind boggles at what people will pay for...

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hpoulter says:

June 30, 2009 at 7:08 am

So Lileks is immune to the Scarlett fever, eh? She makes me whinny like a colt, even though I am an old gray nag.

I didn’t know it was “eh-dine-a”. Now, if I ever have any reason to say it, I won’t sound like a dope, or at least an outlander. I will put it in the same file as “San Raff-ell” for San Rafael, CA.



Nancy says:

June 30, 2009 at 7:28 am

My son (26), who liked the first Transformer movie, panned the second—essentially agreeing with what most critics were saying. His date (several years younger and not as much of a movie aficionado) said she thought it was good.

I know I am a female and all but I don’t get the ScarJo thing at-all. There are some beauties out there but if you saw her on the street, lit by daylight and not dressed by stylists—she would be an attractive but not stunning young lady. Just my opinion—and I have never seen her in a movie so maybe I am missing the intangibles.



Blackwing1 says:

June 30, 2009 at 7:30 am

We liked Pluskat because he was nice to his dog. But don’t you wonder what happened to Pluskat’s dog, that beautiful pre-AKC (non-sloped-back) German Shepherd? “Ver ist mein hundert?”, is the last we hear of him. Hope the poor critter made it out of the range of the shelling.

Don’t forget Gert Frobe (pre-Goldfinger) as the corpulent sergeant, cordially despised by the French farmer.



EG says:

June 30, 2009 at 8:07 am

Thank you. I also do not enjoy the Scarlett Johansen. It has been explained to me that she has excellent ta-tas for a skinny girl, but a lot of people fit that description, don’t they?

We get the “did you get your phone book?” call here, too. I just hang up because the phone book went straight from the driveway to the recycle bin and I don’t want the robot to feel bad. But really,

shouldn't a robot know that we all use the internet to find phone numbers?



Nicole says:

June 30, 2009 at 8:17 am

Heh. I give house tours at a modernist home, even though I don't care for the aesthetic. In the winter, it is bleak as hell in there, all gray and metal and angular. I prefer Arts & Crafts. But the job posting was for an interpreter, and the house wasn't specified. It is sometimes a relief to come home to my sloppy, colorful place.



Irritable Bear says:

June 30, 2009 at 8:37 am

Those yellow pages are also delivered to Irritable Bear here in the woods. Irritable Bear is not irritated by this, because it means Irritable Bear has a backup if Irritable Bear runs out of Charmin™.

(And Irritable Bear did not choose the word "backup" out of hand. Or the words "out of hand".)



Henry says:

June 30, 2009 at 8:38 am

Recently over 120 phone books (name of book withheld but is a bright color) were dumped on a pristine shoreline in a local secluded state park. Most were still bound in shrink wrapped plastic bundles of 12. Many others were randomly tossed about in the woods and on the beach. Quite a desecration for a company that touts "we are an eco-friendly company". After having notified the company, the vendor, the state agency in charge of the park and the state police We recycled the books. We later learned that these phone book dumpings are not terribly uncommon. The perps think the books won't be found but the distributors say they always turn up. The employees must really enjoy their work. They don't deliver the books, dump them in a remote location and finish their shift by taking a nap on the shore...job completed!

In this resort area where many residents are gone for the Winter the phone books pile up on lawns, driveways and the scenic roadsides. They become unreadable soggy messes when the residents return in the Spring. And who need 3 phone books anyway?



Kirk M. says:

June 30, 2009 at 9:08 am

There's the usual Star Trek references and now a reference to AbFab. I always knew I loved you.



Les Nessman says:

June 30, 2009 at 9:24 am

Loved the Island, because it is all too believable. I could see it happening in 20 years.

ScarJo- Very nice looking girl but...meh. One of many.



Roger says:

June 30, 2009 at 9:42 am

I don't remember the scene from The Longest Day but if I remember my German right, Pluskat would have been saying "Wo ist mein hund?" (where is my dog?), not "Wer ist mein hund?" (Who is my dog). By that time I'm sure Pluskat knew who his dog was.



Lisa says:

June 30, 2009 at 9:52 am

Notes on removing yourself from phone book delivery lists (as this issue is a major bee in my bonnet):

This page will allow you to select "zero/0" as the number of books you receive in your zip code:

<http://selectyourdex.dexknows.com/SelectYourDex/searchByZipCodeAction.do> for all of the Dex-related phone books. There's four books wrapped in plastic that I won't have to recycle on the day I receive them.

Info from a Star Trib article on this:

"HOW TO REACH DISTRIBUTORS

To make changes for Dex phone books, go to

<http://www.dexknows.com> and click on "directory options" at the bottom. You may also call 1-877-2-GET-DEX. For Yellowbook, call 1-800-YB-YELLO. For Verizon Yellow Pages (Idearc), call 1-800-888-8448."

Your blog post reminded me that I'd been meaning to research this, and I was able to remove myself from four books we receive from the Dex company at the link above. I also called both Yellowbook and Verizon this morning using the numbers above and both companies removed me from their lists within about two minutes. Easy peasy!



bgbear (roger h) says:

June 30, 2009 at 10:00 am

I never heard of "The Island" and one afternoon my wife was watching it on cable, and asked what it was about. I said the first thought that came to my head "isn't that 'Clonus' "?

Really now, is Ewan McGregor an improvement over the forgettable comic relief fireman from "Emergency"?

Another MST3K classic with Peter Graves.



Doc says:

June 30, 2009 at 10:08 am

There's some controversy over Pluskat's actual whereabouts on D-Day. Well, not controversy exactly. Some say he was at a brothel instead of his bunker, but being technical advisor he was able to correct this problem. Not that it makes him less likeable.



jeischen says:

June 30, 2009 at 10:59 am

I loved your idea for hurling blazing phone books at the phone book companies. I'm looking at my feet below my desk right now and can count six humongous phone books plus the four or five smaller local books in my desk drawer. We used to have just two phone books, the town phone book and the "city" phone book. Now we have three city phone books, divided into huge individual white and yellow page additions. We also have two county phone books and at least

two or three local books. Since I own a business, I get sales reps from each phone book company coming to my office. This year, I have decided not to have any display ads in the phone book. I think phone books are becoming obsolete and will move my advertising dollars to online sources and direct mail.



Paige says:

June 30, 2009 at 11:44 am

O. M. G. That house on the hill is about four Tuscan-looking poplar trees from being the lair of one Edna Mode.

NO CAPES.



Will says:

June 30, 2009 at 11:49 am

Between being nice to his dog, Max, and yelling at the REMF, Pluskat was one of the more interesting characters in the film. "The invasion is coming." "Where are they headed?" "Straight for me!!!!"

It's funny how many charismatic Germans there are in the film. Pluskat, Goldfinger (Sgt. Coffecan), General Blumentritt, General Marcks, the irritable Luftwaffe pilot.



SeanF says:

June 30, 2009 at 11:51 am

My five-year-old daughter, whilst we were driving past a Burger King (or was it a McDonald's?) the other day, excitedly informed me that they have "Transformers" with their kids' meals. She ended her spiel with a pitch-perfect, "It's in theaters now."

I told her she watches too much T.V. 😊



juanita - John Davey says:

June 30, 2009 at 11:57 am

Phone books. Bleh. I'm sorry, "directories".

An Agency I work for gave *just* AT&T the gift of over \$100,000 for a one page yellow page ad (not the first position in the book either) for just one town – they also got the special full color "Tab" page as well, plus some yellowpage.com positioning. When the same Agency (old ownership) had 20 locations in Northern California, we used to place over \$1 million with just AT&T annually.

The Agency also has adds in 3 other competing yellowpages.

The point being, is companies still see value in the yellow pages or they wouldn't be throwing \$100K away every year for one book. And when we measure ad performance, we still get a *very* strong result from the yellowpages. I can't explain it, but it still seems to work.

Go figure!!?



Bilwick says:

June 30, 2009 at 11:58 am

Yes, Pluskat! In the movie he's sort of a Third Reich Everyman anyone who's worked in an office and has to deal with entrenched

stupidity from the higher-ups can identify with. Pluskat at the beach, watching the oncoming invasion armada and reporting back to HQ via phone: "You know all those ships you say the Allies haven't got? Well, they've got them!" Officer at HG (patronizingly): "Pluskat, Pluskat . . . where are all these ships heading?" Pluskat: "STRAIGHT FOR ME!!!" You can tell he wanted to add, " . . . you stupid @\$%^&!!" or something, but didn't.

I liked the thing about the dog disappearing. I wonder if it was true. It was like the dog, with that instinct for earthquakes that animals have, sensed that Hell was about to break loose, and decided to go pee on some trees in Southern France.



juanito - John Davey says:

June 30, 2009 at 12:01 pm

*Will Says:
June 30th, 2009 at 11:49 am*

Between being nice to his dog, Max, and yelling at the REMF...

Rear Echelon M F. I've always cherished that phrase...



Dave (in MA) says:

June 30, 2009 at 12:09 pm

"AbFab". Ugh.

I used to use phonebook pages to line my bird's cage until he decided it was fun to shred the paper and I wondered if the ink was good for him, so now they go from the driveway to the garage floor to await the semi-weekly recycling truck.

(wondering what a jumpsuit with sideburns looks like)



staghounds says:

June 30, 2009 at 12:20 pm

The Planster's Vision

Cut down that timber! Bells, too many and strong,
Pouring their music through the branches bare,
From moon-white church-towers down the windy air
Have pealed the centuries out with Evensong.
Remove those cottages, a huddled throng!
Too many babies have been born in there,
Too many coffins, bumping down the stair,
Carried the old their garden paths along.

I have a Vision of The Future, chum,
The worker's flats in fields of soya beans
Tower up like silver pencils, score on score:
And Surging Millions hear the Challenge come
From microphones in communal canteens
"No Right! No wrong! All's perfect, evermore."

John Betjeman



Gibbering Madness says:

June 30, 2009 at 12:24 pm

*It's funny how many charismatic Germans there are in the film.
Pluskat, Goldfinger (Sgt. Coffecan), General Blumentritt, General*

Marcks, the irritable Luftwaffe pilot.

That's one of the movie's great strengths, I think – instead of the enemy being just The Germans, there are two kinds – warriors-for-the-working-day who just happen to be in the wrong side's army, and snotty Prussian jerks. Sure, we can identify with the French who dislike Sgt. Goldfinger, but we can also identify with the goofy schlub who's just doing his Army chores.



swschrads says:

June 30, 2009 at 12:49 pm

phone books. you use a stack of them to press flowers with, don't you, because they're free and The Oxford Dictionary is not... right?



swschrads says:

June 30, 2009 at 12:51 pm

oh! yes! I just remembered. phone books are great for laying out scraps that you are spraying with spray adhesive to put into scrap books. spray the little oddments, put them in place in the scrap book... then flip a couple pages for a fresh spot to glue.

but we don't do that.



aodhan says:

June 30, 2009 at 1:34 pm

“Off and wrong” soong?

There is an opt-in option, it's buying land line service from the phone company. Though I'm cell-only and we still get phone books. Poor trees.



Will says:

June 30, 2009 at 2:01 pm

That's one of the movie's great strengths, I think – instead of the enemy being just The Germans, there are two kinds – warriors-for-the-working-day who just happen to be in the wrong side's army, and snotty Prussian jerks.

I agree completely. I watch that film every year (guess which day), and damn near have it memorized by now. The weakest link, to me, are the American parts of the film. John Wayne, Eddie Albert, Jeff Hunter, and Fabian have some of the worst stilted wooden dialogue the world. Hank Fonda and Robert Mitchum help balance that out, though.



Will says:

June 30, 2009 at 2:06 pm

And let's not forget the German telephone operator when the underground was acting up: “Hello! Damn! Hello! Damn!”



DensityDuck says:

June 30, 2009 at 3:44 pm

Dude, no. Don't go see “Transformers”. Buy the 1980s animated movie on DVD and watch that instead.

The current “Transformers” property is horrible, horrible junk, with

the “Transformers” brand name slapped on it in a desperate attempt to catch 1980s nostalgia. It’s a 150-minute movie about transforming robots where the actual transforming robots are on screen for less than 30 minutes. It’s a movie where a robot dresses up like a girl and tries to get the male lead to kiss it. It’s a movie where being black is a humorous character trait.

It’s just *_bad_*. And not even “haha let’s mock this on RiffTrax” bad. This is “Borat” with occasional robots.



rivlax says:

June 30, 2009 at 4:22 pm

My favorite Hans Christian Belch performance was as Robert Shaw’s gofer sergeant in “Battle of the Bulge,” 1965. I love it when he walks off at the end.



Mike says:

June 30, 2009 at 4:58 pm

Seems like Hans Christian Blech and Wolfgang Preiss were in every WW2 movie made in that 30 year period after the war. Loved Rommel’s line at the beginning: “Would you rather be tired, or dead?”



DryOwlTacos says:

June 30, 2009 at 5:45 pm

I bet that newfangled modren house is Green as hell and stands as a rebuke to all the coal-burning, tree-cutting, incandescent-bulb environmental scofflaws who pass it in their energy-swilling, internal-combustion atmosphere-destroyers. As long as you have the trebuchet out, let’s lob a few telephone books at it.



Jan says:

June 30, 2009 at 6:54 pm

I’ve always been an advocate of planting trees in my homes’ landscapes but, Lordy, that goes double for that house. It needs trees—lots of them, planted as densely as possible to obstruct the street view.



Moishe3rd says:

June 30, 2009 at 7:37 pm

Actually, as far as I know, that house is as blackcoaloil as hell. I only know this on rumor via a friend of mine who did, indeed, just finished building a “Green as hell” house about five blocks away on the same street as the Block. His house was supposed to be a model showplace for his work as an architect/developer/landscape/urban planner or whatever the heck he is actually called. Unfortunately, he finished his Green as hell (but nicely normal looking) house exactly when the whole financial world came apart. Meanwhile, I drove by the Block again today and, in addition to the Block Addition (connected by the Block breezeway corridor), they did, indeed, plant a tight row of a zillion small pines in front of the Block wall and are landscaping the bottom 1/20th of an acre... There is a large pile of Blocks for the Block down near the street, so I suspect that they are building more blocks to intersperse with the Block landscaped yard. The mind still boggles...



Chris says:

June 30, 2009 at 8:42 pm

Sgt. Schultz from Hogan's Heroes was always a favorite of mine, another poor, good-hearted sap that just got caught on the wrong side of the war. I always envisioned that, postwar, Hogan and his guys would have maintained contact with Schultz, regarded him as an old friend, a guy they would meet up with every five years or so to have a beer with and swap stories, while they probably would have told Klink to go ^#\$@ himself.



Dara says:

July 1, 2009 at 11:16 am

JAMES YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS LISTING OMG:

http://www.realtor.com/realestateandhomes-detail/1240-South-Manzanita-Ave_Palm-Springs_CA_92264_1109231960

LovelyListing found it. (Their entry: <http://www.lovelylisting.com/2009/06/call-police-theyre-hoarding-our-nations.html>)

Particularly check out 9 of 15. TELL ME that's not the Gobbler. TELL ME.



Dara says:

July 1, 2009 at 11:21 am

Oh and don't miss the Virtual Tour. DO NOT MISS IT

<http://www.palmspringsproperty.org/flaherty/21269257.html>



Stevie the K says:

July 1, 2009 at 2:22 pm

the Pluskat/tea sipper interchange always reminded me of Tora! Tora! Tora! (aborted subtitle: "the first Jewish WWII movie") where the guy who played Oscar Goldman in the Six Million Dollar Man keeps skeptically asking for "Confirmation" from the hard-bitten non-com. He finally confronts him as things are exploding and says "THERE's your CONFIRMATION!"

Unfortunately as I recall, Pluskat gets no such satisfaction – doesn't he get blowed up real good as he's heading back from the front in a car? Bad day for him.

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