Too many pictures today; sorry. But a good weekend always produces many pictures, and this was a good weekend. Ever have one of those weekends where you spend an evening color-correcting public-domain footage of the 1939 World’s Fair and applying motion stabilization, and then you think hey, why not edit it down and set it to music, and you get out the keyboard and then it’s 1:45 AM? Yes indeed. But we’ll get to that later this week.

Sunday I needed to get out of the house – anything to get away from the computer. Went to the Mall to see if Macy’s had shirts on sale; by some odd turn of events, they did. Standing at the register I heard the clerk tell a customer that he’d have to look up the UPC code. When it was my turn I said “UPC code is sort of like ATM machine, eh? I say it all the time myself.”

He laughed, then got a look that suggested I had actually said “frim-frammin’ at the joss-pot, wang-danging with the nibble-pincher, eh?” Perhaps I had. It’s cold out. Then I went to Eddie Bauer, where they had the first sure sign of spring: all winter coats SLASHED. Pity, because then the stuffing falls out.
Hah! Hah! Oh, I'm a regular caution. When the coats are half off, the season has changed in our favor. The downside is the loss of summer clothes in July, which is a dagger to the heart. But that's years away.

Then I found some new glasses at a store: finally. New frames. I can't wait. Whole new look. (The brand name is “Titanium,” which makes me certain they're plastic, but it could be that special plastic-metal the Soviets used for their civilian medals. And while I thank you for the offer, do not give me any suggestions for buying glasses online. I have enough trouble getting the proper fit and prescription with stores staffed by actual people, and the place I'm getting my eyes checked has a discount if you buy the frames there.) It's a black frame without the old outdated hipster-thick aspect; they're actually Ray-Bans, which for me still have residual retro cool from their 80s resurgence. Timeless as car fins. Or as car-fins ought to be; I'm still surprised no one ever thinks to bring back fins. It's almost as if the designers think they'd be lectured for socially-inappropriate automotive designs. Oh, you want the Fifties back, do you? With racism and sexism and everyone smoking indoors and McCarthyism? Sigh. Yes, of course.

I don't know why, but I watched “Back to the Future” Friday night. Four TB of media to consume, and I choose an old movie I've seen a half-dozen times. As I said on the Twitter feed, it makes one feel a bit . . . old to consider that Doc Brown was headed for the year 2010 before he was waylaid by LIBYANS, who were the gold standard for terrorists back then. At the end of the movie he says he's heading 30 years into the future, so we still have five years to develop hovercars and Pepsi Perfect and self-drying jackets. It's amusing to see the things the movie got wrong about the future.
Payphone banks. And . . .

Of course, we probably will have some newspapers in 2015, but it's interesting how they assumed that OF COURSE there would be newspapers. (I recall thinking how cheesy the paper looked; it resembles a novelty paper they'd make for you at Coney Island. YOUTH JAILED – there's a headline written by someone with lots of newspaper experience. It's like a story about a bus crash with the headline BRAKES APPLIED.) There are also dot-matrix fax machines. They got the wide-screen TV right, but otherwise they missed the whole "computer" thing about the future.

Ah well. The one thing that really sticks out in the 1985 vision of Hill Valley? The main street movie theater is a porn house. Somehow in a town of that size with such a compact downtown . . . no. Don't think so. At least downtown was thriving; usual, since it was apparently within jogging distance to the mall. In five years they could, and probably will, do a reboot, but it won't be the same; the cultural divide between 2015 and 1985 is a crack in the sidewalk compared to the gap between '85 and 1955.

Also watched an unusual movie called “What A Way To Go,” part of the last gasp of pre-Boomer-uber-alles overculture. Mad-Men-era confection with boffo production values and a broad sense of comedy that looked very dated very quickly, but now looks charming and almost surreal. Shirley Maclaine, pre-insanity, plays a lovely young lady who marries poor men for their good heart, only to have each one transformed by her love into a go-getter who meets an untimely end and leaves her tons of money. She goes through Dick VanDyke (store owner), Paul Newman (arrogant, pretentious American painter in Paris) Robert Michum (ultra-suave industrialist) and finally Gene
Kelly, who plays a dancer and a crooner. And there's this guy:

![Photo of Gene Kelly](image)

Kelly handled the choreography, and achieves something quite clever: he sends up his own style.

![Dance Scene](image)

What had been Powerful and Full of Yearning in “Singin’” and “American in Paris” was played for laughs here; Kelly overacts – overdances? – just enough to let you know he's winking at the conventions this time. Somewhere in this routine is a young Teri Garr dancing in the background; she would have been about 16. (She's 63 this year.) Maclaine's really good, too. Anyway, after Gene Kelly's character is offed, and she's left with a mere $211 million, she consults with his attorney about building a mausoleum where “Pinky's” movies will be played in perpetuity.

![Advertisement]

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This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5441) for the full menu. Enjoy!

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Go [HERE](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5441) to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret extra links is [HERE](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5441)!
It's a Vulcan Brothel! Somehow it makes me very happy to see the most banal manifestations of the International Style dyed pink. Miami Beach FTW!

God help me, I have a soft-spot for those 60s structures now. Plain as they were they have a certain technocratic charm; you can hear the IBM tape-drives whirring in the offices. They've aged better than anything from the 70s, and much of the overly “whimsical” post-modernism from the early 80s. (Although I have always loved the AT&T building, and I don't care what the serious critics said. After 30 years of flat tops, that thing was necessary.)

Sunday I also went to Hunt and Gather, the greatest antique store in the world; bought many matches, and some 1920s can labels. It's a museum as well as a store; there's no end to the interesting kitsch-bits you find.
Mickey wears underpants! Who knew! Ah, but that's tomorrow's Blet.
Monday Matchbook later; see you soon. BTW: I believe I'm caught up on my Bleetplus mailings; if you have not gotten your codes – assuming you contributed, of course;) – email lileks at mac dot com with the subject line HEY DILLWEED. Thanks!

83 RESPONSES TO Monday, Feb. 01

metahizzle says:
February 1, 2010 at 1:46 pm

Regarding acronyms, I've heard two terms for this phenomenon. “RAS Syndrome”, which expands to Redundant Acronym Syndrome Syndrome. And “PNS Syndrome” which expands to PIN Number Syndrome Syndrome, which in turn expands to Personal
Identification Number Syndrome.

**Russell** says:
February 1, 2010 at 1:50 pm

I always got bizarre looks when using “RBI” to mean the plural, as I understood it to be an abbreviation for “Runs Batted In”) e.g. “Sandberg had 4 RBI in yesterday's game”. Should I say “arz bee eye”???

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

bgbear, I worked for Pinkerton for a few years (now known mostly as those friendly Swedes, Securitas). Since I had and have an interest in history, I looked through some of the archives and talked with other Pinkertonians even deeper into that stuff than I was. There were big ego rivalries between branch offices. The New York office didn't like Chicago office guys, they both hated the San Francisco office. Famed Pinkerton agent Charlie Siringo would routinely walk into the Denver office with his gun drawn, because he hated and was so hated in return by several of the other agents there.

Go back a little further in time, I had a long, well oiled chat in a bar with a guy who had worked for Pinkerton for 30+ years and read things that had been tossed out years ago. He believed that Pinkerton was so bad at gathering military intel during the Civil War that it was a major reason for McClellan's repeated failures to advance in a timely manner. Pinkerton and McClellan knew each other from mutual dealings with the Illinois Central Railroad, hence the big trust factor between the two.

Sorry to speak ill of a former employer with a great reputation, but Pinkerton's real genius was marketing. That, however, is a discussion for another day.

**gmann63** says:
February 1, 2010 at 1:54 pm

James, you need to use your powers for good – get us a screencap of Teri Garr in the chorus line.

**juanito - John Davey** says:
February 1, 2010 at 1:57 pm

Have always referred jokingly to RBI as “ribbies”. All of the stat chasers that I associated with used the same terminology...

**Russell** says:
February 1, 2010 at 1:59 pm

Metaphizzle:
I love your acronyms!

When my son was playing youth hockey in Chicago, the kids would all try to impress one another with their latest NFL sweaters of their favourite teams. I overheard my son's best friend asking him, “How do you like my new New Jersey jersey?”
kc says:
February 1, 2010 at 2:09 pm

Nostalgia... just played “Snow White” for my Pixie and her cousin... the same VHS we got for Pixie's mama, so many years ago. Still worked, which shocked me. The quality is even noticeable to ME, but the story and songs kept a nearly 4-year-old cousin in his seat!

Might be time to upgrade our video library...

Chris says:
February 1, 2010 at 2:19 pm

Nevermind all of the other junk, I want the Black & Decker “Mr. Fusion Home Energy Reactor”. I figure that technology is worth a few trillion dollars.

Gibbering Madness says:
February 1, 2010 at 2:21 pm

He believed that Pinkerton was so bad at gathering military intel during the Civil War that it was a major reason for McClellan's repeated failures to advance in a timely manner.

Shelby Foote makes that point in his epic Civil War history; some of the disparities between Southern troops actually present and Pinkerton reports of troop strength make you quite sympathetic for McClellan's supposed timidity. 1:5 isn't unusual.

Kevin says:
February 1, 2010 at 3:32 pm

A famous redundancy in L.A. is The La Brea Tar Pits. I felt quite superior as a 5th-grader when I realized how repetitious it was.

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 1, 2010 at 3:36 pm

Thanks for that info Gibbering Madness. I only heard Mr. Foote speak during Ken Burns' documentary on the Civil War. I didn’t realize he had written that. There was a crazily curious (in my mind) confluence amongst the Federals. As I mentioned earlier, Pinkerton and McClellan knew each other re: Illinois Central R.R. Interestingly, Lincoln was one their attorneys also. I have heard of no evidence his path crossed with Pinkerton until he was President-elect, and Pinkerton interceded to provide protection for him to get into D.C. Pinkerton supported and voted for McClellan in the 1864 election. He came to despise Lincoln's approach to the war.

Borderman says:
February 1, 2010 at 3:56 pm

I'm trying to find wholesome movies that my almost-seven year old will like (she loves it). BTW, any suggestions would be appreciated (we've got most of the animated hits).

@ Kerry Potenza: Recently caught The Absent-Minded Professor on TCM and it was even funnier than I remembered on first-run. Considering I was in 3rd grade.
on its first-run, being funnier 49 years later is saying something. The sequel, Son of Flubber from ’63 is not quite as funny, but still pretty good. The Shaggy Dog, the ’59 version with Tommy Kirk, still is absolutely hilarious 50 years later. Can also vouch for Swiss Family Robinson (1960) with John Mills, and Toby Tyler (1960) with Kevin Corcoran. The 1960 version of Pollyanna, starring a very young Haley Mills, is perfect for an almost-seven year old. She’ll never forget it, and you probably won’t either. Talk about misty eyed...oh brother. Let’s not leave out the crowning achievement of that era, Mary Poppins, another one she’ll likely not forget.

In case you couldn’t tell these are all Disney pictures from the time when that name was synonymous with quality family entertainment, emphasis on quality. I steer away from recent re-makes, Disney or not, because they’re just weak imitations, not my style. Some magical element left the studio with Walt’s passing, I’m afraid. I showed these titles to my niece and nephew when they visited, mainly because they were my fave raves when I was their age, but also because I knew there would be no fallout (a.k.a. age-inappropriate questions about sex, violence, language, etc.) for my sister-in-law to deal with when they returned home. There weren’t. And my niece and nephew loved them. Netflicks has the titles. I checked.

@Mr. Lileks: That screen capture of Dino with platinum hair and the goofy expression is one of the more hysterically funny things I’ve seen today. Thanks!

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 1, 2010 at 4:03 pm

@kevin: that is a whole ‘nother class, foreign language redundancies like Rio Grande River, Mount Fujiyama, Iwo Jima Island.

xrayguy says:
February 1, 2010 at 4:03 pm

I remeber WWTG as a kid, thinking it was hi-larious, but not understanding ANY of the adult humor and watching it a couple of years ago and thinking “My folks let me watch this?”. Great stuff.

*Di* says:
February 1, 2010 at 4:05 pm

@juanito – John Davey: That would be three on the column. What a pig that car was. Then shortly thereafter I bought my first car for $60 from my aunt (I was 16) – 1953 Chevy, brown&tan, in pristine condition – and with automatic transmission.

And I just noticed Mickey in his underpants on this 2nd visit. And I prefer to have not had. That ain’t right 😐

Archer says:
February 1, 2010 at 4:15 pm

I loved “Back to the Future,” but it was my least favorite with III
being second best. I loved the idea of the Delorean as the time machine. Did you know that you can still purchase a Delorean brand new? Take a gander at http://www.delorean.com/ Now, that's cool!

**Archer** says:
February 1, 2010 at 4:22 pm

Borderman: I adored Mary Poppins as a kid, but watched it a few years ago as an adult with my children and found her extremely off-putting. Perception as a kid of a self-centered, know-it-all, condescending twit was apparently a bit askew.

**Archer** says:
February 1, 2010 at 4:26 pm

Finally, how could any woman in her right mind have “offed” Gene Kelly – especially after seeing him dance. No realism there. I know it was just a character in the movie, but still...it's GENE KELLY! Super – super hot. Love the photo!

**Archer** says:
February 1, 2010 at 4:31 pm

I guess I needed to see the movie, I misread what you meant by how he was “offed.”

**Petronius** says:
February 1, 2010 at 4:35 pm

People still get the future wrong. Yesterday in the Chicago Tribune the architecture columnist talked about a guy working in the Willis(nee Sears) tower in Chicago in 2020 taking a bullet train to St. Louis in two hours to have a face to face meet with a client. The idea was that we will need magnificent new stations to support our High-Speed Rail future. I shot back that in 2020 the guy in Chicago will boot up his iPad Mark VI and have a video conference with Missouri.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
February 1, 2010 at 4:40 pm

I don’t if I an ruining the laff over Mickey in his scivvies or adding something equally disturbing.

The Disney mouse is slightly off model as are many older toys, however, the mouse has eyelashes. Check the usual images, Minnie has eyelashes, Mickey does not. Minnie usually has some type of knickers displayed under her dress.

That is Minnie wearing only gloves and panties, I assume she threw her bow into the audience of lecherous rodents (and probably Pete the cat-thing).

**Wagner von Drupen- Sachs** says:
February 1, 2010 at 5:08 pm

Anybody use S.c.u.b.a. apparatus?

Wagner von Drupen-Sachs says:
February 1, 2010 at 5:09 pm
And Mickey is wearing his speedo swimsuit, ya pervs.

Borderman says:
February 1, 2010 at 5:11 pm

@archer: Interesting you had that reaction to Mary Poppins as an adult. I loved her as always, and it was Dick Van Dyke that rubbed me the wrong way all these years later. His Cockney accent is just-amateurish, I guess is the most charitable word I can use. It's so unrealistic it takes away from me appreciating his dancing, which was his biggest contribution to the whole picture when I was a kid. But, everything about it was all fantastic then.

Worst case of “not such a hot movie anymore now that I'm grown” was Jason and the Argonauts (1963). Harryhausen's animation, especially the dueling skeletons is still as good as ever, but the rest of it was kinda lukewarm. Disappointingly lukewarm. I liked my memories of it better. Some things are better not revisited.

Borderman says:
February 1, 2010 at 5:13 pm

@Mark E. Hurling: Is that why Pinkerton wasn't looking out for the President's welfare at Ford's Theater that terrible night J.W. Booth brought his pistol to the show, to payback Lincoln for his approach to the war? Or had presidential security passed to someone else by that time? If it was payback, that could possibly make Pinkerton part of the plot, maybe a part of those missing pages from Booth's journal? Hmmm—there's a Star Trek holodeck episode in that, if Picard and the gang were still active.

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 1, 2010 at 6:57 pm
When Lincoln was shot, Pinkerton had ceased his executive protection services. It was supposed to be performed that night by a policeman, but for one reason or another he failed to show at Ford's. By default it was taken over by a Major Rathbone, a noted drunk. The rest is sad history.

My prime suspect for the missing pages in Booth's diary is Secretary of War Stanton. He and the army played very fast and loose with the other conspirators' trial. It was a military tribunal that would have made modern heads spin like Linda Blair's in the Exocist.

rivlax says:
February 1, 2010 at 7:27 pm
“What a Way to Go” was one of my favorite movies as a teenager. For one, I had a crush on Shirley MacLaine back then, and she's about as appealing as ever in this movie. Plus, I lived in Paris when it came out so the Paul Newman segment resonated. Hop, Hop, Hop to Hoppers.
Kerry Potenza says:
February 1, 2010 at 7:42 pm

Borderderman, thanks for all the movie suggestions. Pollyanna is a great idea because we read the book together and my little girl loved Hayley Mills in The Parent Trap. We actually have Mary Poppins (a favorite of mine); she was less enthused about it.

*Di* says:
February 1, 2010 at 8:22 pm

@bgbear:
"That is Minnie wearing only gloves and panties"
Oh well that is somewhat less disturbing than if it were Mickey (I think)...

And, can I say, as straight female, that Shirley Maclaine had some great gams.
And great cachet as well for being part of the rat pack. Cheers to her!!

efurman says:
February 1, 2010 at 8:35 pm

James, don’t you know that ALL USA Todays look like cheesy novelty papers?

Scott Brady says:
February 1, 2010 at 11:22 pm

“What a Way to Go” is an underrated movie. It pops up on Turner Classic sporadically.

margaret says:
February 1, 2010 at 11:30 pm

Not to be missed for kids big and little is Blackbeard’s Ghost, starring Peter Ustinov, Elsa Manchester, Dean Jones, Suzanne Pleshett. Extremely quotable flick.

jamcool says:
February 2, 2010 at 12:51 am


“Radio” as in “Radio Corporation of America”…RCA made sound recording equipment for the film industry, thus the stake in RKO.
can take care of it!

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

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

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I went to a “head shop” today, as they were once known. Did a story on a record store whose T-shirt had been worn by Ringo Starr on the Grammies. Now, Ringo + Grammies pretty much encompasses the sum total of Things About Which I Care Very Little, so I had some fun; in the stand-up introduction, I described Starr as “a percussionist for a popular ‘rock and roll’ ensemble” as though it was 1963 and I was addressing Rotarians in Peoria. The store was exactly like the stores of my youth – creaky wooden floor, bins thick with records making the soft woof-woof-woof as you thumbed through the selection; a smell of colitas, rising up through the air. Or at least aromatic sticks designed to mask the smell. It was unnerving to see records again, to say nothing of records from the 70s and 80s. I don't miss them. Arranging records in your collection was what we did before we got computers and could change the tags and album art in iTunes.

I did buy a T-shirt, though: a black number with the angry face of the RED OWL. Turns out the Red Owl fell out of copyright, and a local artist snatched it up; the reconstruction of a Red Owl store in town for the Cohen Bros’ latest movie was also involved, somehow. All I know is that I’m pleased to wear the Owl. He had a steely vengeance, that one; you could imagine him flying into a
rage, landing on Piggly Wiggly's face talons-first while Piggly squealed NOT THE EYES, NOT THE EYES, and all the Scottish supermarket mascots watched, leaning on their sticks. A fine haggis that'll make one th' owl's done.

There were many Scottish supermarket mascots in the 60s – still one in Moorhead, which has the crappy CashWise Scotsman. Isn't a bit like having a Jew as your mascot? Schlomo the Shekel-Pincher says “Oy, Such Bargains!” Oh, I forgot: Jews are cheap, but Scotsman are thrifty. Riiight. Got it.

Wonder if there's a flickr pool for Scottish supermarket mascots. Well, there's this; give it time, and someone will ask if he wants to join the Scottish Supermarket Mascot Pool.

Anyway, it's too fargin' cold to wear a T-shirt.

The shoot was fine, but while I waited to set up I heard a cover of “Pump It Up,” and to my surprise a sad slow cover of “Up the Junction,” by Squeeze. About time, I suppose. They also had a counter of hip-because-it's-like-old candy:

The Idaho Spud! Venerable. Also Chick-a-Stix, which I will always recall from Childhood as having a special place in my confectionary repertoire. Get this: because my dad ran a gas station, he had a candy machine, and because he had a candy machine he had to go to the warehouse to stock up. I remember it as Candy Valhalla, with crates stacked to the ceiling with every possible variety, from Milky Way to Zagnut to Zero bars to Seven-Ups. They gave me a Chick-O-Stix as a way to say hey, kid, just as the bank handed out five-count Life Savers to kids who came with their folks. It's amazing the memories that can be welded in place with the solder of sugar, no?
That was half the video. The other half will be done tomorrow, when I interview the guy who gave Ringo the T-shirt. Works in the building. Is Ringo's nephew.

Really.

I promised a few Hunt & Gather Antique Tableaus, and heaven forfend I welsh on that. Sorry: Indian-Giver on that. I don't know if this is a preacher doll or a 1965 surgeon waiting for his gloves so he can get down to surgerifying:

He has a mate:
Maybe it's a set; My First Phreneologist collection.

A big table with an ancient painted bread ad:
Bread-wise, it's much derided, and often seen as an example of EVERYTHING that was wrong with post-war food – ersatz bread, pillow-soft, imperishable. But it was actually a 30s invention, and was a marvel of modern technology: Bread That Time Itself Could Not Spoil. No wonder they had an enormous building at the '39 World's Fair.

Well, look what I found:
It's this. Turns out it didn't have a real keyboard, but a printed one. Criminey, what a rook.

Never underestimate the aesthetic power of a drunken cowboy and his oversized ceramic dog:
I know I've posted this one before, but they still haven't sold it, and it makes me laugh. What all the internet thread-jackers who yank a thread left or right for their own obsessive needs are slathering on their hair today!
If you're wondering whether the antique store has a wide variety of ceramic 50s letters used to spell out things like PERRY MASON, ATTORNEY AT LAW, well, yes:
Later today: things! Stop back.

88 RESPONSES TO tuesday, feb. 02

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 2, 2010 at 11:15 am

I think Old Navy stole that mannequin idea from a Japanese program about an expat American family in Japan played by mannequins, “Oh! Mikey”.

http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7734489369799727406&ei=XU9oS67mKYiQqQPH4fDxAw&q=oh!+Mikey&hl=en&client=firefox-a#

http://www.fuccon.com/

Metaphizzle says:
February 2, 2010 at 11:15 am

I have no idea if the record player or the converter is any good—anyone have any experience with these things?

I've heard that the really cheap (like $50 or less) USB turntables aren’t worth bothering with. I can't speak from experience on this, however.

Expensive converters aren’t strictly necessary. I have an RCA-to-3.5mm converter cable from Best Buy; it ran me $10-15. I use it to connect my turntable to my computer's sound input jack, and I use Audacity (freeware!) to capture the audio. It's given me good results.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 2, 2010 at 11:18 am

is it two links that get you moderated?

I'll try this, sorry for dupe:

I think Old Navy stole that mannequin idea from a Japanese program about an expat American family in Japan played by mannequins, “Oh! Mikey”.

http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7734489369799727406&ei=XU9oS67mKYiQqQPH4fDxAw&q=oh!+Mikey&hl=en&client=firefox-a#

Metaphizzle says:
February 2, 2010 at 11:26 am

Come on metaphizzle, don’t you recognize the classic William Shatner song reference?

Sorry, I'm not that into Pokemon.
You call yourself a record collector. Indeed.

If my music collection ends up being future archeologists' only record of the decades in which I lived, their conclusions about music trends in the US are going to be hilariously wrong.

Michael Rittenhouse says:
February 2, 2010 at 11:28 am

Colitas sounds like a town in southern California, where a girl the Eagles sang about was from, and someday Don Henley will go back to Colitas and take her away with him.

browniejr says:
February 2, 2010 at 11:29 am

@bgbear (“Oh! Mikey”)- Mighty potent nightmare fuel there! I think the producers are anti-American, but that's just me.

Never liked the Old Navy ads, either.

Archer says:
February 2, 2010 at 11:35 am

Don't make fun of the mannequin double amputees! It's polically incorrect and you simply don't have a leg to stand on.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 2, 2010 at 11:36 am

some days I wish I had a sophisticated sense of humor. . .not!

Mr_Lilacs says:
February 2, 2010 at 11:49 am

Housekeeping note: “older entries” and “younger entries” links on the bleat comments page seem to have traded places today.

Here in Colorado we've had a plethora of “medical” marijuana dispensaries crop up of late. Given the wretched state of retail, the landlords are happy to get anyone who might pay rent. AFAIK so far none have used “colitas” in the name, but there is “Dr. Reefer”.

DryOwlTacos says:
February 2, 2010 at 11:53 am

I thought it was a Mister Rogers figure, but now it's just creepy--and the little girl figure, too. He seems to be leading the choir, but she's just brushing away gnats.

My downtown office is next door to a place called High Times, which seems to specialize in hookahs. They have a few CDs of local bands but no records. The rekkasto in this town is a remarkable place, brimming over with books, videos and CDs as well as records. We have an internationally recognized jazz program at our university (show band nominated for Grammy this year), so there are a lot of collectors buying and selling.

I, too, have hundreds of old vinyl disks and boxfuls of 45s, and have actually purchased the USB turntable to digitize some of them. The fact that I've had it for months but haven't hooked it up yet is
telling. “You mean I have to dupe them in real time?” O_o

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 2, 2010 at 12:01 pm

Some acquaintances that Mrs. Bear works with started their retail career selling the usual head shop type accouterments back in the 70s. Today they sell clothes and accessories in a a very family oriented business and their children are lawyers and other respectable professionals.

They are a little liberal but, far from hippie. Guess it was just good business sense back then.

Spud says:
February 2, 2010 at 12:16 pm

The candy story reminds me of a birthday visit I made in the late 60's to a Tootsie Roll plant in Chicago. My dad sold metal hoses back then, so one Sat. afternoon he took me along on a visit to the plant. His contact there led us to a side room that had shelves full of various Tootsie Roll products, and he told me to “help myself”. I did and had enough for my sisters and brother too!

I'd like to hook-up my turntable someday to listen to my old vinyl records sitting in the closet, but time-money-space seem to be an issue. Maybe when the kids get older and/or we move to a bigger house with a potential man-cave …

Another commenter was right-on in the “something missing” with MP3’s. Lately I have been listening to music off Lala.com, and while it's nice to hear some old Steely Dan it just does not seem to have the “presence” that the LP's would provide. I don't miss the pops and scratches, though.

(not from Idaho) Spud

rbj says:
February 2, 2010 at 12:23 pm

“Archer:
February 2, 2010 at 11:35 am

Don't make fun of the mannequin double amputees! It's policially incorrect and you simply don't have a leg to stand on”

I have to hand it to you Archer, that is a disarming comment.

Nixmom says:
February 2, 2010 at 12:28 pm

I was thinking that the guy in the orange sweater could be Mr Rogers but I'm not sure where the little girl fits in; I never watched the show, though, so for all I know she was a recurring nightgown-clothed regular.

swschrad says:
February 2, 2010 at 12:35 pm

the ceramic letters appear to be titling letters for movie makers.

the sophisticated home cinematographer would have black screens (or lord forbid, crayon-color color screens) with those letters, in
Evening At Lakes

yes, they were as used in hollywood. where they had invented a little thing called the optical printer. “A” roll of your film. “B” roll of a shipload of leader, with at the right place, your titles inserted. you provide “timing” instructions to 40% your B roll, and the ghost letters appear over your running film at the appropriate places.

replaced by the time line on the bottom of your confuser screen, and you drop the clips on parallel video lines, and you drop an effect between them. children do on the computer in minutes what you paid experts with 25 years of experience to do in a week in the “golden age.”

not even going to talk about matte effects.

*Di* says:
February 2, 2010 at 12:42 pm

San Colitas … sounds like a mission? a race track? a prison? a freeway?

It all becomes a blur eventually living here in Cali

And the Sky Bar was my all time favorite – four different and distinct fillings in ONE bar = heaven

LalaWojo says:
February 2, 2010 at 12:46 pm

1)I sure hope you bought the ceramic dog, it looks just like Jasper!
2)Wow, all these years I thought that a “colita” was some sort of tropical drink.
3)Is it just me, or does Mr. Trol appear to be wearing more makeup than the ladies in the ad?
4)I think I used ones of those typewriters in high school business class

Chris says:
February 2, 2010 at 12:49 pm

Mister Rogers?
Commerce Bank of Beverly Hills

Dave Williams says:
February 2, 2010 at 12:52 pm

Sky Bars are still around but I think they changed one of the flavors, and, yes I’m old enough to remember the jingle (but I’m not going to write it out here)...

xrayguy says:
February 2, 2010 at 1:05 pm

God, I miss the smell of head shops-underlying hint of TCH with overlayers of patchouly, sandlewood and B.O., Zig-Zag displays, Tiger Balm, standing around reading underground comics (but never buying), takes me back, good times, good times. Wish they...
could bottle my youth.

Chas C-Q says:
February 2, 2010 at 1:43 pm

(See the link in my handle.) Wiki reports, you decide: “Eriogonum jamesii is a species of wild buckwheat known by the common name James’ buckwheat and Antelope sage. … It may also be called a Colita, such as in one of The Eagles’ most famous songs, Hotel California, …”

OTOH, follow the link there, to (irony alert) “The Straight Dope.”

Borderman says:
February 2, 2010 at 1:48 pm

I don't even like the Beatles.

That's OK Metaphizzle, they don't like you either. They told me to tell you that.

metaphizzle says:
February 2, 2010 at 3:13 pm

All of them? How recently was this?

I'm scared.

DerKase says:
February 2, 2010 at 3:39 pm

Don't make fun of the mannequin double amputees! It's politically incorrect and you simply don't have a leg to stand on

I have to hand it to you Archer, that is a disarming comment.

Wow! That's odd. I'm re-reading George MacDonald Fraser's “Flashman's Lady” And just read the appendix where he mentions a cricket match between a team of one-legged men that played against a team of one-armed men. The one-legged team won by 103 runs, though 5 wooden legs were broken during the game. Bizarre. And non-pc.

shesnailie says:
February 2, 2010 at 3:45 pm

“the girl with colitis goes by”

_@_v – i thought that was a joke from fran dresher's ‘the nanny’...

*Di* says:
February 2, 2010 at 3:46 pm

The guy and little girl figures are troubling me.
Yes, sweaterman definitely leads to Mr. Rodgers. Or maybe Ward Cleaver in relaxation mode?
But the position of the hands – maybe they were originally part of a larger tableau and the family was decorating a Christmas tree?
Well at least that makes me feel a lot more comfortable.
Chris says:
February 2, 2010 at 3:54 pm

Colitas...we've had like seven different explanations here now.

I love the internet.

Nyquist's sampling theorem suggests that, all other parts of the system being equal, a digitized copy will sound just as good as the original master tape from which it was sampled. Minus all of the pops and skips on the LP copy.

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 2, 2010 at 4:42 pm

George MacDonald Fraser, may he rest in peace. His Flashman books were just great. I've read them all more than once. His unvarnished depictions of that Victorian scalawag and his era were marvelous.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 2, 2010 at 4:58 pm

All of them? How recently was this?

I'm scared.

Don't listen to Borderman, Zombie George and John would like to have you over for dinner.

We'd like to take you home with us,

We'd love to take you home

madCanada says:
February 2, 2010 at 5:08 pm

Colitas, OK. But what the heck are “The Mercedes Bends”?

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 2, 2010 at 5:21 pm

Mercedes bends occur when one has risen in social status from the depths too quickly. The rapidly expanding gasses in the brain dilute higher judgment functions resulting in a tendency to cause the muscles in the back of the neck to contract spastically and causing a victim's nose to point toward the sky.

Capt_57 says:
February 2, 2010 at 5:39 pm

If it wasn't for his female counterpart, I'd say the fellow in the orange sweater was a Pat Boone doll....
PersonFromPorlock says:
February 2, 2010 at 7:03 pm

browniejr, you're asking a question that entails too many “it depends...” to go into here. There's a very good vintage audio forum at...

http://audiokarma.org

...that would be worth your time.

D T Nelson says:
February 2, 2010 at 8:42 pm

I love Idaho Spuds. I had a couple the week before last. They don't taste like potatoes at all.

I like to patronize the small candy producers. I also enjoy Mountain Bars and Big Cherry bars (both of which aren't really bars, but are more of a round gob with filling, like a Bun Bar).

Also, I assumed Trol was pronounced with a short o, rhyming with the -hol in alcohol.

Rick Lee says:
February 7, 2010 at 1:10 am

If you like old fashioned candy like the Spud and Chick-o-stix, you need to read the book Candyfreak by Steve Almond. He traveled all over the country visiting the old factories that are left making independent candy lines... stuff not owned by Mars and Hershey... of which there are few left.

Seattle Dave says:
February 13, 2010 at 6:03 pm

I just ran across an animated short that used those very letters. Here, at about 1:13.

http://www.archive.org/details/mother_goose_little_miss_muffet

Fred says:
February 14, 2010 at 10:08 am

I have always thought the term “Indian Giver” referred to the raw deal the Indians would get from the government every time they signed a treaty promising them a section of land ‘forever’ and then 5 to 10 years down the road they would be told “alright, pack it all up and get moving, we have a new home for you.”

As for colitis or colitas, I seem to recall reading a ‘Straight Dope’ column once which stated that the word was basically made up to fit the rhythm scheme...

Fred says:
February 14, 2010 at 10:13 am

“older entries” and “younger entries” links on the bleat comments page seem to have traded places today.”

Actually that's been the case for as long as the new Bleat format has been in place I believe.
Child had an early piano lesson this week; afterwards we went to Perkin's to eat. I did not take my iPhone.

“GOOD,” she said. “You always have your head down in that thing and you don't even look up to say hello when I get off the bus.”

“That,” I said, “is an exaggeration. It happened twice and you called me on it both times. How many times have I been smiling and waving when you get off the bus, and I get nothing? Bupkis?”

“What's bupkis?”

“Nothing.”

“Well it's like you're obsessed with your iPhone.” She picked at her quesidilla. “I don't think you should get an iPad.”

“What? Why?”

“Well it just looks like a big iPhone and you have one.” Takes a bite. “It's a waste of money.”

“I will not have you speak about Apple that way.”

Rolls eyes.

“It's just a computer and you don't need another computer. You have, like, a
dozen."

Good Lord. I don’t even get this from my wife. We have an understanding: she does not complain about occasional technological upgrades (the last of which was 2 years ago) and I do not point out that her clothes and shoes occupy 79% of the closet and drawer space in the house.

“It’s not just a computer. It’s a different machine. When you’re grown up this is the only sort of computer you’ll know. Besides, it’s a book reader. Lets me carry books and things around.”

“I like real books,” she said.

“So do I. But I always – listen. Back when I was in college in the previous century I carried around a big bag, and it had everything I needed – a book, about ten copies of magazines all smushed in the bottom, fountain pens, my journal, and it was a pain to lug it around. I’m even tired of carrying my computer around and it weighs five pounds.”

“I think you’re just saying that because you want it.”

Couldn’t really argue with that. So we talked about cartoons we couldn’t stand but that she used to like, cartoons we always hated (Ed, Edd, and Eddy is back on TV, but Rolie Polie Ollie isn’t: the world has gone mad) and the problems of the Pokemon stories. I imitated Xx, who always sounds like the guy who voices Nelson Muntz trying not to be Nelson Muntz. “I’m walking in a forest to get to Sapphire City where we can go to a gym and train Pokemon! Meanwhile I’ll keep them squished in a dark cold ball until I let them out so they can fight other Pokemon until someone faints.’ And what does Brock do, anyway? Why doesn’t anyone have a job?”

A year ago she would have given me the hairy eyeball; now she grins and says “I know.”

She likes talking about these things, of course. It’s, er, validating, and we can Bond. I imagine if I’d talked with my dad about Tom Swift it would have been the same, but in those days Fathers occupied their own stratum of popular culture. We discussed the “Back to the Future” movies, which she’d recently seen. Loved the first, liked the third, hated the second. HATED it. But was interested by it. Bifftown was horrifying but fascinating to her, but Biff just wasn’t dumb and mean, he was EVIL, and that made the movie much different. Her favorite character was Marty. Who was yours?

Besides Jennifer #1, decked out in high-80s garb and hair? “Doc Brown,” I said. Great Scott! ONE POINT TWENNY ONE JIGAWATTS “

“Yeah.” Grins. “But Marty’s mom in the past was kind of a pervert.”

Oh my look at the time. I picked up a triangular slice of quesadilla and hummed the Imperial March and said “It’s an Imperial Star Cruiser” and then attacked it with two french fries made into an X-wing fighter. PEW PEW PEW. Poured some salsa on it. “Oh look everyone on the bridge is dead.”
This sent her into stitches: salsa standing in for Imperial bridge crew in Dead Form. Got us off Mom-as-perv, anyway. That was possibly the best reaction to anything I did all day, and damn, it was full: did the Newsbreak in the morning, and since it was Groundhog Day I ended the show, then started it right over again with the same script, but with a vague sense of deja vu. I'm not an actor so the concept of “act like you're having deja vu” is something you just have to . . . Do, and hope it works. Then we reset the studio and did an interview with two reporters who did a huge fantastic story on a Minnesota National Guard unit in Afghanistan. They're on the sofa, I'm in the Host Chair, and once again, I get that Krusty-the-Klown-seriously-interviewing-Lane-Kirkland vibe, but what can you do. Then I ran upstairs, wrote the headlines, did the quick headlines intro for the Newsbreak. Lunch: a pathetic sandwich and a warm Coke. No time: have to finish the Ringo story.

See, Ringo wore a T-shirt on the Grammies, and it had a logo of a local record store. Shot the record-store part yesterday, as I said; today we interviewed his relative, the guy who sent him the shirt. He works in the building. Alas, the fellow decided at the last minute he didn't want to do it, since he had not volunteered his role in the first place and was really not interested in getting this out there with his name and face and all. Quick huddle, quick rethink – did a walk-and-talk in the office, employing my favorite trick: walking backwards WHILE talking. Whoa! It's here.

And that was that.

And this is this; more later, with Out of Context Ad Challenge coming your way around 10 or so, with Black and White World to follow.

Topic for discussion: cartoons today are better. Or worse. It's hardly fair to compare everything to the golden age of Warner Bros., no? I grew up with Frankenstein Jr., and the rest of the crap-batch turned out by H-B. Better stuff since then? Oh yes.

Pass it along, if you wish

102 RESPONSES TO wednesday, feb. 03

Clay Yedid says:
February 7, 2010 at 11:22 pm

During the film, I was momentarily jarred by most of the similar things that have been discussed here, but for the most part, I overcame them as my enjoyment progressed. Even the over zealous depiction of capitalism or the “over-zealous military commander” were accepted as being a important part of the story. But there one technical issue that (oddly enough, I guess) irritated me. I had no way to go back and watch it after, but I'm pretty sure that when the Colonel was killed, he took his hands off the robot controls, trying to remove the arrow/bolt. Yet, with the Colonel's death, the robot TOPPLED OVER! I would have expected such a machine just to
simply stop moving and stand there.

Fred says:
February 14, 2010 at 10:45 am

I was a big fan of the ‘Star Blazers’ series when I was a kid. I've wanted to re-watch it for some time now but haven't found a reasonably priced version of it. I'm kinda afraid that when I eventually do that I will be disappointed...

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

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

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go HERE to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ulta links is HERE!
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Finally, I'm starting to see again. Went to get my head examined, subset eyeballs, tonight; all is fine. No chancres in the macular area, no glaucoma, the latter fact proved by an ultrasound exam. Yes, they ultrasounded my eyes. I'm carrying twins! The amount of sheer Technology thrown at me this visit was surprising; last time it was the hated puff-of-air in the eye, followed by a slow, tendentious exam: better? Worse? Same? Is it safe? This time I had the breeziest eye doc ever, a fellow with a line of patter and figures of speech that flowed like water from a spring. He could have sold me a car while he was at it.

But like all eye exams, the diagnosis consisted of a contradiction of the previous diagnosis. It's all subjective, it seems, an art form, and every time I get my eyes checked the doctor questions the previous prescription. By my estimates I haven't had the proper prescription for a DECADE, and 10 years ago I was fitted with glasses that were supposedly too strong. Never quite noticed the downside there. Oh, folks appeared as walking skeletons, sure, but otherwise no problem.
Anyway: I did the eye exam. I got the drops. I had the ultrasound. I peered into a camera that scanned my eyeballs for something or other. I had pictures taken of my optic nerve, splashed up on a monitor for my entertainment: here's your nerve, here's the gutters that transfer the information to your brain, here's your macular part. Bad news: high pressure in the eyeball, which could be a precursor to glaucoma. Gosh, doc, what are the symptoms? He said: not many symptoms, unfortunately. You just go along, la da dah, then uh oh. But that's when he gave me the ultrasound, and said “ah,” and sat down to explain: I had thick eye-walls. Most people have eye-walls that are 500 to 550 microns thick; mine were 650 microns thick. This distorted the eyeball pressure readings.

“How is this peer-reviewed stuff,” I asked, “or something the salesmen for the ultrasound machine say?” He assured me it was actual science. Other things he told me: the eyeglass racket is concentrated mostly in Italy; they own most of the brands. I could get the frames online for cheaper, and there was an advantage – they're cheaper! – but here I paid for fitting and measuring and guarantees and not having to mail things back, and so on. And so on. Here's the thing: the guy liked his job. He liked his work. He liked people. Garrulous, funny, ironic, and knowledgeable. (When I mentioned the high price of frames, he said “The prescription's the technical part,” he said; he jerked a thumb towards to the door, indicating the show room beyond. “Out there, it's the jewelry store.”) Got in right away. Flat fee for the job. High-tech diagnostics. Perfect. I'd be wearing my new glasses now, except that -

Well, he was going through the various options, and made a long involved analogy between anti-reflective coating and chrome rims on a car. “You can’t see them. They don’t make the car run faster.” He shrugged: whatever you want; some people like the chrome rims.

“I'm in TV broadcasting now,” I said, amending it to ward off hubris: “On the internet. But we have lots of light on the set.”

I went with the chrome rims.

The sales guy said the frames looked good on me! but I had to ask if he ever told anyone their choice looked stupid.

“Oh yes,” he said. “But not like that. Maybe, like, _oh I think this might be a better look_.” But if Madame wanted a push-up rhinestone spangled bra and Madame wanted to pay, he'd write up the order. He got out a little machine that fitted over my eyes and did something, and wrote down some numbers. Took my insurance: it had a 25% discount! But the store was having a 30% sale. He recommended the sale price. I said that would be fine.

In seven to ten days, a new look.

Wonder if anyone will notice.

**Busy day all around:** didn't get to posting the Black and White World. It's below. Column night; I also spent a lot of time just talking with my wife, which cut into evening work – and, I watched an old “American Experience”
I have thick eye-walls | The Bleat.

A documentary (available on Netflix streaming) about the crash of ’29, with interviews of old cackling men who were on the trading floor when it all ended. We never learn: every boom ends with the patter of shrapnel.

Bleatplus is up. Here’s a taste to get you, yes you, to contribute to the site and get your password:

I found this at the antique store last weekend, along with several other old labels, examples of commonplace commercial design, the way the world looked. Remember how I’ve lamented how the details of ordinary life are mostly lost – the scents, the signs, the slang, the sound? When I was in the store’s basement I passed a booth where the seller was arranging things, and caught a strong tang of a bygone aroma. Stopped: whoa: what? She winced and said she’d dropped a small sample bottle of men’s cologne. It broke; the scent escaped. It was like the ghost of Dads Past – piney, astringent. It had a brief moment in the air before the ventilation system inhaled it and sent it away. For a moment, there it was. That’s the curator’s curse: the past is in the bottles. But you can never bring yourself to crack the seal. It takes an accident to catch a whiff of the truth. And then it’s gone.

**Tomorrow:** Sears 1934, Comic Ads, a column . . . and a surprise. I think. See you then; have a grand dat!

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**Pass it along, if you wish**

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**39 RESPONSES TO *i have thick eye-walls***

Kim says:
February 4, 2010 at 12:33 pm

I’ve had it with glasses – I’m goin’ for Lasik this year. I’m at that...
I have thick eye-walls | The Bleat.

awful point of progressive lenses (no bi-focals for me!) where it's a big difference between lookin' out and looking down.

And it's really hard to get an itty bitty contact lens to give you distance vision, near vision and fix an astigmatism. It tries valiantly to perform, but alas, it is all for naught.

Can't wait to see the new frames, James!

Now I'm off to have a grand “dat”! : D

swschrad says:
February 4, 2010 at 12:42 pm

I like that eye chart. woot. yer pwned.

I recently had an eyeball — nay, THE eyeball, the other one is for show and some peripheral vision — reamed and rehabbed. cataract surgery. the lucky majority get the clouded funky lens dissolved in the eye with an ultrasonic probe. then they Hoover it out. I don't think they use maximum power for that one.

then they slip in the new plastic lens, with little side tabs to hook under the focus muscles so it actually works like the real thing. shot in through a large needle. the lens is rolled up, and unfolds in the lens capsule.

good thing they get you way goofy for that one. did a little research, as you might guess, and the common anesthesia for this sort of thing is propofol. so I told the anesthesiast that I'll have what Jacko is having.

still can't dance. (other slimy jacko joke of your choice here.)

Paul says:
February 4, 2010 at 12:44 pm

James, that eye chart is brilliant.

Re glasses, about a year ago I went to a different optometrist. Nice guy, relaxed (always have your blood pressure checked while having an eye exam. It's amazing how low the readings can be, as if the whole vibe of an eye exam is like Gordon Lightfoot to the ol' diastolic reading. Just mellows you out.) And he said my current eye prescription was way too strong. He gave me samples of the revised, slightly less corrective, contacts. Whoa. Everything was right. Not necessarily sharper. It just looked right. Like there was less distortion, like you're not seeing the world through a slight shimmer of heat rising from hot asphalt. The corrective power of needed reading glasses dropped from 2.5 to 1.5 or 1. And a slight nagging headache at the end of a long day went away.

So heed the “too strong a prescription” statement.

Spud says:
February 4, 2010 at 12:44 pm

Sorry to hear about your eye pressure buildup. I was diagnosed with glaucoma a few years ago, have had a few laser surgeries and I'll have to have my eye pressure checked for the rest of my life (or if I lose my eyeballs). It's the silent vision killer, as you don't know anything is happening until it's too late.

I watched the last half of “Mulholland Falls” last night: Nick Nolte
before alcohol brought him down and an ooh-la-la Melanie Griffith, along with a cast of stars. Bruce Dern played a police chief, and I coveted his glass frames. They were the prominent black Ray-Bans with the silver wire support under the lenses. They’re difficult to find (at least for me), although I suppose you can find them sometimes at an antique store. I have a strange aversion to wearing other people’s glasses, even if I’ve swapped out the lenses. I guess it’s like wearing used shoes – I’d just rather not.

**Brisko** says:
February 4, 2010 at 12:57 pm

Enjoyed today's BleatPlus. Now you'll need to tell us the story of Lena one of these days.

**Bizarcane** says:
February 4, 2010 at 12:58 pm

That last paragraph … wistful, poignant. Good way to start the day.

**juanito - John Davey** says:
February 4, 2010 at 1:04 pm

I'm thinking Roy Orbison / Early Elvis Costello.

Really it's a good look.

I don't mind the eye puff. And if I recall, the whole family goes in to see Dr. Yamada for eye checkups on February 20th. He's a great doc with a great practice. Open on Saturdays. Located in a bad part of Sacramento, only a 45 minute drive away. All of our friends see him for eye care as well. His daughter is a partner in the practice now, and they've brought in another nice young doc. Just a nice visit. Kids like going too.

Never new my vision was deteriorating until one year I had to take a DOT physical to renew my Commercial Driver's License. I thought I struggled because of a long day, after a string of long days, but I passed the eye exam. The next renewal DOT physical two years later, and I was literally sweating while taking the exam.

Doc's conclusion: You need glasses.

What? I've always had 16/20 vision.

His response: Not anymore.

I no longer renew my Commercial Driver's license, and I can pass a DMV eye exam, so there is no restriction on my License any longer. But I keep them on for computer work (11 hours a day) reading and night driving. Prescription sunglasses seem to make a difference while playing golf.

Now I need to check my hearing since I know I have a problem there, from years of loud guitar (thanks Ted Nugent, now we have something else in common) and sitting next to 42U equipment racks all day long…

**Mark S.** says:
February 4, 2010 at 1:04 pm

LASIK 8 years ago was the best decision I made regarding my eyes. I no longer have to worry about contacts or glasses (at least not until
my eye muscles atrophy and I'll need reading glasses). I highly recommend it to all.

**HunkyBobTX says:**
February 4, 2010 at 1:16 pm

I like the Pabst Blue Ribbon Malt extract label in the Bleat plus section. No doubt it's from the prohibition era, or at least a result of it.

**wiredog says:**
February 4, 2010 at 1:32 pm

“He assured me it was actual science." That's what they said about global warming. We're expecting a couple feet of snow here in NoVa. Sure, in the Frozen Tundra of Minnesota that's nothing. Down here in the South it's the Snowpocalypse.

Actually, since it happened in December, it's Snowpocalypse II: The Sequel.

When I was 11, in a playground disagreement, I received an eye injury that left my left eye with 20/200 vision. No central vision (scar on the retina), so I don't really see stereo. Ophthalmologists and optometrists have fun looking at it.

**wendy gunther says:**
February 4, 2010 at 1:45 pm

@Kim: When I went for my Lasik, I watched an obligatory Patient Education video that went like this.

“Nearsighted? We can fix that!
Farsighted? We can fix that!
Astigmatism? We can fix that!
Combinations of the above? We can fix that!
Presbyopia (eyes getting older, needing bifocals)? We can't fix that!”

And they didn't.

@Juanito – John Davey: We're all getting older.

**Philip Scott Thomas says:**
February 4, 2010 at 2:02 pm

*It was like the ghost of Dads Past... And then it's gone.*

Last summer I was walking through the town and I smelt my Dad go by. Soap, cigarette smoke and leather. It was 25 years since he died. But there he was. It was just for a moment. Then he was gone again.

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
February 4, 2010 at 2:31 pm

“thick eye-walls” WBAGNFARB
Diane says:
February 4, 2010 at 2:32 pm

My eye guy is very technology minded; I had my first ocular ultrasound four years ago, for the same reason. He's also the same age as me – every time he mentions an advancement in treating future eye problems, I just tell him he has to go first.

Scent is a more powerful trigger for memories than almost anything else, isn't it?

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 4, 2010 at 2:51 pm

It certainly is Diane. Every time I get a whiff of creosote, it takes me back to the summer when I was 6. The railroad had just dropped a huge load of replacement ties for track maintenance on the siding in our village. Since it was August in the Midwest it was hot, airless, and muggy. The smell of creosote was inescapable. Just writing about it now, I can visualize just where they put them on the North end of town across from the general store.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 4, 2010 at 2:51 pm

Menthol Cigarettes, Dentyne gum, and hairspray would some up my mom circa 1965.

Brisko says:
February 4, 2010 at 2:51 pm

[quote]@Juanito – John Davey: We’re all getting older.[/quote]

@wendy gunther

Not me. I’ve got Benjamin Button Syndrome.

Kriesa says:
February 4, 2010 at 3:17 pm

I've been getting lenses with the anti-reflective coating for probably the past ten years. Last time I got new glasses, I was feeling poor, and decided to go without. I am so glad that I did. My night vision is 50% better without the coating (contrary to the advertising) and they fog up less in the winter. The tech said that I’d be bothered by reflections of overhead lighting, but they are not in my line of vision at all. Within months, my coated lenses always looked slightly scuffed, and they smudged all the time. My uncoated lenses still look like new a year later, and only need to be cleaned once a day. I feel like I was getting ripped off, all those years that I fell for the anti-reflective spiel.

Of course, if I made my living on film, I might feel differently about them.

Borderman says:
February 4, 2010 at 3:34 pm

Had 20/20 vision until computers came along. Twelve years after buying a text-only 80-column KayPro 4 ’84 with the 9 in. screen, glasses were needed to see the icons in Windows 95 on a 13-inch
screen. Getting old, like war, is hell, as everybody knows. Terrific eye chart, am still grinning. Can you post a translation of the acronyms after WTF?

-0-

Agreed, scent is indeed the most powerful memory trigger. Sound is close, oldies radio can put you in the Wayback Machine, but scent trumps all. Being near the electric trams (streetcars) in Melbourne, Australia smells very much like being around the mechanical cable cars in San Francisco. Why? Not a clue. Something to do with the brakes, maybe. Salt air, proximity to a bay, is another common factor.

wiredog says:
February 4, 2010 at 3:38 pm

Growing old beats hell out of the alternative.

wiredog says:
February 4, 2010 at 3:42 pm

Oh, and
“shut the F up
owned
you're a new guy
laughing my ass off rolling on the floor
ok thanks bye ”

browniejr says:
February 4, 2010 at 3:47 pm

It would seem that measurement of eye-wall thickness should be an input parameter BEFORE measuring eyeball pressure, rather than relying on an average measurement. . What do they do if your pressure is low? Hook up the compressor and add a few pounds?!?

Got rid of my need for eyeglass fashions every few years by getting Lasik about 3 years ago. Worked fine except for my need for reading glasses due to the dreaded Presbyopia/ old age. I was nearsighted before, about 20/200- 20/300. One of the options discussed before Lasik was correcting one eye for near vision, the other for far vision. Sounded too weird to try, so I didn't do it. Wiredog- what is it like? (sounds like you got it in a playground version of Lasik).

swschrad says:
February 4, 2010 at 3:48 pm

acronyms, from top to bottom.

OMG – oh, my God.
STFU – shut the (!) up.
PWN3D – aka Own3d. you been hacked, we own your computer, down to root level. we're already buying stuff with your credit card numbers.
URAN00B – you are a n00b = newbie = my dog knows more about computers.
LMAOROTF – laughing my ass off, rolling on the floor = it's funny
KTHXBYE:P – ok, son. thanks. g'bye. pthfflfpfp.

glasses lens coating; this time around, I got zeiss lenses. coating is a little different; it's not yet like a gobotar lens, but it's a little tougher
I have thick eye-walls | The Bleat.

than many, the glasses guys told me even so, clean them with a little dish detergent on the fingers under running water, and always dry with a soft clean cloth. they threw in a siliconized nonwoven cloth for the purpose. have not worn through this coating yet. I usually start getting thin spots or “crackle” on coated lenses within 6 months.

that really shows up under polarization, and of course, since I got the fancy Japanese frames with the polarized sunnies that magnetically click on, it would be massively obvious.

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

forgot... that sequence of acronyms would be the reaction of the hacker as they actively broke into your computer. as an eye chart, it is just freakin' hilarious to me, since most opthamologists are using computer-driven eye test equipment for everything except the actual fitting and slit lamp to look at the back of your eye and, without the handheld lens, the back side of the front of your eyeball.

Tony Dickson says:
February 4, 2010 at 4:52 pm

@Spud Google Shuron Ronsir ZYL for brand new 1940s-60s style eyeglass frames.

Will says:
February 4, 2010 at 5:57 pm

My sister and her husband both got lasiked 10 years ago. They loved it then, but they both are now wearing glasses again. YMMV.

I don't mind wearing glasses, so I've never been really tempted by the Laser. And, to my risk-averse way of thinking, the surgery would have to come with a signed, notarized certificate from God guaranteeing that it wouldn't have any unpleasant side effects, and that it would last till I croaked.

I do hate eye exams, though. Thanks to my mother, I am very near-sighted and have to be checked for macular and lattice degeneration. Dilation + super-bright exam light= about a three-day headache.

lanzos says:
February 4, 2010 at 6:45 pm

650m? SIX-fifty? OMG! – This is a sure sign of the Alien Invasion Of Earth By The Venusian Honeybee People!

wendy gunther says:
February 4, 2010 at 7:00 pm

@Brisko:

Benjamin Button syndrome? I'll believe that when I see it.

Course, Lasik and all, I may not be able to see it when I see it.

By the way: I was given PRK instead of Lasik (something about having eyes more suitable for one procedure than the other). The difference is PRK makes you feel like you stood in a sandstorm for
twenty-four hours.
With your eyelids pegged open.

shesnailie says:
February 4, 2010 at 9:31 pm

…@_v – i wonder if your eye doc has this gahan wilson cartoon on his wall…

http://blog.timesunion.com/comics/files/2008/07/pbc1eyedoc.jpg
it's surprisingly popular amongst optometrists…

Ed Earl says:
February 4, 2010 at 10:00 pm

Twitch,

Had emergency eye surgery for a detached retinas in October — fully macular strip tease. Nothing glamorous like the old DeeCee days — no ticked off husband or bar brawl. Just old age — eye jelly apparently liquifies and collapses. One in 80 million or whatever the odds are — the jelly peels off the retina. So, don't mess around with this stuff, cuz.

Surly

Natalie says:
February 4, 2010 at 10:49 pm

This is completely unrelated to anything in the Bleat, but I just had to comment. Well, we're in for another winter storm as we call them in the south. You would call it just another day. But, we're supposed to get some ice here (… waiting while you finish yawning…).

Anyway, I have some old Diners on my iPod and had to get some groceries today. Dumb idea since it's days like this that everyone stocks up on everything in case the ice brings with it the Apocalypse.

Anyway (again), I just want to thank you, James, for helping me tune out the crazys at Walmart. Seriously. Popped on the iPod and I was sitting at a stool at the long boomerang Formica counter with my coffee and pie and dead to the mass collection of insane carts around me.

I do love the Diner.

GardenStater says:
February 4, 2010 at 10:57 pm

I'm 49 years old, and the only member of my family that's never needed glasses. GardenWifey, on the other hand, is blind as the proverbial bat. So is GardenSon#1, who just turned 16 and has worn glasses for the past 4 years. GardenSon#2 has fine vision, just like dad.

I have thick eye-walls | The Bleat.

Weird how that happens.
Anyway, I'm grateful every day that I have good eyes.

James Vaughan says:
February 5, 2010 at 1:35 am

… chrome rims, video lights – bad move!

Maharincess says:
February 5, 2010 at 9:44 am

Need to pass an eye test for your driver's license? Come to Rhode Island! My eye doctor told me a new patient came in because he flunked the DMV's eye test. But the helpful DMV clerk handed him her glasses, and when he successfully read the eye chart with them, handed him a new license. Gotta love them govt. employees!

Ry YYZ says:
February 5, 2010 at 9:50 am

I first got a pair of glasses with the AR coating maybe 10 years ago, and thought they were a real improvement, but also noticed that they tended to be difficult to clean. So, the next time I got glasses I went without the AR coating, and was driven to distraction when driving at night by the reflections off the inside of the lenses, and even worse off the outside of the lenses, reflected back by the inside of my helmet visor (and then back again and so on) when riding my motorcycle at night. Last time around I got the lenses with the AR coating AND the easy-clean coating. This pair has been really good, but I've had them for several years so I guess it's about time I went to see the optometrist and get my eyes checked out, and get some new ones. And maybe some contacts, too – I've never had them, but they would sure be nice when skiing or riding my bike in the rain, so that I don't have to worry about the glasses fogging. Still not sure about the whole Lasik thing, though.

Greg says:
February 5, 2010 at 10:31 am

“Oh, folks appeared as walking skeletons, sure, but otherwise no problem”

Reminds me of this little gem: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0096256/

Directed by John Carpenter. Starring Roddy Piper. Hou can you lose?

Roger Ritter says:
February 5, 2010 at 10:44 am

In the BleatPlus, I notice the statement on the label for the Armour's Pork & Beans, "The meat contained herein has been inspected and passed at an establishment where federal inspection is maintained." That, of course, doesn't necessarily mean that the federal inspector was the one who inspected it. Just that he has a job somewhere on the property. I wonder how many people were actually reassured by that label...
benjammin says:
February 5, 2010 at 3:25 pm

My wife recently went in for an eye exam because we moved to a new area and needed to get re-examined for a new prescription… The prescription they wrote was weaker than her previous prescription, and when the new contacts came in she found that everything was blurrier, harder to read road-signs and such. She went back and told them just to give her her old prescription, and they were kind enough to exchange them for free.

Proof that the art (not science) of eye exams is somewhat subjective… But how could it not be? If they're basing your prescription on “which one is better, A or B?” and they both look the same, there will be some inevitable inaccuracy.

Also makes me wonder why they even needed to do a re-exam if they just ended up going with her old prescription despite their findings. Seems like they just wanted an excuse to get more money.

Holly Linden says:
February 10, 2010 at 1:54 am

Hello Sir, I'm an optician / buyer, and got the biggest kick out of this post! Your writing is delightfully clever, and I thank you for it.
I have thick eye-walls | The Bleat.

default copy from the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Yes, it's one of those days that's Bleat-poor but link-rich. Fridays sometimes turn out that way. Thursday had the spirit and mood of Friday, though – I'm working at home on Friday, as I did often in the now-distant Golden Age – but it didn't include any of the things I usually do Friday, like redesign sites, scan stuff, watch the B&W World movie, and such. As I've said before, I love Fridays because nothing is due on Saturday. Ever since the Bleat began, I’ve had a weekday deadline at the end of the night. I wonder if I would have started this if I’d known what it would mean. Probably. Was amused to read that Kids Today have stopped blogging, more or less; they’ve moved the blurtage over to Facebook, which makes much more sense. The web is the Great Heaving Sea; Facebook is an auditorium. Tumblr is a flea-market. Blogs will either be for writers, or communities gathered around a particular ideology or subject, or ace aggregators who can spit out 30 unique links a day. I can’t tell you how many times I hit a link on Twitter, only to find it’s a link to a site that links to someone else’s site that copies something someone else said, then says “these people are insane” or “that’s a point more people should be making.” Drives me NUTS.

But I expect some people have set up automation routines that spit tweets when they update. They’re not alone. Today at the paper I was amused to see

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http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5625
our website note that unemployment had gone up, “unexpectedly.” This is something of a jape in certain circles; any bad economic news about joblessness or housing seems to be “unexpected.” Since I sit right next to the tireless crack web-conductors who mediate the gush of the wires, I noted how “unexpected” is a rather . . . perennial term these days, ot derided for its inevitability, and doesn’t it constitute a wee bit, a tiny dram, of editorializing, no? Because in the back of my mind I’m thinking there will be bloggers who will say the paper is part of the TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED cabal that furthers this meme. As was explained: the program automatically scrapes the AP heads, and puts them on the page – and since AP constantly updates stories, any attempt to remove “unexpectedly” from one story would be countermanded in a tick, as soon as AP sent along another version. I did not know that. I learn things every day. Which is why it’s always amusing, and somewhat depressing, to hear people on the gauche and the droit make Wide Sweeping Assumptions about things they see on the site.

It’s excusable from people who’ve never worked in the media, but amusing from those who have. Especially if they’ve never worked in an actual daily paper.

Okay, I’m rambling. Here are the links for the day.

Comic Ads!

Sears 1934!

100 Mysteries!

The newspaper column, HERE.

The Diner! HERE. (It will explain the Pizza Hut matchbook above.)

Now if you’ll excuse me I have to listen to Beethoven’s 6th and replace some halogen bulbs. Be right back.

Back. As highminded as that sounded, it’s like this: I am writing in the kitchen on a laptop whose iTunes I barely stocked, and haven’t touched for two years. Good thing: the more choices, the more you’re paralyzed. This is okay, but I could be listening to something else. The laptop has the Fantasia soundtrack, which hits that rare nexus of childhood / Disney / Classical / Thirties, and is hence occasionally irresistible. The Beethoven led into “The Dance of the Hours,” playing now; it’s fascinating to hear the Fantasound mix bouncing between the two speakers on either side of my hands. I love that sequence – low comedy and middlebrow music, combined with backgrounds that look like a deserted vision of the World's Fair: ostriches and alligators and elephants, oh my. But since this was the first time I heard the music, and since I listened to it again and again on the soundtrack (yes: bought it as a teen, at Broadway Music, a record store that inhabited a former movie theater where I'd first seen “Fantasia” during a previous re-re-release; the theater was a porn house that periodically showed Disney flicks as some odd form of penance. The soundtrack album was beautifully packaged, the disks thicker than usual, the paper sleeves so creamy you could slide out the album
I came to expect the real music to be the same as the edited or enhanced Disney versions. There's a timpani thump in the “Dance of the Hours” sequence to indicate a hippo has fallen on her arse. If I'm listening to a version of the piece performed by an orchestra, I know where the thump is, I expect it, and I usually whap an imaginary mallet.

If my neighbors are watching from across the broad yard of Jasperwood, they just saw me imitate Chernobog at his moment of triumph in “Night on Bald Mountain.” The last part of the piece is really Sympathy for the Devil; you feel for the guy. Dawn is a buzzkill when you're uber-evil. Then the genius of “Ave Maria,” which I will always remember as the source of one of an embarrassing moment: standing in the Pantheon on Rome, arguing with a high-school classmate about whether Schubert or Schumann wrote it. She was right. I was wrong. I will always remember that I was wrong, in the Pantheon.

I am damned certain I have written all this before, how the movie begins with primordial abstractions, ends in divinity, and evaporates in the last bright brazing sunset of the last summer night of 1939. As much as it may pain some to admit it, the end of the Old World was directed by Walt.

Actually made it down this far? Congrats, and thanks! Now head back up and hit the links, and I'll see you Monday.
bgbear (roger h):
February 5, 2010 at 2:40 pm

Would a modern version sold at Ikea would be a Hoosker?
Or a Husker Du?

Rubo says:
February 5, 2010 at 3:35 pm

My Great-grandmother had a cabinet like what is shown in the Sears catalog. In Indiana they are called “Hoosiers”, and if they are in decent enough shape, bring a pretty good price at auction.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 5, 2010 at 3:39 pm

Hoosier Sifter WBAGNFARB

Rex V says:
February 5, 2010 at 3:48 pm

The Butt Boys?…snicker

hpoulter says:
February 5, 2010 at 3:54 pm

bgbear (roger h):
February 5, 2010 at 3:39 pm

Hoosier Sifter WBAGNFARB

The “Hoosier Daddies” is already taken.

*Di* says:
February 5, 2010 at 3:55 pm

There also a Bumpass Hell in Cali –
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geothermal_areas_in_Lassen_Volcanic_National_Park#Bumpass_Hell

And the best video store in the universe just might be located in San Diego – http://www.kenvideo.net/ (an honest to goodness FAMILY business) and conveniently located right next to (though not related to) - http://www.landmarktheatres.com/market/SanDiego/KenCinema.htm

Haven’t been to either lately since I’ve moved a bit too far away in the county😊

hpoulter says:
February 5, 2010 at 3:57 pm

Ain’t it always the way? I was listening to a Goon Show from 1954 the other day, and I thought a Peter Sellers character name would be a great web alias. Sure enough, somebody is already using it, though without punctuation:

Avery “Tom” Deacon-Harry.
Warren says:
February 5, 2010 at 4:42 pm

“[A]ny attempt to remove “unexpectedly” from one story would be
countermanded in a tick, as soon as AP sent along another version. I
did not know that.”

You could call it an unexpected discovery.
But I suppose that would be redundant, wouldn’t it…?

Drew says:
February 5, 2010 at 4:44 pm

Well, dang. Who knew there was both a Pantheon and a Parthenon?

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 5, 2010 at 4:48 pm

Well, dang. Who knew there was both a Pantheon and a Parthenon?

Incidentally there will be a Pantathon to help raise awareness and
money for dogs left in hot vehicles.

D Palmer says:
February 5, 2010 at 5:08 pm

James, The foundation of Chicago style deep dish pizze rests on 3
pillars: Gino’s, Uno, and Lou Malnati’s.

The story is that it was invented at Uno, but the inventor was Rudy
Malnati (father of Lou), who was the chef there. Gino’s (the Gino’s
you mentioned was Gino’s East, which is related, but not the same)
was founded one year after Uno, and before Due.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 5, 2010 at 5:14 pm

Man, I miss the Pizzeria Unos they used to have out West here.

Shelley says:
February 5, 2010 at 5:15 pm

I didn’t know that Sears made a Hoosier type cabinet. They still
seem to be plentiful back east, but you hardly ever find them in
California. My Grandmother’s house was built in 1938 and already
had built in kitchen cabinets and a red, black and yellow version of
that linoleum.

I miss that house. It was art deco heaven.

browniejr says:
February 5, 2010 at 5:49 pm

@juanito – John Davey: Would someone go up to their Husker Du,
open a door, and say, “Hey- who ate all the Frusen Glädjé?”
I think an antique Hoosier cabinet in good shape would fetch a good price at auction.

Jan says:
February 5, 2010 at 6:48 pm

RE: Today's 100 Mysteries mystery–I think James has uncovered, or, considering how dead the dialogue is, disinterred the inspiration for Keith Jackson's famous broadcast delivery.

Imagine young Keith at the movies in 1938, mouthing along, “Whoa (Nellie), let me do the talking.”

chriscritter says:
February 5, 2010 at 7:42 pm

The Kellogg's bird picture promotion had its low point when they were advertised on radio's “The Adventures of Superman” – even Bud Collyer couldn't hide his embarrassment at promoting them in the Kellogg's Pep cereal commercials.

wdot says:
February 5, 2010 at 7:58 pm

Schubert, Schumann. What's the difference? One died really young, and the other went completely bonkers.

Actually, you could have pulled this one off. Schumann “quoted” the Schubert “Ave Maria” at the very end of his song, “Widmung,” or “Dedication.” This piece is most often heard in the Liszt piano transcription. You know it. I'm sure you do.

Of course, the idea that you were having this discussion with a girl in the Pantheon is already sad enough. Had you delved this deeply into the weeds, it would have been just pitiful.

Regards.

Lou Shumaker says:
February 6, 2010 at 5:35 pm

Here it is! The Eddie Cantor number from “Roman Scandals.” I KNEW I saw it somewhere before!

Here's Jaime Weinman explaining why you have to see this number:

“The strange thing about the number is that as it progresses and gets more and more surreal and bizarre — the usual pattern of a Berkeley number — it almost seems to be rebelling against itself. First it betrays one of the rules of a blackface number by having the dancers actually notice that Cantor is a white guy in blackface, and get quite angry at him for it. Then the two groups of dancers, black and white, who were originally separated from each other, join together and team up against their common enemy: Cantor, the white guy pretending to be black, the man telling them all how they should look. They use one of the beauty treatments they had to go through to “keep young and beautiful” as an instrument of torture against Cantor, pumping their fists in revolutionary style.”

“I doubt Berkeley actually intended this to be some kind of act of revolution against the traditional blackface number or girlie number. But he would follow his crazy ideas wherever they took him, and that's where this particular idea seems to take him: the
chorus girls take over the number, stage a coup, and kill the star.

It really is a bizarre clip:


Lou Shumaker says:
February 6, 2010 at 5:36 pm

By the way, Jaime is now talking about the Benny Goodman clip from the Hollywood movie you just discussed recently. Are you two mates on the same listserv? Do you coordinate movies to talk about?

ssmart says:
February 6, 2010 at 9:01 pm

The FDR time pieces. “The Dome on the White House” huh?

madCanada says:
February 7, 2010 at 11:57 am

@ Lou Shumaker:

Woww. Very very strange. And more proof than ever that Busby was one of the towering visionary geniuses of his century.

(Was that little Billy Barty in blackface??????)

Bruce says:
February 7, 2010 at 2:27 pm

When oh when will the Diner return to Itunes? I lost nearly 20 pounds listening to the Diner on my Ipod while walking, and now I'm getting all puffy again.

madCanada says:
February 7, 2010 at 5:45 pm

@ Lou Shumaker:

I agree with Jaime Weinman. In this clip there seems to be some great subconscious working-out of collective cultural guilt here, even while keeping a tone of surreal whimsy.

It makes me admire all participants just a little bit more — even Mr Eddie “anything-for-a-dumb-laff” Cantor.

madCanada says:
February 7, 2010 at 9:44 pm

Wow. VERY interestingly ... Eddie Cantor had the spine to oppose racist populist broadcaster Father Charles Coughlin in the 1930/40s, and to defend/embrace a young Sammy Davis Jr in the 1950s. So you shouldn't judge a life till you've measured the whole thing.

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

Jon says:
February 25, 2010 at 8:34 pm
I realize this is weeks later, but having listened to the Diner, and thinking about the problem of the “all-corners pizza”...

Suppose someone took the four corners off of a round pizza, and lined them up in some kind of diamond/oval shape. Could someone take a liiiiittle bit of fresh dough and roll out something in the shape of those four contiguous corners? That way, you could make two cuts, and hey presto – four corners, no rest-of-the-pie to deal with.

And maybe Charlie Brown could finally kick the football, too – triumphant, and not funny at all...
I am backstage at this place:

It's around the corner from this tableau in my beloved Minneapolis:

I am backstage at this place:

It's around the corner from this tableau in my beloved Minneapolis:
It's a trick – the two tall buildings in the middle-ground aren't the same size, and the slender tower in the middle is taller than the buildings on the right. Yes, Sunday was another gig at Orchestra Hall, the thirty-somethinth time I've done this. En route I realized I'd forgotten to wear a belt. I took that as an omen.

Sure enough: the first time I mentioned a composer, it was the wrong one (script was wrong) and when it came time to introduce an actual living composer, he was nowhere to be found. We were supposed to have an interview on the stage. Much dead air. Huge, elephantine, loud, dead air. I went to Plan B, which consisted of “not interviewing the composer,” and on went the show. If this had happened the first few times I did this, I think I would have soiled myself, but long ago this just became loose and fun, and today was fun. Waiting now to take my bow.

Odd weekend; nothing was normal. Friday we had company over, so the usual pizza routine was SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT, and roll-with-the-punches-guy I'm not, this was a trial. Yet I managed. Somehow I got everything done for the website, and ended up watching “The Wrestler” until that hour of the day F. Scott Fitzgerald postulated was the constant time in the dark night of the soul. Moral of the movie: save your money, and don't try to date strippers. I liked it a lot, inasmuch as something this downbeat and grim can be enjoyed; mostly you marvel at the ravaged, putty-faced bulked-up actor, who took the name of the long-gone actor “Mickey Rourke” and made a stunning debut. (Unless you believe that was actually Mickey Rourke. Hah!)

Looking for the exact Fitzgerald quote, I found a page of epigrams. Such as:

> At eighteen our convictions are hills from which we look; at forty-five they are caves in which we hide.

I couldn't disagree more. Well, I suppose it's so for some, but for others they are the level plains from which we can see new ideas approach, and old ones recede.

Hmm: a bit clunky, but I get the point:
It is sadder to find the past again and find it inadequate to the present than it is to have it elude you and remain forever a harmonious conception of memory.

So many of his quotes sound like a drunkard’s regret, no? You can sense the man forcing his spiny sadness into the tiny lacquered box of a maxim. But he’s right; whenever we remember the past, we always forget to take something along: ourselves. We live each day with our own problems and hopes and doubts; why imagine it was different then?

On alkies:

*Often people display a curious respect for a man drunk, rather like the respect of simple races for the insane… There is something awe-inspiring in one who has lost all inhibitions.*

Well, he’d know. I remember once I was walking towards Times Square at night, and saw a young man in a tux leave a restaurant. He was heedless of all, gloriously smashed; he ranted and sang and yelled and staggered towards the bright lights, listing and tripping without ever planting his mug on the concrete. It was like watching a rocket out of control. Crowds parted. He may have ended up in the river; his last thought might have been ah jeez, I fell in the toilet.

This is the famous one:

*The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.*

I don’t agree. The test of the first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time, favor one, and not let it cloud your ability to understand the other.

This is the other famous one:

*There are no second acts in American lives.*

Tell that to Steve Jobs. Or Mickey Rourke.

Here’s the quote:

*In a real dark night of the soul, it is always three o’clock in the morning, day after day.*

See, I like 3 o’clock in the morning. For one thing, it means I’m going to sleep,
with much done or observed or thought or said. Granted, three o’clock in the morning is grim business if you’ve been drinking beer since noon. But if you’re working the overnight shift at the restaurant, it’s the hour when you have the place to yourself, the moment between the last mutterings of the previous day and the first stirrings of the next. To rule 3 AM is to rule the world – and at 3 AM the world is quite pliable, and amused by anyone who wants to take the scepter.

I like Fitzgerald – he’s a local boy, after all, and Gatsby was a North Dakotan. (Or so rumor had it.) I still think John O’Hara’s “Appointment in Samarra” is a better novel of the 20s – “Gatsby” floats over its era, “Samarra” walks alongside. Fitz is always seen as a Symbol of the Jazz Age, because he was glamorous, his wife went nuts, and he cracked up, dying a beer drunk. But O’Hara was more typical of the people of the era: he went on working as best as he could with the tools that he had.

In the end, Daisy Buchanan was a bore, and Gatsby was a fable. You can read all the Doomed Romantic Notions you want into it, but remember the scene where they drive through the hellish burning ash-mounds en route to Manhattan? Turns out it had a second act of its own. And a third.

Saturday night we went to the History Theater to see some theater about History. It was a Gala Event, a fundraiser for a local hospital, and through my wife’s job we nabbed two seats at a table stocked with High-Powered Lawyers. You know it’s not a normal event when there’s an iron lung in the theater lobby.

Those things terrified me when I was a kid – the idea of being stuck in a metal tube all your life, probably in the living room, pooping in bags and watching TV upside down through a mirror: shudder. I grew up after the great Polio Scare; all the symbols of the polio panic (March of Dimes PSAs, matchbooks that had pictures of little girls with crutches) had faded away, but the horrifying power of the Iron Lung remained.

The main event of the evening was a play, of course, but first: dinner. I found myself seated next to a smart couple – he was a lawyer, she taught religion at a local college – and halfway through the conversation came that moment every writer lives for, the ol’ Dawning Realization. Turns out they were Constant Readers, to use the King term. As is often the case, they had no idea there was also a website. (Hi, guys! Hope you have fun exploring.)

The play was quite good, even though it had 12 child actors. It was the life story of Sister Kenny, who turned standard ideas of polio-treatment on their heads. Don’t immobilize; move the limbs. I knew nothing of her, and had assumed she was a Mother-Theresa-type nun moving through the ward in a wimple, hunched with humble piety, her name attached to the hospital because she’d set up a place to succor the stiff and the lame. Whoa no. First of all, “Sister” was a rank in the Australian nurses corps, and second, she was one of those force-of-nature types who brooks no nonsense, rails against the
establishment, et cetera. She was played by the best actress in town, Claudia Wilkins, and the play was so well-staged you didn’t care that there were 12 child actors. I mention that only because some people find child actors to be unbearable no matter how good they are; you have to overcome your initial instinctive dislike of kids who are so obviously good at lying.

The tricky part? Dealing with the movie version of Sister Kenny’s life, where Rosalind Russell played the tireless, tempest-toss’d scold of ossified medical theories, and lotsa romance was thrown in. The tagline for the movie: A woman made for love . . . but whose service to humanity became her destiny! Sorta kinda yeah, but no. The play more or less said SHE WAS A LESBIAN, OKAY? It broached the subject with a scene of recollection whose pathos was so sharp it managed to make its point despite the booming detonation of chestal coughs from three different locations in the theater.

And now the week begins; gird up, get ready. New glasses on Tuesday. Yes, I will post pictures. It’s a whole new look.

58 RESPONSES TO monday, feb. 08

RPD says:
February 8, 2010 at 5:02 pm

Bill Mumy not only played the role of the disintegrator tot in the original Twilight Zone, but he reprised the role in the TZ revival, playing the same character as an adult. He had a son that could bring things back.

madCanada says:
February 8, 2010 at 6:35 pm

Yes, excellent Bleat today.

There’s a bit of buzz on the internet this week about someone finally making “Catcher in the Rye” into a film.

Beyond “DON’T DO IT!!!!” I only have one other word to say …

Gatsby.

ie. Take away the wounded, haunted narrative voice, and all you have left is a rather ordinary soap opera.

Gabriel Hanna says:
February 8, 2010 at 6:50 pm

Often people display a curious respect for a man drunk, rather like the respect of simple races for the insane… There is something awe-inspiring in one who has lost all inhibitions.

My cousin met a bum in downtown Seattle who was staring into a juice jar and laughing maniacally. My cousin asked him what was in the jar, and the bum looked sharply at him and said, “Jealous?”. My
cousin was indeed jealous.

*I don't agree. The test of the first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time, favor one, and not let it cloud your ability to understand the other.*

This should be written on jade in letters of gold.

browniejr says:
February 8, 2010 at 8:19 pm

@RPD: Bill Mumy did play Anthony Fremont again on the new Twilightlight Zone, but it was a daughter (played by his real life daughter Lilianna): [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0734791/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0734791/)

Cloris Leachman also reprised her role as Mrs. Fremont. They never explain who the daughter's mother was, and whether or not she was “wished into the cornfield!”

browniejr says:
February 8, 2010 at 8:28 pm

Mr. Lileks: Your new glasses at the 0:28 mark?  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Eb2Xf-k6-g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Eb2Xf-k6-g)

Writteaway says:
February 8, 2010 at 8:38 pm

browniejr:

Ha! That certainly is a new look, think it makes our host look like he gained a few lbs?

Mike Gebert says:
February 8, 2010 at 8:52 pm

Gatsby is one of those things where I think, why am I reading about the Jewish ex-gangster moping for some vapid WASP chick on Long Island when we could be reading an exciting story about Meyer Wolfsheim running the rackets in New York City?

Considering how Fitzgerald turned Irving Thalberg into a dull moper, too, you have to grant that he had a certain genius for taking some of the most fascinating figures of the early 20th century and sucking the life out of them.

JWE says:
February 8, 2010 at 11:42 pm

<<Lou Shumaker:
February 8, 2010 at 3:44 pm

<>

They've never been out of print. The truth is sadder: his novels remained in Scribner's catalogue, and the books in their warehouse, unordered by booksellers and librarians until demand suddenly revived after WW II. Then the initial sales were of books printed fifteen or twenty years before.
It's the Readathon month, which means kids are commanded to read as much as possible to raise money for the school. Last year they raised over $160K. Yes, that much. So the pressure's on to top that number, just like a telethon, although the principal doesn't slump in a chair with a cigarette and bawl while singing “You'll Never Walk Alone” – which seemed a curious choice for the MD Telethon, because, well, you know.

So the child is reading a lot. She prefers to write. I asked her why: she said there's more imagination involved in writing. True, in a sense, but also a dodge. Get Reading! Stop writing, and get reading! She has quickly turned this into a clever cudgel: time to practice piano. But I'm reading! Clean your room. But I'm reading! You want me to read, don't you? Sigh.

At night she sketches a bit before bed. This may be my favorite, ever: the dog.
Good day – got up at o-dark-hundred, got the paper. Thin, as Monday papers usually are, but it's odd to start your day with a weight-based evaluation of your employer's situation. Snow and lots of it – nothing like the pounding the East Coast got, of course, and it's fluffy as a kitten. A 900 ton kitten fed to a giant industrial fan. No, there would be blood. Well, you know what I mean. Drove to work with the wonderful calm feeling you get when you know everyone's going to be late. First order of business:

Go outside and stand in the snow and talk about how it's snowing. Don't misunderstand me: I love to do this stuff. I love to do weather. If all goes well I'll be doing a short weather segment for the Strib site every day, complete with big graphics and forecasts and all that stuff. Not that I'm a weather junkie with all that stuff about baronometrical pressures: no. I just want to be a TV weatherman.

Then I banged together a script about the Superbowl TV ads, ran down to the studio; miked up, stood in one place while the lighting was adjusted with great care, faced the TeLeProMptErS, and here you go.

The stats are in for last month, and the newspaper had (Dr. Evil voice) 100 meeeelion page views. That is sweet. Seriously:100 million. So, YEAH. This doesn't mean we're heading into our third century with eff-u cash in the vault and vats of caviar wheeled through the newsroom, but for a local media company it's very nice news. I feel better working for a newspaper
than a magazine, since a great number of large famous titles have done a header off a cliff: Newsweek (or Newsreek, as we called it in high school) had single-copy decline of 41 percent. FORTY. ONE. PERCENT. The total number of copies sold was 62K per week, which is smaller than the population of the Fargo-Moorhead area. Imagine the country. Now imagine the Upper Midwest. Focus on a small blip of humanity in the empty prairie. Imagine that half the people are buying your magazine. Not reading it all: just buying it. Now zoom out to the entire country again.

Now imagine you have a more venerable competitor who’s doing better.

Now imagine you’re US News and World Reports. (Or “Useless News and World Distorts,” as we called it in high school.)

A shakeout is coming in the next year, to state the obvious, but it’s not the first time. Every horrid economic contraction brings a die-off, as bad economics combine with shifting tastes to winnow the herd. The last big die-off took away Life, Look, and the Saturday Evening Post – each of which was a staple in the magazine rack by Father’s Chair or the coffee table. I think part of it was self-inflicted, though – for magazines devoted to graphics, they got ugly in the 60s and 70s, and coupled with the uglification of the ads they lost their snap and pizzazz. I wonder: if someone put out a magazine like Life today, but gave it the feel of the 40s – hand-drawn ads bursting with color that seemed to contain real people purchasing and enjoying real products, as opposed to static conceptual illustrations of a product, would they do well? I may be a romantic, but I believe that good graphic design can save a product or bring it back, and it’s not as if there’s a shortage of talent. There’s a shortage of inspiration in the MadAv world, as evidenced by the Superbowl ads. Make every issue a McSweeney’s Panorama.

No, we can do it on the web! True, but some web ads that are really, really attaining subcutaneous-irritant status. They’re not as ubiquitous as the ads that tell you how to avoid paying for white teeth by following one rule about akai berries, but oy. The first:

Since we have a small rodent in the house, I can assure you they’re mostly unaware of government refinance initiatives, and hence require the occasion prod. But leaving side the use of this creature to snare your eye, what’s the deal with the date? 9/10? Is that in The Future, or is it a reference to September 10th, and hence a suggestion that you’re locked into a bad mortgage because you have a pre-9/11 mentality?

We move on:
The reason this guy drives less than two hours a day is because he is locked up in a security facility, the result of a government program to create multiple clones of Steve Wozniak using electro-stimulated bio-putty. Never could get the mouth right; doomed the whole thing.

There's this one, which prompts me to posit one simple idea: your nipples should not be equidistant between the top of your shoulders and your belly button.

Hipster men with bohemian grooming standards! APRs have never been lower!
Since I've been collecting these, I've noticed a fall-off in the ones that employ the hortatory invocation of the President. Wonder if there's a program that swaps ads in and out based on daily tracking polls among independents. Hey: it's the future of advertising. Everyone has to be nimble now.

Speaking of which, click on the ads! Can't hurt. Later today: Comic Sins, and an update of 1930 Magazine Ads. See you in a bit.
The Green Police are bagging and tagging “evidence” collected at the roadblock and using all kinds of plastic bags and containers to do so (not to mention the waste of department resources and all the idling cars). This is clearly mocking.

Remember the tagline is “Green has never felt so right” in contrast to everything else “green” feels kinda “not so right”.

Could it be a brilliant ad that appeal to both sides of the issue with a cute animal added?

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 9, 2010 at 6:46 pm

oops, I commented on the wrong site, had both pages open.

Oh, well the Audi commercial did come up in this thread. I still like that anteater, cute animals are a hit in Superbowl ads.

Susan in Elk Grove CA says:
February 9, 2010 at 7:10 pm

Suggestion: 9/10 = “9 out of 10”. Maybe?

Gina says:
February 9, 2010 at 8:25 pm

Smart kid, Natalie. That “but I’m reading!” dodge got me all the way through my childhood. 😛 You go girl!

MikeH says:
February 9, 2010 at 9:40 pm

Not sure which of these internet ads are more dumb, the freakshows that our author is showing us or the stupid dancing people ones from a year or so ago. None of these images has to do with anything they are trying to sell.

Pam-EL says:
February 9, 2010 at 10:08 pm

I applaud Child’s picture of Jasper. It shows both talent and love.

lindal says:
February 9, 2010 at 10:31 pm

Re: Wiredog
Neat link. I wish I’d known about it last week. I was stuck in Pittsburgh from Friday until late Sunday because of the storm. Glad I made it out before the next wave hit. We ended up driving to Cleveland to catch a return flight. Man, there are a lot of people who don’t know how to drive in snow!
When we were walking through MSP on Sunday, one of my teammates pointed out that it was SuperBowl Sunday. It was almost unreal that we had all forgotten about it. I saw the halftime show and a few ads, but the only one I really liked was the Anheuser-Busch one.
Patrick says:
February 10, 2010 at 9:51 pm

RE: O-Dark-Hundred/O-Dark-Thirty:
I've heard it referred to as another term: The Weewee Hours.
No explanation should be required.

Paul in NJ says:
February 13, 2010 at 3:23 pm

Hipster men with bohemian grooming standards!
And an… interesting TITLE attribute has been specially selected for that image. Hrm. Not that I disagree, mind you… (And you thought no one moused over!)

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LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?
Use the form below to search the site:

Search

Still not finding what you're looking for?
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!
Not . . .

a good day. Not at all. Wednesday is shaping up to be another round of keister-kicking, too.

Man.

Well.

The least bad part was my daughter’s reaction to my new glasses, and it was full of horrors and tears; I would have made her happier if I’d come home in a gore-smeared hockey mask. It’s like you’re not you. Well, yes, there’s that. They’re too big. My wife liked them. Me, I think I like them; after today, I’m not sure who the hell is in the mirror, but he looks 12% hipper than the last iteration. You can find them tomorrow on Newsbreak – no pix here, because self-shot shots always make your nose look Durante-sized.

When I got them I wandered around the mall, confused. Certain things were clearer. Much clearer. Sharp and lovely. On the other hand, I had the impression I was walking on a sheet of glass over the Grand Canyon; HOLY VERTIGO BATMAN.

Yes Robin. The unnerving sensation of losing one’s balance over a yawning chasm.

HOLY PEDANTIC DEFINITION, BATMAN!
Yes Robin. And that can only mean we are up against the arch-fiend. . . . I’m sorry, who’s up in the rotation? Or have we invented an arch-fiend to accommodate a pop-culture figure whose agent got him on the show?

(fist smack) It’s got to be one or the other, Batman.

Yes Robin I know.

HOLY DISTENDED FACIAL SACs, it’s the Dizzler, played by Dizzy Gillespie.

(ruminatively) Yes . . . yes of course. The Duke of Disorientation. The Lord of Lack of Balance. Hook up the Dramamine Dispersal Unit to the Batmobile! Then, to the Batmobile!

HOLY INTERNAL COMBUST-

Stop it, chum. It’s annoying.

Anyway. Like that. Afterwards I went to eat a meager meal at Zantigos, which I cannot get enough of. Once a week. I try something different every time; today I went for something they call a “taco.” Crisp and fresh. The green chili burrito gave me head-sweats, so when I walked outside my scalp froze. There I stood, head still spinning from the day, eyes swimming from the glasses, skull covered with a light glaze of chili-sweat. Nothing to do but get in the car and go find some rye.

For later. For later in the week. I had read some recent praise of rye, and was curious; alas, the local store was out – because, as the clerk explained, rye is now hip. Sigh. Well. I left without buying anything, and that earned a curious look from the clerk: surely everyone who comes into a liquor store buys something. No one buys nothing. They come in for hooch; it’s just a question of the form.

Got home, showed face to family. Wife loved the new glasses; child, as noted, was disturbed. But this passed over the course of the night, and by the end of the day she regarded me as the Same Old Dad again and wanted to talk about the book she was reading. Some cats were having a war against other cats, who were using biological compounds to make them hemorrhage. A bit different from “Tom Swift and his Amazing Wonderful Future-Bringing Thing,” eh? We talked about the book until she fell asleep. Jasper sighing on the end of the bed with that great disappointed gust dogs sometimes emit. Dogs don’t yawn because they’re tired, but they do sigh because they’re resigned. It would be apt if this was the one expression we shared with dogs.

Then I wrote a piece of music to be used as way-deep-back-background for a cooking video. About creampuffs. They wanted something tinkly and busy to underscore the actions of cooking, something not to be listened to, but dimly heard. Since I used the movie-soundtrack function of iMovie I couldn’t snap to the beat, and so it’s not as crisp and perfect as I would like – but as I said, it’s deep background. I give you a link for one reason: around 2:20 I dumped the whole frickin’ day into a cello figure. Pouring out my heart! For creampuffs!
It’s all a repeat after that, more or less. I had to redo the main melody because I realize I had copied the “Masterpiece Theater” theme. I think.

Oh: Black and White world isn’t to everyone’s tastes, I know; like so many things, another tiny tunnel down which I go expecting company. But this week I deal with America’s version of Metropolis. Really. I’ll give you a still of the title card:

Here’s a brief clip. I mean: geezum crow. Wow.

Black and White World can be found HERE. Later: Out of Context Ad Challenge! See you in a bit. Also, shoot me now.
**xrayguy** says:
February 10, 2010 at 1:24 pm

YouTube has a clip that is all 109 “HOLY” iterations by Burt Ward from the first season of “Batman”. FYI

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**covvie** says:
February 10, 2010 at 1:24 pm

Only the second comment on Cream Puff Symphony! I *liked* the figure at 2.20, synthesised though it be. You've just proven what Jack Benny used to say — “There's ALWAYS room for Cell-O!”

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**Kathy F** says:
February 10, 2010 at 1:28 pm

Cream Puff music, Does anyone ever think about the things they ask you to do? “James, write us about 3 minutes of music, something cremppuff like, you know, not intrusive, just background. We need it by 2. And while you’re at it could you deal with the cold fusion problem?”
Well done.

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**Charlie Young** says:
February 10, 2010 at 1:43 pm

The only problem with those little airplanes: ignoring the physics of flight. Those aircraft would be bumping each other out of the sky. Simple things like airflow dynamics and Newtons laws of motion were completely left out of that film.

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**fizzbin** says:
February 10, 2010 at 1:55 pm

Oh! Oh! How to make cream puffs! I know this one! You send your kids to be educated by the commie-rat-bastardos of the public school system 😏Like, the kids only play the tug of peace, everybody hits a home run, no scores are kept, ad nauseum. All for the sake of their precious self-es,es,esteem 😁

Why, I tells ya, In My day...wha? Oh, fine, then. I'll go back to my room and lock the door! Let 'em call in an air strike! When I'm gone, you'll all be sad, so there.

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**“Di”** says:
February 10, 2010 at 2:01 pm

Max Headroom sure got it right with the tube/network that you could never turn off – it knows your every movement . . .

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**Writeaway** says:
February 10, 2010 at 2:49 pm

funny, fizzbin

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**Bob** says:
February 10, 2010 at 3:41 pm

Am I the only one who thought James was talking about bread when
Mr_Lilacs says:
February 10, 2010 at 3:54 pm

A plethora of topix today!

Spex – I've worn them since 1977. Just got progressives last month. Easy to adjust except for walking outside in the snow. I think I will get a pince-nez before I need another pair of spex so I'll have the frame at the ready.

Slivovitz is too authentic for the hipster set. At least the price should remain stable (although it's a better deal to make yer own).

How's about this for an unanticipated tech: this morning I listened to a private FM station that was available only in my car. It carried programs that were specific to my interests. It even paused the broadcast when I wanted. I have a hunch I'll be listening to old and new Diner and Radio Derb podcasts on my commute for a while.

Dave says:
February 10, 2010 at 4:41 pm

James, I think this is the guy you're looking for: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Count_Vertigo

Jennifer says:
February 10, 2010 at 5:54 pm

Your glasses are great–nice choice. The person who helped you did right by you. I got progressives for the first time (hello 42) last year and the first few days were not fun. That paired with lenses that aren't very “tall” gives you a reeeeally tiny viewing window. Now, love 'em.

browniejr says:
February 10, 2010 at 6:47 pm

@Jennifer: So where are you seeing Mr. Lileks new glasses?

efurman says:
February 10, 2010 at 6:56 pm

@GardenStater:
Well, if someone had shown me a movie back in 1973, and it showed people carrying computers in their pockets, being able to watch a movie on them and then click on a screen to get the biography of the actor who played “3rd man from the left,” and then call a friend on that same tiny computer, and send him driving directions and then use that same computer to make a reservation at a restaurant...

I would have said “Yea, sure. No way.”

Hand held computers doing all sorts of amazing things? No, that I would have imagined. It's all those flying cars and ONLY 37 years in the future that I have a problem with. I can even imagine that all those flying cars just may be true in the future. Just not 37 or 50 or maybe even 100 years from now, but someday.

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5745
*Di* says:
February 10, 2010 at 7:14 pm

The grille on your GMC truck looks a lot like one of the Union Pacific streamliners – http://www.lib.niu.edu/2008/iht08150127-2.jpg – or vice versa.
Except the truck has a wonky left eye.

shesnailie says:
February 10, 2010 at 7:29 pm

-_@_v – movie link is here…
http://lileks.com/bw/30s/imagine/index.html

Aleta says:
February 10, 2010 at 7:35 pm

I enjoyed Cream Puff Symphony very much. As I was listening, I was watching some of the guys in the shop working on the new rocket engine and the music fit very well. Thanks for the ear-candy 😊 I played cello as well as piano, once upon a time before arthritis.

Bud says:
February 10, 2010 at 8:54 pm

Was there an actual movement in the 20s and thirties to make the BellHop Jacket an uberhip piece of general evening wear? Between this Photo Essay and Luarie and Frys interpretation of Wodehouse's Wooster, I'm starting to become confused.

I thought only the band, and other hired help one might TIP wore the short coat.

DumbBlone says:
February 10, 2010 at 11:09 pm

My typically happy-go-lucky dog sometimes lets out a sigh that makes me wonder if I should get him that medication that they advertise with the uncanny little wind-up doll; or perhaps I have failed him somehow?

Sam L. says:
February 11, 2010 at 12:17 am

That clip of all the airplanes flying in lines–I saw that in the last 2 or 3 Star Wars movies. Couldn't buy it there, either.

Jason says:
February 11, 2010 at 1:11 pm

I didn't know Rye was hip, but I do agree with everything Sean said at 8:56 am. In my parts, you are lucky to find a bar with rye on hand. While most bartenders know how to make a Manhattan or Old Fashioned, you will usually get a blank stare when asking for a Sazerac. Which really sucks as a properly made Sazerac is probably my favorite cocktail, if I had to choose just one. Unfortunately it requires two ingredients (3 if you count the Rye) that are generally
fairly obscure, i.e. absinthe and Peychaud's bitters. With the govt lifting their ban on manufacturing and importing of absinthe, that will hopefully change at some point. Sure you can always use a pastis, but its not the same.

**DensityDuck** says:
February 11, 2010 at 4:40 pm

I'm still a bit intrigued by the hemmorhaging cats. Yes, I could spell it properly, but I can't be arsed right now. Anyway, WHAT book is this? That seems like material that's a bit harsh for an eight-year-old.

**GardenStater** says:
February 11, 2010 at 7:33 pm

Speaking of hip rye: Two buddies and I had an outing last Saturday to Tuthilltown Spirits, the first legal distillery in NY State since Prohibition. A nice tour, followed by a tasting. I picked up a nice bottle of “New York Whiskey,” smooth but obscenely expensive. James would love the label.

**browniejr** says:
February 11, 2010 at 8:31 pm

THE NEW GLASSES: http://www.startribune.com/video/?elr=KAarks5PhDcU9PhDcU9PhDcUS5PhDcoO4M5U&p=1&show=40365512

**A little weekend Lileks « The TrogloPundit** says:
February 14, 2010 at 12:50 am

[...] Hey, that's what I always do. Here's the link [...]
Thanks for dropping by! Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
It's the anniversary of Jack Paar walking off the Tonight Show. He had a beef with a censor because he told a joke that included the abbreviation “w.c” – “water closet,” i.e., bathroom. We've come a long way. Preposterous prudity in retrospect, but ah, for the age when there were some standards. Not that I would want them. No, I want these standards, which are too loose for some and too tight for others. Who am I to judge? Who are you? It doesn't matter: there aren't any monolithic network censors who can shape one-third of the overculture's terms. If a YouTube channel offends thee, unsubscribe it, and move along. It's an era when you can calibrate with exquisite precision the temper and tone of your media consumption.

I'm sorry there's no more than this, but I am in the middle of a three-day extravaganza of really, really, really crappy days. Everyone's fine, I'm fine, dog's fine, hamster's fine, but other things are not, repeat NOT fine, and working them out is gruesome and delicate. It occupies my mind – so much so that I forgot to post the Out of Context Ad Challenge, as you no doubt noted.

It's above. Wish me luck. Back tomorrow.
63 RESPONSES TO very tiny thursday note

April says:
February 11, 2010 at 2:22 pm

Long, long time reader here, first time commenter. Just wanted to say take care, James.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 11, 2010 at 2:33 pm

About modern manners: I noticed in an old movie the other day that men stood up when women came into a room, to their table, etc. Courtesy was nice while it lasted.

Man, no wonder those gentlemen of the past did not want woman in the workplace. At my office, I would be standing up every 5 minutes.

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 11, 2010 at 3:30 pm

I wish you well. You'll come through this just fine. And now, an inspirational quote from Gunny Highway, “Improvise, adapt, overcome.”

Maharincess says:
February 11, 2010 at 3:32 pm

@bgbear: In those 1930s and ‘40s movies set in offices — or in newsrooms — I don’t remember any men jumping to their feet when a secretary or female reporter entered the room.

Aleta says:
February 11, 2010 at 3:37 pm

Luck is wished. I was ready to commit seppuku two weeks ago (things eventually got better – chocolate was involved), so you have empathy and sympathy out here in the desert.

Shelley says:
February 11, 2010 at 3:43 pm

Hope you get things straightened out.

Personally, I would be at home in the 30s-40s. I would gladly trade into not having TV if I could still walk into a hardware store and buy a rifle. I don’t find Leno funny and I loathe Letterman. Movies these days are crap.

I’d like a craftsman, art deco, orange and lemon grove festooned Southern California please. Even with depression and war, I’d take it. At least we’d have Shirley Temple instead of Miley Cyrus.

I would miss YouTube though and Blogs.
DensityDuck says:
February 11, 2010 at 4:37 pm

I'm happy enough to unsubscribe from channels I don't like. What happens when the channel I unsubscribed from forces itself into the ones I've got left, and then acts all huffy when I complain?

GardenStater says:
February 11, 2010 at 4:56 pm

Re: Your troubles
As someone said to me when I was unemployed,
“When God closes one door, He opens another–but it's Hell in the hallway.”
Truer words were never spoken.

Philip Scott Thomas says:
February 11, 2010 at 5:36 pm

Genial Host,
Like so many before me up-thread, I wish you well. I dearly hope what it is that is troubling in your life will resolve itself quickly and satisfactorily.

Al Federber says:
February 11, 2010 at 7:28 pm

“…other things are not, repeat NOT fine, and working them out is gruesome and delicate.”
Is it constipation?

Seattle Dave says:
February 11, 2010 at 9:38 pm

Sick in bed myself today, and just now feeling well enough to see what's happening on the Interwebs. Hope your troubles are short-lived. Remember, there are a lot more of us who like you than there are who dislike you.

lindal says:
February 11, 2010 at 10:48 pm

Wishing you all the best. Everyone else has said it better than I will, but you have ready and sympathetic bunch pulling for you in the comments.

lindal says:
February 12, 2010 at 11:23 pm

I'm only posting this here because I know everyone will have moved on to the other threads, but I'm starting the process of getting a divorce and playing happy-family with my husband's family for a wake and funeral right now. I will never see most of these people again, and can't tell them. So crappy times, I got 'em. You have a lot of my sympathy for your hell-days. Probably because
misery loves company.

← Older Comments
developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Hey howdy hey! Friday. Listen, folks: thanks for all the kind words and attaboys. Made a long day brighter. And now it's Frida – let grey hearts lift and sing! But not “American Pie.” I hate that song. I wonder if the Scandinavian version says “Drove my Ford to the fjord, but the fjord was dry.”

Pounded flat as a tin sheet tonight, and short with my daughter, which always gives me pangs of instant regret. Never, ever take out your mood on your family. It's the easiest thing to do and the least forgivable; they're the ones to whom you owe your best self. The fact that they're closest obligates you to be extra careful. Of course, you can't take out your bad mood on your co-workers; what did they do? (Unless they did something. Even then.) You can yell at the dog, but to him it's just blah-blah dominance-racket from Mister Alpha. Talk to the paw. You can take it out on strangers, but then you're abrogating your part in the social compact. You know where this is leading, don't you? That's right: the clocktower, with a rifle.

Well SORRY if I go for the symbolic approach.

Well no. I do find that the deeper the issues, the better I drive. When you're
masticating the gristle of existence, someone’s decision to cut in front of you and make a left turn matters less. Ideally this would be a lesson, no? Take things as they come, relax, exhale. I can have perspective? But humans have short memories. Something I always mean to tweet (to use a phrase that would have baffled me three years ago) has to do with human behavior in the Target parking lot. Sometimes I think that all you need to know about our species can be summed up in the change that sweeps over a human when they leave their car and become a pedestrian. When they’re a driver, the people walking in the lot to their cars are SLOW and STUPID and UNAWARE – c’mon, I got a spot to get to, all day I do not have, please be aware of my large machine. But when you park and proceed on foot, you are part of the Walking Tribe now, and that car that backed out without seeing you is obviously piloted by an IDIOT and c’mon, I’m walkin’ here!

Somewhere there’s a parallel universe where it’s just not a problem; everyone drives around on Segways and while they whirr along they have water-pistol fights for the sheer joy of it.

In case you’re disinclined to read the rest, here’s today’s links. Trust me, they are links; have to adjust the color in this template.

100 Mysteries. Basil Rathbone!

Sears 1934 comes to an end . . . with 101 pages.

1940s Comic Ads.

The newspaper column.

The new Toy Story 3 trailer is out. It is full of joy. Steady patrons to the Bleat know I love computer-generated animation, and love beyond reason Pixar productions; their ability to invest ones and zeroes with emotional power is unmatched. I love to watch the credits, because it sorta blows holy hell out of the auteur theory, eh? A glorious collaboration. Of course it’s shaped and guided, as all these things are, but it’s still a miracle to see so many names attached to something that makes such a singular impression. (This may be a side-effect of being overwhelmed by the sheer amount of stuff – “Up,” which I love, seems more stylistically episodic, but that’s another post.) Another “Toy Story” movie sounded like rote franchise-flogging when it was first announced, and people were wondering what could possibly be done: okay, toys in peril, Woody nervous and hectoring, Buzz bluff and confident, got it. What’s interesting about this trailer is how it leans on the strength of the backstory: the toys are in the box. It’s an ensemble piece. You remember how much you like all those guys. At some point you realize that Slinky’s voice has to be different, because Jim Varney’s passed on, and Rex the flutter-forearmed plastic dino is voiced by the son of the greatest editor of the New Yorker, but that’s after two or three viewings. This is all character and situation. Compare to the trailers for “A Christmas Carol,” which consisted mostly of Jim Carrey screaming while being thrown around the sky and shot down ice-covered rooftops.
I’m sure some will carp: c’mon, they can remote-view Andy? Really? By using Missus Potato Head’s eye? But the very fact that you quibble about that suggests that you’ve already accepted the idea of a living, thinking, moving-around Missus Potato Head as a self-aware individual.

Which is no small feat, really.

Then there’s the history: this story goes back a way. In one sense, it’s the history of CGI, with each film standing as a benchmark. If I’d been in on the project, I would have been oh-too-well-aware of that; the first was a milestone, the second linked the new puppets to the old while upping the technical ante and adding emotional wallop (seriously, if you weren’t touched by Jesse’s song, the only question about your heart is whether it’s anthracite or bituminous) and the third, I expect, closes the loop: the boy has grown up, and so has the medium.

Showed it to my daughter tonight; she smiled when she saw the Disney logo, smiled wider when she saw Luxo, and laughed throughout. She’s pumped. I’m pumped. I miss these guys.

Plus, KEN MAY BE EVIL.

Thank you for bearing with me this week. Have a grand weekend, and I hope to earn your patronage anew come Monday.

87 RESPONSES TO those good old boys were drinking aquavit and skyy

juanito - John Davey says:
February 12, 2010 at 1:50 pm

bgbear (roger h):
February 12, 2010 at 12:04 pm

@juanito: my life story would hardly fill an infomercial.

just set it and forget it!

Oh, more like Bears Gone Hibernating or Ursus Gone Antiquing?

swschrad says:
February 12, 2010 at 1:53 pm

comic ads “radar” radio watch… radar, eh. in the 40s? they got a bunch of surplus 1n21 detector diodes for the semi-tuned crystal radio in the watch.

when you needed them commercially in the 60s and 70s, they were up to $25.
Those good old boys were drinking Aquavit and Skyy | The Bleat.

surplus in 46, probably ten pounds for a buck, provided they were floor sweepings.

madCanada says:
February 12, 2010 at 2:06 pm

Standby ... RIGHT NOW ... The full, complete "Metropolis" is being streamed LIVE from Berlin HERE ... an hour of new footage!!! This northern Lang fan is very happy today!!!

http://www.arte.tv/fr/mouvement-de-cinema/cinema-muet/3050038.html

canajuneh says:
February 12, 2010 at 2:26 pm

"Joe Broderick:
February 12, 2010 at 1:00 pm
I will admit to liking the song “American Pie.” It’s not the world’s greatest, and got waaay too much airplay when it came out (I was a senior in high school at the time). I wouldn’t put it on my iPod, but if I hear it on the car radio I’ll listen to it. Only good thing Don McLean ever wrote. That one about Vincent van Gogh is so sappy it makes me gag.
"

I hate sappy stuff too, (so anything by Josh Groban has me reaching for the bucket). But, when I think of American Pie, I think of Don Mclean, and then a video that combines 2 things I enjoy…his song Vincent, and the works of Vincent Van Gogh. Here it is http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dipFMjckZOM

Maybe I like it because it was one of those songs that’s fun to play on the piano. Early on, in the tadpole years, our class went on a field trip to a gallery showing of Vincent Van Gogh’s paintings. I had to be dragged there, but it left an impression that stuck with me ever since. Funny how that happens.

canajun-eh says:
February 12, 2010 at 2:30 pm

And recently, somebody pointed out the “real meaning of American Pie”. It’s out there on the intertubes too, and puts a different spin on what I’d always thought the song was about.
http://www.cfa.harvard.edu/~jdevor/links/TheMeaningOfAmericanPie.htm

Kevin says:
February 12, 2010 at 3:23 pm

I believe I was in college when the song came out about Vincent van Gogh, and I always wondered whether, because it was about van Gogh, it was recorded in mono rather than stereo.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 12, 2010 at 3:27 pm

The good ol’ boys were drinking whiskey and rye but, apparently old man Levy was dry.
**Borderman** says:
February 12, 2010 at 3:36 pm

The B&W World movie reminded me of seeing the poster, when it when up at the local theater in ’66, of what turned out to be Basil Rathbone’s next-to-last picture. Starred Ferlin Husky of all people. Glad I never saw it. The great Sherlock Holmes reduced to doing creepy haunted house stuff to scare the cowgirl hat off poor little old Molly Bee. The Laff Riot of the Year, no doubt. I guess Rathbone had some bills to pay, or somethin’. Don’t we all.

On a farm where there was no electricity, like the one in way-backwoods Kentucky where my dad and my uncle grew up in the 1920s, a gasoline-powered washing machine would have been the lap of luxury for my grandmother. She boiled the laundry, Western-movie style, in a big pot over a fire. Or so I’m told. The hill country west of San Antonio (Texas) only began to receive electricity in 1935, the year after that catalog was issued, so there was definitely a market for them. Was wondering how many gasoline-powered washing machines Sears sold, compared to electrically powered ones.

**Borderman** says:
February 12, 2010 at 3:42 pm

Kevin:

always wondered whether, because it was about van Gogh, it was recorded in mono rather than stereo.

Would Rooster Cogburn just as soon see Avatar in flatscreen?

**Kevin** says:
February 12, 2010 at 3:52 pm

“Would Rooster Cogburn just as soon see Avatar in flatscreen?”
And would the Venus de Milo have enjoyed “A Farewell to Arms”?

**Borderman** says:
February 12, 2010 at 4:09 pm

Kevin:

“Would Rooster Cogburn just as soon see Avatar in flatscreen?”
And would the Venus de Milo have enjoyed “A Farewell to Arms”?

Should Glen Close’s character have sung “Goin’Out of My Head Over You” to Michael Douglas’s character in Fatal Attraction? Naw. He got the point anyway.

**browniejr** says:
February 12, 2010 at 4:13 pm

@Maharincess: I think you are right about the shower head being out of frame in the Sears catalog. I think it is really interesting that the toilet/W.C. is so prominently featured. I remember the old Leave it to Beaver show from the early ’60s had a bathroom WITHOUT a toilet, and earlier this week there was the anniversary
of the Jack Paar/W.C. joke controversy… yet in the mid Thirties, they show a toilet and a babe in a tub taking a bath and there are not riots/calls for boycotts of Sears? Must be “pre-Code” thinking.

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
February 12, 2010 at 4:18 pm

actually Leave it to Beaver had a toilet, kind of out of frame, in the first episode with the baby alligator.

**Shelley says:**
February 12, 2010 at 4:21 pm

My bathroom is still apparently in 1934. Of course the house is about the same age.

**D Palmer says:**
February 12, 2010 at 4:50 pm

It's interesting how many of the crappy novelty items come from Chicago. I had no idea that we were the center of 40's kids mail order crap.

The way they indicate the zipcode is interesting too. The Wallets from from the Illinois Merchandise Mart, 1227 Loyola Ave, Chicago 26, IL. At first I thought that was the Merchandise Mart downtown, but then I looked harder at the address and realized that it was in Rogers Park on the north side, about 1/2 a block from Loyola University.

All Chicago zipcodes start with 606. So Chicago 26 would be 60626 today, which is in fact the zip for that neighborhood (I lived there, about a mile north for 6 years).

Today that site is a crappy 60's apartment building next to the Loyola L stop.

**Mike Gebert says:**
February 12, 2010 at 5:15 pm

“Would Rooster Cogburn just as soon see Avatar in flatscreen?”

Andre deToth, who directed the 50s 3-D House of Wax, was one-eyed.

**William Overby says:**
February 12, 2010 at 5:43 pm

Glad things are better today!

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
February 12, 2010 at 5:55 pm

Herb Minkman: Today, if you go to a party, and you see, you know, a whoopie cushion, or a plastic lost lunch, or the..

Al Minkman: Phony doggie doodie.

Herb Minkman: Yeah. And, if it doesn't look good, it's probably not a Minkman. And that makes us look bad.
Mike Wallace Voiceover: Herb and Al Minkman are third generation jokemakers. They grew up in a world of dribble glasses and Chinese finger prisons. But they're growing old in a very different world – one overrun by pirate novelties.

DryOwlTacos says:
February 12, 2010 at 6:08 pm

I worked in the office of a radio station when “American Pie” was popular. Part of the reason the long version was played, rather than the retail-45 version (which was only the first half of the song with a badly-tacked-on playoff; the song concluded on the flipside) was that it gave the DJ a comfortable amount of time for a bathroom break. Same for “Lying Eyes” a couple of years later; they played the short version in regular rotation, but if they needed a 10-100, they put on the album version.

Does anybody born after 1970 know what the heck I am talking about?

Borderman says:
February 12, 2010 at 6:21 pm

Mike Gebert:

“Would Rooster Cogburn just as soon see Avatar in flatscreen?”

Andre deToth, who directed the 50s 3-D House of Wax, was one-eyed.

Used to work with a guy who had been in a fireworks accident as a kid and only had one eye. He said 3-D movies were a waste of time for him. He tried them once and he said the screen was a jumble, unintelligible. I only have his testimony to know what it’s like. Indeed I was thinking of my old colleague when I wrote that about Rooster Cogburn.

May hat is off to Andre deToth. ¡Bien hecho!

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 12, 2010 at 6:24 pm

@DryOwlTacos:

It was established above that there were toilets before 1970 so, I assume the DJ was smoking.

Borderman says:
February 12, 2010 at 6:26 pm

DryOwlTacos:

Does anybody born after 1970 know what the heck I am talking about?

Side One of Happy Trails by Quicksilver Messenger Service gives you almost a half hour. Usually could only get away with that on the graveyard shift, though.
I guess I'm cheating on your question, I'm class of '51. Sorry. But you are 100 percent correct about radio and long songs.

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
February 12, 2010 at 6:45 pm

I blew another “joke” I meant “no toilets” before 1970.

Comedy, you allude me again.

**Mr_Hat says:**
February 12, 2010 at 9:18 pm

Man, do I love Fridays. (That could be an ad tagline for a casual dining chain headquartered in southern Minnesota!)

“Horn and Hardart's automat
Is the place where I last shat.
Now I'm singing in E flat.
Listen!
[Sincerely]

Mr. Hat.”

**shesnailie says:**
February 12, 2010 at 9:25 pm

_@_v – i have both eyestalks but for some reason can only see out of one of them at any given time. so i'm not wasting my money on avatar.

by the way sears used to sell mail-order house kits. everything you needed to build a substantial suburban dwelling in numbered pieces with a few kegs of nails and plaster thrown in to slap it all together.

**Loge says:**
February 12, 2010 at 9:33 pm

In college (lat '80's) there was a certain bar that had dollar pitcher and oldies night every Thursday, and at midnight they'd play *American Pie*. People would sing along, you had to be there.

**hpoulter says:**
February 13, 2010 at 6:51 am

TOY STORY 3 TRAILER EASTER EGG:

If you watch this trailer at 720p, and blow it up as big as you can, you can see a lot of details on Andy's walls and bulletin board (0:55). Ticket stub from a “Humble Beginnings” concert, “Most improved player” trophy. Etc. Big score – there is a postcard on the board with the message side obscured, but it is ADDRESSED to Carl and Ellie Peters.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_FfHA5whXc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_FfHA5whXc)

**hpoulter says:**
February 13, 2010 at 6:59 am

If you go to the Apple site you can watch it (and the new trailer) in...
Those good old boys were drinking Aquavit and Skyy | The Bleat.

1080.

**Brian Lutz** says:
February 13, 2010 at 2:56 pm

_Same for “Lying Eyes” a couple of years later; they played the short version in regular rotation, but if they needed a 10-100, they put on the album version._

_Does anybody born after 1970 know what the heck I am talking about?_  

Only because my dad had a CB back in the Seventies.

**Who Am Us Anyway** says:
February 13, 2010 at 3:45 pm

_When they're a driver, the people walking in the lot to their cars are SLOW and STUPID and UNAWARE – c'mon, I got a spot to get to, all day I do not have, please be aware of my large machine. But when you park and proceed on foot, you are part of the Walking Tribe now, and that car that backed out without seeing you is obviously piloted by an IDIOT and c'mon, I'm walkin' here! Totally true. One corollary is George Carlin's point about “Have you ever noticed how anyone driving slower than you is an idiot and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?”_  

**madCanada** says:
February 13, 2010 at 7:18 pm

_I've got to admit, I've never listened to “American Pie” all the way through. Catchy tune, etc … But Buddy Holly was a great little songman full of promise: that's all, he wasn't Abe Lincoln or a Kennedy … A eulogy to Buddy doesn't need to be any longer than three minutes, and the lyrics don't need to be anything other than simple & clear._  

**swschrad** says:
February 13, 2010 at 7:53 pm

_ah, free-form radio. usually at night, those stations were highly formatted in the day._  

_well, we had one in Lincoln, Nebraska that was pretty funked-out all the time. but during the day, they got the commercials in and got the station ID out every hour on the hour._  

_many a big jock has a story of running out for burgers or whatever with a big long record on, and getting stuck in traffic or the zipper wouldn't go up or whatever the deal was, and came back to the phone lit up and the record going “skriTCH!” “skriTCH!” in the end groove._  

_and several have really good stories of the LP getting stuck on a playing groove. Larry King has often told a story of putting a weekly sermon record on at one of his first jobs, and the stuck groove was “DAMN!” “DAMN!” “DAMN!”_  

**DryOwlTacos** says:
February 13, 2010 at 10:56 pm

_Back in the day, American Top 40 was distributed on three LPs that_
Those good old boys were drinking Aquavit and Skyy | The Bleat.

usually arrived in the mail on Thursday or Friday each week. The Sunday afternoon shift was leisurely for the board operator, who just put on the records and followed the enclosed log sheet, which told exactly how much time he had between spots. After the shows were aired, they were supposed to return the disks, but they tended to pile up. I still have a couple of sets from the summer of 1975. On one of them, Casey says our station's call letters!

xrayguy says:
February 13, 2010 at 11:08 pm

Parking Lot- My big gripe is those who “walk the diagonal” or “hypotenuse” for those who had higher education. Instead of staying in along the back bumpers of parked cars and then doing a 90degree turn at the appropriate time, these imbeciles haul their doughy butts CORNER TO CORNER IN MY DRIVING SPACE, taking up the MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF TIME as they move at a slugs pace to the front door of Target. If you have a stroller or small child, you are forgiven, but the rest of you I WILL USE THE HOOD MOUNTED CHAIN GUNS ON YOU IF YOU DONT GET OUT OF MY WAY! Thank you, have a good day.

Emily says:
February 14, 2010 at 10:59 am

Do you suppose that Woody really had his own personality, or was it whatever Andy invested him with? In other words, are all of their personalities what Andy perceived such a toy would have as a personality?

shesnailie says:
February 14, 2010 at 2:39 pm

Back in the day, American Top 40 was distributed on three LPs that usually arrived in the mail on Thursday or Friday each week. The Sunday afternoon shift was leisurely for the board operator, who just put on the records and followed the enclosed log sheet, which told exactly how much time he had between spots. After the shows were aired, they were supposed to return the disks, but they tended to pile up. I still have a couple of sets from the summer of 1975. On one of them, Casey says our station's call letters!

_@_v – i have a set of records and log sheets for dick clark's rock roll & remember – show #426 – april 7, 1990.

metaphizzle says:
February 15, 2010 at 1:24 pm

Does anybody born after 1970 know what the heck I am talking about?

Dave Barry alleged as much in his Book of Bad Songs, that these overly long songs got airtime mainly because the DJs needed bathroom breaks. I remember his examples included “American Pie”, and “Inna Gadda Da Vidda” by Iron Butterfly, and “Stairway to Heaven” by Led Zeppelin, and “Hey Jude” by the Beatles (some of whom are still singing “Na na na na, hey Jude”).

← Older Comments
Those good old boys were drinking Aquavit and Skyy | The Bleat.
I have wood in my hand. It’s technically a splinter, but it came from a large chunk of wood I put in the fireplace. En route to its immolation it bit me, one last nasty instinctive gesture of defiance, and there’s no getting it out at the moment. So I am now part tree. A very small part, and it’s not part of me in any lasting, biological or spiritual sense, but it’s there, all right. A piece of lumber I will carry around town for a day before it gets shoved out like a freeloading brother-in-law who’s been on the couch for a month. GET A JOB, SLIVER.

Wise move, though; everything else went up the flue. I always wonder where these trees came from. We’re getting to the bottom of a stack of wood that came with the house, very old wood that sets on fire if you so much as play an Arthur Brown record, and I wonder where the trees once stood. What they had for a view. Most firewood is free-range, I believe; no cage-grown wood that stood in regimented rows before the reapers felled the crop. At this time of the year when the trees are bare it’s easy to imagine the branches as arteries and capillaries feeding a vast invisible brain; I imagine the root system below, how a tree is basically a rod with stuff on one end and stuff on the other. Maybe the important part of a tree is the roots. Maybe they’re all standing on their heads.
Or not. So. Weekend? It was. Good? It was that. Friday had the perfect version of everything, from the early-evening nap broken hard by the dog, barking in anticipation of Pizza. When no one make dinner he assumes Pizza is coming, and today he was so irritated by the delay in the Arrival of Pizza he stood at the door and barked, as if he could summon the food by yelling. When it finally came he made the grumpiest sound as he followed me back to the kitchen – roghgh roghgh roghgh roghgh.

Instead of working on new websites or building a backlog of stuff for ongoing sites, I cleaned my room. We had guests coming over the next day, and I wanted to get things neat. Listened to “The Cage” while I did so – it’s an old Star Trek 2-parter, and I know it so well I can just listen to it like a radio show. I remembered how cool I thought it was when I watched the original series as a kid. Now the shows have the enhanced graphics:
Although I always wonder why they never cut . . . this.

I know, I know – Number One, aka Nurse Chapel, aka Roddenberry's Wife, was the unemotional one in the pilot, but still. There's also a moment where Spock says “we're not going to go?” and he sounds like a six-year old who's realized Dad isn't driving the family to Disneyworld this afternoon. Still some my-t-fine TV sci-fi for the age, complete with the mind-reading butt-headed old ladies in shimmery-mumus, and the last vestige of 50s-style spaceship crews. You know – buzz-cut, military, enlisted guys, doin' a job. The cultural distance between the pilot and the actual show isn't immense, but it's there.

Agree? One beep for yes, two for no.
**Had some folks** over Saturday night, a farewell for a co-worker sacrificed in the latest purge, and it was a rollicking time – although it concluded with the guest of honor playing a few songs from her lovely CD on the piano, which gave the evening a civilized cafe-society sheen you always hope your parties will have. Sparkling bon-mots, wry jibes, elegant banter, oh, and gather ‘round the piano everyone, she’s going to sing the song she performed at the Blue Parrot. Her sites are [HERE](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5807) and [HERE](http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5807). She’s just great. And yes, we had a nightclub singer / burlesque chanteuse as our videographer / news footage editor. Why? Because THIS IS AMERICA. And she was great.

**Sunday** I took Gnat to see “Percy Jackson and the Olympians,” a movie she was REALLY REALLY looking forward to seeing, since she’d read all the books and they were great and the movie looked cool and this was going to be AWESOME. (Nine is a great age.) We took our seats early and made sarcastic comments about all the ads for 20 minutes. She was pleased to see the preview for “Diary of a Wimpy Kid,” but said it looked nothing like the book and didn’t seem like the book and everyone looked older than the book. This just may be the trailer’s misrepresentation of the book, but it’s more likely evidence of the Hollywood Krep Heaper, which takes a small-scaled unique idea and heaps it with Wacky Action and cartoony camera-action. This movie should have the pace of a Charlie Brown show, but no.

The theater filled up; a couple in their thirties sat next to us. No kids. A PSA played instructions on what to do if there’s a fire: walk, do not run, to the exits.

“That’s wrong,” I said to my daughter. “Run as fast as you can, knock people over, and if they get in your way you go for their eyes.”

The woman shot me a look of utter horror. I should have done the same to her. What’s worse, friends: an adult who’s really into children’s books, or an adult who’s really into the tween / young adult genre? Right. It’s possible to enjoy children’s books for their art and simplicity, and of course a well-written tween series may have a tone or style an adult finds amusing. But if you are over 30 and seriously into a book about demigod 11-year-olds to the point, well, enjoy, I suppose. She had a loud braying laugh, too.
“I think she's going to talk through the whole movie” Gnat whispered.

She didn’t. But periodically Gnat whispered complaints into her fist, annoyed with the changes the movie had made. She was bothered that Annabeth’s hair wasn’t blonde, and she was really irritated that her eyes weren’t grey. They were supposed to be grey. They were grey in the book. (Sometimes she looks into the mirror and tells herself she kinda has grey eyes.) There were other complaints throughout the movie, noted more in sadness than anger, but when it was done she was happy because it was fun and I’d liked it and we had a great time!

And then.

And then we sat at the counter at California Pizza Kitchen and the complaints poured out. I asked her to say what she thought was different, and what was the same. “Where do I begin,” she said. The more she ticked off the discrepancies the more I realized they’d changed things without thinking, or caring, what effect it would have on the core audience. Someone with no particular love with the source material had decided this would go, and this would be different. Think of a Spider-Man movie where Aunt May gets shot and he lives with Uncle Ben, and he’s in college, not high school, and Gwen Stacy has brown hair.

The trailers included this, and I expect it’s the same all over the country: at some point before the title's revealed, you get it, and you can’t not grin. Of course. Well, of course.

Later today: a mere matchbook. If all goes well I should have the first of a series of “24” previews in short video form up on Startribune.com, unless it doesn’t happen. I'll post a link on Twitter – or “Twiddle,” as one of our aged-but-still-fiesty newspaper columnists calls it – later today.

**One more thing.** The early part of the film takes place at Camp Half-Blood, where everyone spends the day beating the hell out of everyone else. It’s like the opposite of a modern school – you get suspended if you don’t bring a weapon. There’s lots of talk of heroism and battle and training and the rest, all quite un-PC – and then we meet the most fearsome warrior, Annabeth, a
girl. I'm seeing this through my daughter's eyes, and she's loving it. But there's a scene in which Percy gets beaten pulp-wise by Annabeth, and I'm wondering what I would think if I was watching this with my son. As it happens, Percy not only regroups, he defeats a slew of classmates, has a sword-clanging hoedown with Annabeth, defeats her, has a sword around the back of her neck and another pointed at her throat – and he stops. Mercy, honor, chivalry, respect, strength in restraint. It's a nice moment, and it sets up a nice callback for the end of the movie where she takes advantage of those very attributes. I'll have a conversation about that with my daughter. But not now. A few years, yes. But not yet.

82 RESPONSES TO *Monday blog post and the Olympians*

ScottG says:
February 15, 2010 at 11:35 am

Just so you know, the above isn't me….

buzz says:
February 15, 2010 at 11:46 am

Beep.

E says:
February 15, 2010 at 11:59 am

hey, we were that couple who couldn't get into any of the non-kid movies on Saturday night so opted for Percy. Haven't read the books, had only the slightest clue what the story was about but figured it would be fun and we would put all our criticism regarding stupidity on the back burner (why didn't son-of-hermes just fly away when Percy was deluging him with water? Why did son-of-hermes give Percy the shield with the lightning bolt in it in the first place? So completely turning off your brain for two hours is tough but you do what you gotta do). Talked to some moms on the way out about how their kids were pointing out all the errors in the movie and thought sorry kids, you will find that in every book made into a movie that you will ever see. At least the kids are reading.

browniejr says:
February 15, 2010 at 12:04 pm

@buzz: I concur. (Funny thing- I tried to submit a one word “beep” comment as my first comment, and it didn't show up. When I tried it again, I got a “duplicate comment” message.....)
Teresa says:
February 15, 2010 at 12:17 pm

If I really love a book, I will never see a movie made from it. Hollywood has been doing this for so long they will never change now. They may stick to the story (loosely) but that's the most they ever do. Most of the time they don't even do that.

Lesson for the day: Never ever expect a movie to be anything at all like a book you've read. If you do, you will be eternally disappointed. If you can separate the two and look at them as two different stories, it might work. If you don't think you can do that, skip the movie no matter how “good” everyone else says it is. Heh.

BTW – be careful around that wood... it can be dangerous. Ha!

GardenStater says:
February 15, 2010 at 12:21 pm

Teresa: The closest I ever saw re: a movie's correlation to a book was “The Stand,” based on the Stephen King novel. Of course, King wrote the screenplay, and probably had a say in the casting, but I was glad to see one of my favorite books turned into a movie that felt like the original story.

Spud says:
February 15, 2010 at 12:32 pm

My kids are just getting old enough to read the kid-lit books that are “cinematized”. I did read “Bridge to Terabithia” before seeing the movie, and like most of the rest the director/writer took liberties to the story in order to make something they hoped was watchable. The movie was OK but nothing spectacular. One of the worst interpretations I saw recently was “Where the Wild Things Are”. Total krep.

(G)Nat sounds like she is at the special age where you can have extended conversations with her yet there is still some “little girl” left in her. You probably thought you would never “date” again, but here you are going out with a girl you love and with your wife's approval. I'm looking forward to taking my daughter out in a few years (she's just six now) on practice dates and just enjoying her company.

madCanada says:
February 15, 2010 at 12:33 pm

“If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies. Don't even mention them to me.” – Holden Caulfield

ie. PLEASE no “Catcher” movie, ever, especially made by today's generation. It would probably star that Michael Cera guy and they'd chuck in a quirky/cute love interest.

juanito - John Davey says:
February 15, 2010 at 12:35 pm

GardenStater:
February 15, 2010 at 12:21 pm

Teresa: The closest I ever saw re: a movie's correlation to a book
was “The Stand,” based on the Stephen King novel. Of course, King wrote the screenplay, and probably had a say in the casting, but I was glad to see one of my favorite books turned into a movie that felt like the original story.

Agreed, pretty consistent with the book. But then again, the format was a miniseries that much more time than a 90 minute – 2 hour movie. I’d prefer a mini series treatment of a novel to a motion picture version. Or better yet, a season long series.

**Wramblin’ Wreck says:**
February 15, 2010 at 12:36 pm

Ringworld” could be an excellent movie if portrayed correctly. So could Arthur C. Clarke's “Rendezvous With Rama”.

But, pessimistically speaking, both would probably end up being travesties like “Starship Troopers” and would only be suitable as garden fertilizer.

**Will says:**
February 15, 2010 at 12:39 pm

I feel obliged to point out that “The Cage” was not a two-parter, and the gussied up graphics aren’t from “The Cage” either. You were watching “The Menagerie,” which had Kirk-era framing sequences which allowed them to re-use the footage from the original “too cerebral” pilot.

**Stephen R says:**
February 15, 2010 at 12:40 pm

Perhaps the best and truest-to-the-book movie adaptation ever is Interview With The Vampire. Other than a Hollywood-y twist at the very end, and some trimming for length, it followed the book quite closely, and was very well done. That was the movie that convinced me that Tom Cruise could actually act.

**GardenStater says:**
February 15, 2010 at 2:07 pm

@madCanada: Y’know, it never occurred to me until now that no one’s ever made a movie of “Catcher.” I’m guessing Salinger refused to allow it. Maybe his heirs (if he has any) will agree, if a proper proposal comes along.

**Writeaway says:**
February 15, 2010 at 2:16 pm

I agree the best way to be faithful to a book is with a mini-series although I never used to have the patience to sit through them.

Best one I saw, was the 1995 British “Pride and Prejudice”. Ahhhh, Mr. Darcy.

**Matt says:**
February 15, 2010 at 2:30 pm

“I have wood in my hand.”
Lileks pRon has arrived!!! I'm setting up my PayPal account now!!!!!!!

WatchWayne says:
February 15, 2010 at 2:38 pm

I thought he meant he had a baseball bat in hand, and was off to tenderize someone's head. No such luck.

Hands down, the most accurate book/movie was Michael Crichton's The Andromeda Strain. Maybe he wrote the book expecting movie-fication, but whichever way, it was terrific. I can't even remember if I read first or watched, they were so much alike and the second one didn't make me mad where they messed it up.

madCanada says:
February 15, 2010 at 2:46 pm

@ GardenStater

Salinger was 100% against a film being made of “Catcher”. A letter from the late 50s has just been made public, in which he very lucidly explains why. The novel depends strongly on Holden's “unreliable” narrative voice — a device nearly impossible to translate to stage or screen.

Now that JD has joined the choir invisible, though, anything can happen. JD said he's not against a posthumous film version, if only to enrich his heirs … just as long HE never sees or hears about it.

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 15, 2010 at 4:02 pm

“The choir invisible,” Nice turn of phrase madCanada

Kriesa says:
February 15, 2010 at 4:41 pm

Last summer, I went to see the latest Harry Potter movie with my boyfriend, my sister, and my dad. My sister is the young one, at 33. My dad qualifies for the senior discount. A good time was had by all.

I agree that the Twilight-style crushes are creepy, but there are plenty of YA examples that really are well written and good stories. I have no idea if the Percy Jackson saga qualifies, as that's not one that's grabbed my attention, but I don't see what is wrong with adults enjoying so-called “young” adult fiction. A well-crafted story should speak to more than one age group.

What about “The Wizard of Oz”? That could be classed as YA fiction, which was made into a movie that only used the book as a guideline, yet has been loved as much by adults as children. Are you just saying that Percy Jackson is not in that league? Or are you actually contemptuous of any adult who steps out of the adult section of the library, or into a PG-13 movie?

hpoulter says:
February 15, 2010 at 5:17 pm

Mark E. Hurling:
February 15, 2010 at 4:02 pm
“The choir invisible.” Nice turn of phrase madCanada

He was just parroting (wink wink nudge nudge)

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 15, 2010 at 5:39 pm

OK, I'll confess my ignorance on this one hpoulter. As big a Pythons fan as I am, is this a reference to the dead parrot bit? If so, it entirely escaped my notice. I was probably laughing too hard at what preceded it.

MikeH says:
February 15, 2010 at 5:40 pm

I am surprised the troll comments are still up. Yes everyone has a right to put across their point of view, but these have NOTHING with the posts except, well Minnesota I guess, they are mindlessly pointless and just hateful and immature. Bet this person is chicken to come up with a reasonable explanation as to why he posted these, but just come up with more mindless venom.

hpoulter says:
February 15, 2010 at 5:41 pm

It's not pining, it's passed on! This parrot is no more! It has ceased to be! It's expired and gone to meet its maker! This is a late parrot! It's a stiff! Bereft of life, it rests in peace! If you hadn't nailed him to the perch he would be pushing up the daisies! Its metabolic processes are of interest only to historians! It's hopped the twig! It's shuffled off this mortal coil! It's run down the curtain and joined the choir invisible! This…. is an EX-PARROT!

hpoulter says:
February 15, 2010 at 5:43 pm

Actually, I think it's “rung” down the curtain, not “run” (this was someone else's transcript)

madCanada says:
February 15, 2010 at 6:09 pm

“IT's a fair cop, but Society's to blame.”

“Alright then, he's under arrest too.”

(Another Python Quote – Hollywood Bowl film)

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 15, 2010 at 7:07 pm

Yep! That's what happened. As I read through that string I recall myself laughing harder and harder as it proceeded. I'm now not surprised I never heard the invisible choir part. Still though, madCanada, a nice turn of phrase, used at a good point in time. Thanks, I needed the amusement this afternoon.
browniejr says:
February 15, 2010 at 8:07 pm

Hey- he has a woodie! http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3yYmmTlgUg (at 9:41)

hunkybobtx says:
February 16, 2010 at 9:11 am

Methinks the troll forgot to take his medication that morning.

Emily says:
February 16, 2010 at 8:24 pm

Just for the record: Why I, an adult woman, like some of these tweens books and movies:

a. I'm a Mom, so I'm going to make sure I know what they are reading.

b. They aren't totally downers. Why does so much adult Literature have to be so…grim…nasty? It can be enjoyable without having to be Disneyfied.

(I did want to rewrite one of them: Charlie Bone and the Seriously Bad Parenting.)

Molly says:
February 16, 2010 at 10:55 pm

Ugh, I love ya Lileks, but this whole thing where you have sort of a secret hankering for the burlesque deal truly irritates me. You have a wife, and a small daughter, set an example for gods' sake. You would have a coronary if your daughter pursued a similar career.

It's like the women's movement never happened at all. Are you truly telling us there's the two classes of women; those you raise, or date, or marry, and those whom you ogle and egg on to remove their clothing and entertain you on a base, lust-driven means you'd never endure from your offspring?

Barf.

Morgenstern says:
February 18, 2010 at 6:45 pm

What's wrong with Spock grimacing widely when the weird alien plant that he has foolishly touched hits him with a sizable static discharge?

Fred says:
February 19, 2010 at 8:39 pm

“I don’t know Greek mythology very well, but I read that Athena would never, never have had a child with a mortal. It seems, on reflection that it would be out of character. Like Athena, the goddess of wisdom, will stay on the Earth, have Annabeth, and then just leave, like any mother would?”

Spoiler so beware but in later books they tell us the Annabeth sprung from her mother’s forehead as Athena herself sprung from the head of Zeus…”

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5807
As for Karate Kid, the trailer I saw said it was in Beijing.
The semi-monthly Night Out with the Giant Swedes. The night began when he backed out of the driveway and crunched into a snowbank—a sound with which we are all quite familiar. The banks are five feet high and made of nasty hard snow seasoned with dirt and salt; every morning I pull out, crunch into one, put it in drive, go forward, crunch into another. Repeat. This time, however, the crunch sounded different. I looked at his rear-view camera monitor: that was no drift, that was my car.

Well, no damage. No harm no foul no regretting the point at which you set your deductible. However: the simple act of inspecting the bumpers shaved a minute off travel time, which meant we missed a light, which meant we got behind a city bus trundling down snow-narrowed streets like an elephant going down the aisle of a champagne-glass store. Winter slows life down in so many ways—and at the same time you wish it would go faster, end, and bring back grass. Flowers. Leaves. Life itself. This is statis; this is life entombed in the glacier.

Parked. Ate at Chino Latino, one of those places where you have to share. The food arrives in six-pound portions, and everyone has some. Sometimes I really don’t like this idea, because if I find an item on the menu I really want, well, I really want to eat it. But that would be churlish—and besides, the burrito was literally the size of a football. As you can imagine, it fell apart when cut, and collapsed into a mash of ingredients, but it was delicious, as was the Mandarin Beef, the lime-soaked pepper-rubbed Satays, the Fish tacos,
and the something-or-other with Mego sauce, who can tell after a while.

The restaurant was located in the space occupied for years by the Rainbow Cafe, an Uptown tradition for decades. But no more.

I don’t recall a good meal there, but it was past its heyday when I moved into Uptown. Served a quarter-million annually at its peak. The sign was a bit more wordy; it included the usual thumbs up from Duncan Hines. (A word about him: since that was the name of a cake mix when I was growing up, I was always perplexed to see the name when I first started reading Life Magazines. Duncan Hines wasn’t a name; it wasn’t really anything but a series of phonemes that indicated cake would follow if the items in the box were assembled in the proper order.) The sign came down in the early 50s when the city banned overhanging signs, and thus blandified the entire city at a single stroke. Idiots.

One of those modern-is-better lessons: the Rainbow was a hep place for its time, but I can’t imagine the menu was anything like the explosion of percussive flavors you can get in Uptown now. You had American, you had Italian, you had Chow Mein – and that was what you had. Perhaps in a
hundred years they'll look at our menus the way we look at the Gilded Age bill of fare – you know, Oyster Consumme, Braised Beets with Ladled Squash, Potato Confit a la Rousse, Squab with hominy stuffing and cabbage marmalade, Peaches Rockefeller for dessert with Stewed Brambles. Maybe. I know that Roman menus sound horrible – I swear the entire ruling class survived on pigeon brains and olives – and they didn’t eat cows. I understand why – more useful as draft animals, milk givers, ceremonial beasts, etc.; it’s like asking why we don’t eat our tractors, I suppose. But given their ingenuity I’m surprised they didn’t figure out a way to steak. What's the point of being Caesar if you can’t have a steak.

Anyway. The new place has one hideous flaw: clever bathrooms. I don’t believe bathrooms should ever be clever, especially if the restaurant serves alcohol, because then men pee in the sinks or the potted plants. This place plays a cruel trick: when you walk into the BANOS, you see sinks and hand-driers. You don’t see MEN or WOMEN, so you don’t know if you’ve entered the wrong room. If you are a MAN and you see a WOMAN, you assume you did not choose wisely, and you backpedal.

Do not confuse people who want to void their bladders.

Once in a bar in Butler Square, a rehabbed warehouse, there was a bar with a two-way mirror on the other side of the urinals. It faced the main lobby. Once you knew the gimmick it was obligatory, on the way out, to sneak a look at the mirrored side, feign shock, then point and laugh.

In my first novel I named a distasteful editor “Fikes,” because that was the name of the plastic shield that held the urinal cookie. I figured a few fellows might pick up the reference on a subconscious level.

**Later today:** my “24″ complaint video at Startribune.com, and a minor Comic Sins. Until then let’s talk about memorable bathrooms! Really: Jasperwood has my all-time favorite bathroom. The worst was in the Birchwood, an ancient apartment alongside a highway. No shower. Clawfoot tub. Painted-over window, peeling walls; if you saw four lines on the wall you’d conclude that was the number of people who OD’d in here. Last year.

Other things I hate in bathrooms: soap that is not meant to be used and towels that are not meant to be touched. But I’ve said too much; over to you.

Okay, more Rainbow.
85 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, feb. 16*

**bgbear (roger h) says:**
February 16, 2010 at 12:24 pm

@juanito: I grew up in Santa Maria and I often tried to tell people here in Santa Cruz that Avila Beach (and the nearby nude beach Pirate’s Cove) is always sunny and they don't always believe me.

Some would joke that it was the effect of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant.

**Spud says:**
February 16, 2010 at 12:28 pm

Bathrooms at third-world countries can be interesting. For many, their pipes cannot handle toilet paper flushed with the “excreted matter”, so you definitely need a trash can – and not just for show.

Plumbing work is one of my least favorite fix-its. I usually know how to do it, but I’ll sometimes end up with a small leak. Re-doing the “fix” usually does not work. At that point you not only wasted your time but you spend big $$ for somebody to come in, see the mess you made and fix it for you.

**hpoulter says:**
February 16, 2010 at 12:38 pm

C’mon – everybody knows the CIA controls the weather. The skies are always clear over nude beaches and nudist camps because they want their satellites to have an unobstructed view.

**swschrad says:**
February 16, 2010 at 12:40 pm

we always used to vacation out in the woods, where the worst toilets
were pit jobs with a smear on the top and an angry raccoon inside.

**Grebmarr** says:
February 16, 2010 at 12:59 pm

Let's see. Nobody has mentioned the “shelf toilets” they have in Europe. If you’ve seen/used one, you know what I mean. If you haven’t, you don’t want to know. Really.

And then there are the “squatting toilets” they have in Italy and elsewhere.

**Grebmarr** says:
February 16, 2010 at 1:00 pm

I couldn’t resist. Google is our friend.
http://www.banterist.com/archivefiles/000212.html

**PersonFromPorlock** says:
February 16, 2010 at 1:01 pm

How come those pictographic instructions on hot-air hand dryers never show the little man wiping his hands on his pants?

**madCanada** says:
February 16, 2010 at 1:05 pm

The best “facilities” I’ve ever encountered, generally, were in the style/cleanliness-fixated nation of Iceland. Even the campsite facilities in remote regions made me feel like I was in a first-class spa. If you ever visit Iceland, be sure to use a restroom. You won’t regret it.

**John Robinson** says:
February 16, 2010 at 1:09 pm

Back in college there was a bar we frequented called Dirty Ernie’s. About the kind of bucket o’ blood dive you’d think, but the men's room was extra special. Small, filthy, reeking, and above the crapper some wag had scrawled, “please do not throw toothpicks in the toilet; crabs are expert pole-vaulters.”

Good times …

**Vladimir** says:
February 16, 2010 at 1:26 pm

The downstairs (from the main lobby) mens room at Radio City Music Hall. A veritable cathedral of micturation.

**bgbear (roger h)** says:
February 16, 2010 at 1:35 pm

Stuck using a filthy restroom is one of those oddball recurring dreams I have.

Must have something to do with “Trainspotting” however, in the dream, I never swam in the bowl.
GardenStater says:
February 16, 2010 at 1:51 pm

@MadCanada:
“"If you ever visit Iceland, be sure to use a restroom."

I'll put that on the top of my list.

@John Robinson:
“Small, filthy, reeking...”

A perfect description of the men's room at the now-departed CBGB in NYC. I was only there once. I went to use the men's room. It was tiny, absolutely covered in graffiti and filth, and to top it off, two guys were in there doing lines of coke (this was around 1980 or so). Needless to say, I made a U-turn. Can't remember where I ended up relieving myself.

xrayguy says:
February 16, 2010 at 1:58 pm

Worst urinal-One I had to use in an upscale restraunt that gave you back spatter NO MOTTER WHERE YOU AIMED.
Best urinal-Public restroom in a doctors building-a huge thing that protruded 3-4 feet out from the wall that you could straddle, STRADDLE I say, while you found relief. A bit like standing over a beaten enemy and showing your position in the pack.

xrayguy says:
February 16, 2010 at 2:06 pm

In college, a female friend told me to come into the womens lounge while she changed out of a costume she had worn for a performance. Keeping in mind what the mens room looked like (flat hard surfaces that are easy to hose down, a drain in the middle of the floor, smell like the catbox at the zoo) I was surprised to enter into a large sitting room with divans and plush chair along the wall, thick carpeting and reading lamps. The porcelan facilities were in another room and even they were better than apartments I had lived in. I found the same to be true in another building where a classmate went to have lunch before class. “Eat in the bathroom” “Sure, it's nice, we have a sitting room”. I mentioned this to another female friend, that is seemed unfair. “It balances out” she said “The mens locker room at the fieldhouse is huge and new. The women have to change in the janitors closet”

Seattle Dave says:
February 16, 2010 at 2:08 pm

My favorite urinals are those old, increasingly-rare models that are set into the ceramic tile of the wall and run from floor level clear up to chest height. My high school's men's rooms had rows of them. No aiming required, and completely splash-free. And each one always had a round, white urinal cake, or what we called “elephant candy.”

Here in Seattle, home of the eco-Nazis, waterless urinals are all the rage. Apparently the pee goes from the urinals to some sort of holding tank adjacent to the restroom which has mineral oil floating atop the urine to prevent stinkiness. It doesn't work. When our Opera House was rebuilt a few years ago, the new men's rooms all had these Falcon Waterless Urinals. The smell was about what you'd expect from a urinal with no flushing mechanism. A couple of years
later, they were all replaced with conventional auto-flush urinals.

**loonytick** says:
February 16, 2010 at 2:10 pm

There's an award for the best ones. Seriously.
http://www.bestrestroom.com/rest_fame.html

**DensityDuck** says:
February 16, 2010 at 2:31 pm

There I sat, same as ever
took a dump, pulled the lever
the drain stopped up but the water flowed
look out world it's the mother load!

**canajun-eh** says:
February 16, 2010 at 3:19 pm

Here's an interesting loo in New Zealand:
http://www.snopes.com/photos/arts/sofitel.asp
I remember that bathroom in Butler Square! Even though you knew it was only a one-way mirror, it was very weird to have people going by waving and pointing! An exhibitionist's dream!

**madCanada** says:
February 16, 2010 at 3:19 pm

The best pubs/bars out there are the ones who dump their excess ice cubes into their urinals. Am I not right, chaps? A gentleman may then amuse himself by imagining he's a Martian death machine in H.G. Wells' "War of the Worlds."

**GardenStater** says:
February 16, 2010 at 3:36 pm

@madCanada:

You took the words right out of my mouth...er, keyboard. When I win the lottery and build my dream house, each bathroom will have a floor-mounted urinal that will be filled with ice cubes each day.

Women will never, ever understand that.

**GardenStater** says:
February 16, 2010 at 3:39 pm

Of course, the most amazing, gargantuan urinals are at PJ Clarke's, on the Upper East Side:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/19178536@N00/123524940

**GardenStater** says:
February 16, 2010 at 3:39 pm

God, but the relationship between men and urinals is fascinating, isn't it?
Pieter says:
February 16, 2010 at 3:41 pm

A quick story on overly clever restrooms. While stationed in Arizona at Luke AFB, I got to know a number of German pilots going through upgrade training in the F-104. One night we went to a local barbecue house that used Ma and Pa Kettle vocabulary for every nook and cranny in the place. One of the German pilots went off to relieve himself and came back chagrined to find he had invaded the Ladies loo. The doors were labeled “HIS’N” and HER’N”. The German for men is Herren. Understandable cross cultural mistake.

hunkybobtx says:
February 16, 2010 at 3:48 pm

There was a bar in Dallas I went to once about 20 years ago, it had one restroom with the label “2P” in neon over the portal. I was lead to understand it was for both men and women, and I saw both entering and leaving it.
I knew this was going to end badly, and despite my better judgment went off to use the facilities. I went in, and knocked loudly on the door of one the stalls and waited. Hearing no response, I entered. Yes, of course, there was some woman sitting there. As I beat as hasty a retreat as possible, there was cursing on both sides of the issue. From me for her failure to respond to my queries, and for not locking the @#$% door. (I guess women never do that). From her were execrations that I dared even enter this place, even though there were other men there. since then, I have never seen another unisex restroom, and if I ever see one I will avoid it like the plague.

Petronius says:
February 16, 2010 at 3:59 pm

2 Toilet Stories:

1. In Japan I stayed in a small, modern hotel. The bathroom had the usual Japanese deep tub (still not big enough for a Gaijin) and a Western style toilet. The Toilet, though, had one of those pictographic instructions mentioned earlier. Apparently it informed the user not to climb up on the rim to use the facility, and that lifting the ring was recommended before urination, gents. It still was better than trying to use a squat-style while racing along the Shinkansen line at 125 mph.

2. In Australia many toilets had two buttons atop the tank to flush. One changed the water in the tank once, if you had made a mere tinkle, the other several times if you left something more substantial. The aussies took water saving seriously. PS, why would somebody in soaking Seattle worry about water usage?

Rightfromthestart says:
February 16, 2010 at 4:34 pm

This whole thread is fascination but isn’t it odd to consider that no one is expected to have urinal in their home yet it would feel odd if a public place force one to use a standard bowl the way one does at home.

Maharincess says:
February 16, 2010 at 4:43 pm
My most memorable public ladies' room was (is?) the one at LA's Magic Castle. The liquid soap dispenser was a nude male statuette; you can guess where the soap … um…. exited.

Kevin says:
February 16, 2010 at 5:59 pm

Well, I must say that, as a brother, son, nephew, grandson, and great-grandson of plumbers, I have enjoyed this discussion. Dana Delany was right-- it was indeed bread and butter to us. The family plumbing shop had a photo of something they had found when they had to pull up a toilet due to a stoppage-- a pair of false teeth stuck in the hole! It was my father's guess that someone came home rather blasted, “talked to ralph on the big white phone,” and in doing so lost his teeth. After that he was probably too embarrassed to acknowledge it when he made the call for service. (Then again, perhaps he had someone else make the call, since presumably his articulation of words might not have been too precise, w/o his teeth.)

Seattle Dave says:
February 16, 2010 at 9:55 pm

My stepfather, a tile setter and general contractor, actually had a urinal in his home workshop, installed after his wife-before-my-mom complained about his sprinkling sawdust through the house en route to the bathroom.

And on the topic of clogs: after a number of years as a handyman for a sorority house, I have no desire ever to plunge, snake, or fish anything out of a plumbing fixture ever again. Plumbers earn every penny of their hourly rate, if you ask me.

Stjohnsmythe says:
February 16, 2010 at 11:06 pm

Urinal vignettes: At a small airport in Michigan (home of a soaring club) was a small sign above the urinal: “Pilots with short pitot tubes please taxi close.”

Tiger Stadium had a urinal in the passageway from the clubhouse into the dugout. It was stationed just outside the dugout entrance so you could see the field from where you were standing; not sure if the fans could see you, though.

Inscribed in the woodwork above the fixture: “Ty Cobb peed here.”

jamcool says:
February 16, 2010 at 11:30 pm

“Chino Latino”…no doubt inspired by our own “Chino Bandido” and its doubly politically-incorrect mascot!

http://www.chinobandido.com/story.html

DensityDuck says:
February 17, 2010 at 12:59 pm

Drawing on the walls has a proud tradition going back to Roman times.

http://ad79.wetpaint.com/page/The+Writing+on+the+Wall
“To the one defecating here. Beware of the curse. If you look down on this curse, may you have an angry Jupiter for an enemy.”

Mike Gebert says:
February 18, 2010 at 12:51 am

I suppose I should write this up in more detail on my own food blog, and perhaps I shall, but for the moment: no, I don’t think they ate blander food than we do today, back then, exactly. True, they didn’t have Thai, or Indian, or Malaysian, and they only barely had Italian and Mexican. But they had a bunch of cuisines we really don’t have any more—Bohemian and Swedish and English and so on. The cuisine compass was just set a lot further north in those days. Okay, but that was all white food, dumplings mit lederhosensausagen, right? Well, yes, it was. But this is the kicker: their meat actually tasted like something. Their sausages and wursts and so on had a whole tonal palette of their own which our industrialized meats don’t. Maybe it was a narrower range, as big band has a narrower range than our era of musical stylistic explosion, but it could satisfy in its own ways which I’m not convinced were inferior to our own, just because they didn’t have ten million spices to tart everything up with. When we eat chicken, we NEED those seasonings because our chicken is indistinguishable from our pork and our tilapia and our styrofoam. Their chicken wasn’t like that.

Matt says:
February 18, 2010 at 9:51 am

Walked into a men’s room at the county fair and saw they had a circular urinal. As in you stare at the guy across from you. The place was empty so I shrugged and went about my business. It wasn’t until I turned to wash my hands that I realized I had just peed in the sink . . . .

Dixon Webb says:
February 18, 2010 at 12:15 pm

James . . . First heard you on Hugh Hewitt’s radio show. Was born and lived in St. Louis Park until 1948. Have fond memories of the early days. When about 5 my uncle took me to the Hasty Tasty in Minneapolis. As I recall they served Chinese food and it was great. They had a Wurlitzer juke box in the corner and a contraption at every table where a nickel would play your favorite record on the machine. I put a nickel in . . . and the machine bottom fell off. About 200 nickels dropped to the table and 5 year old me thought it was my private bonanza. Funny, the things we remember for some 70 years. You’ve a good blog. Keep it going.

Dixon
Daughter wants to start a newspaper. I advised her to come with an online site.

“But how will I charge money? If it's a newspaper I can charge people money to get a copy.”

Honestly, we had this conversation. She wants to start a newsletter for her classmates about their shared interests, like Warrior Cats and anime about Warrior Cats and stories about Warrior Cats. She had intended to charge 15 cents per copy.

“Your daddy did that,” said my wife.

“You DID?” Pause. “About what?”

Oh, things. Space. Some kids were into baseball, I was into rockets.
But I came up with something the school printed off for me, and they gave me a mimeo sheet too.

“A what?”

An archaic technology that smelled wonderful. It’s one of the scents we no longer know: mimeo fluid. The very term is lovely to say: mimeo fluid. “I printed it off in the school office. But that was a long time ago.”

“Yeah, but no one will pay me for a web page.”

“They will if you password-protect it and sell logins.” (Remembered I had some passwords to send out; felt the usual OMG NO TIME EVERYTHING IS CRUSHING DOWN INTO ONE DENSE BALL OF DREAD THAT SITS ON MY CHEST AND IT HAS EYES, HORRIBLE EYES, HUNDRED OF EYES THAT STARE AND DO NOT BLINK)

“Passwords?” she said, eyes alight. This would make it even cooler. This was great. So this will be our weekend job.
I was amused to read that the New York Times wants to charge $360 for the iPad version of the print edition. Well, of course they do. But at least it's not as bad as Newsday's decision to wall everything off unless you're a subscriber. They also redesigned their site based on the premise that people like a thumb pushed into their eye sockets:

Reminds me of an old line from somewhere, Sandra Bernhardt perhaps: I rely on my personality for birth control. The site is actually marginally better if you inverse the color scheme:

**Came home.** Napped. No dreams, thank God; last night I dreamed all my dead relatives showed up at my house, one after the other, starting with my uncle. He sat down and said nothing. The standard confusion of the newly dead – reticent, truculent. I started cleaning up the house; my mother told me I should have neatened up before everyone got there. It struck me as
uncharacteristic; she wouldn't say that. But I said I didn't know. She said I told you we were coming. I felt bad I'd missed the message and worse that I hadn't called her. My dad was sitting next to her, with his early-photo poker face, looking much younger. I looked back to the living room and saw all my dead relatives, chatting, smoking, carrying on as they always did at Grandma Lileks' house after church on Sunday. I wanted to apologize to all of them. My Mom spoke: And I think your friend should go.

I was scooping up small paper squares (orange) scattered on the table when the alarm went off.

The mystery isn't why we think the Romans believed their ancestors observed their actions, it's why we think they don't.

Went downstairs, thinking Thursday already, and we're behind on our piano practice; behind behind behind. It took the morning paper to tell me it was Tuesday, and then I felt depressed. Jasper came downstairs, which was unusual – he usually waits until everyone's up, and I wake early and leave alone, having said good morning to no one. He gave me a look: breakfast? Well, sure, old friend. Here. Dig in.

Not in a mood to listen to music right away, so I tuned into the XM old radio show channel. Boston Blackie, crap from the old days. I hate Boston Blackie. Parked, slam door, wheetwheeted the alarm, crunch crunch crunch, take care passing the street. Buses just come out of nowhere if you're not paying attention, and since this headline is a running joke with a friend at the paper, I'd hate to go out that way. Or maybe I would, because there would be one fellow who'd laugh at the funeral. For the right reasons.

Used to have another running joke with the fellow on the other side of the cube who scoured the wires and fine-tuned the front page of the website: “Nothing,” he’d say when I came in, meaning, no big news. “We’ll manage,” I would say. He was fired the other day and so was the sharp sarcastic but ultra-Minnesota-nice lady in the next cubicle down. The fellow with whom I have the running Onion bus-hed joke was moved over to a desk two down from the first one I had, close to the center of the room. When there's one fire in one can, you move close to warm your hands, I guess. I sat down at my desk, looked across the partition, and noticed that one of them had turned off the TV over their pillar before they left. Seems disrespectful to turn it back on. Someone will.

So, what do you want to do with your life? I believe it was Neidermeyer who asked that question, albeit in a different context. The answer in the video? “I wanna rock.” This is not a sufficient objective. If one wants to attain success and personal satisfaction as a musician in a popular-music ensemble, yes, I suppose it’s a good answer, although it’s more appropriate for “what do you wish to do with your 20s until you are dropped by the record label for disappointing sales for your follow-up, and keep in mind that’s one of the best-case scenarios.” If you want to rock your entire life, well, have at it, but...
you might as well add “win the lottery while being struck by lightning while answering the phone to find it's the wrong number and the Pope is calling me and he won the Powerball too, and hold on Benedict, sir, Christina Hendricks at the door ” because it's just as likely.

If, however you define “rock” to mean living an existence based around the consumption of heavy-metal music, beer, reefer in a series of drab, ill-furnished basement apartments subsidized by a serious of hair-net jobs, then this is not a commendable aspiration. It is not even an aspiration at all; it is a desire to float numb in a shallow stream, with the only notable sensations derived from striking your head on stones as the current bears you along.

Still, it's a good question. It may be the root of the massive knots in my stomach and thrumming pulse and shadow-on-the-door-of-a-cottage-by-a-dark-Scottish-loch feeling as I drive to work. This could be a delayed mid-life crisis, although I should live so long for this to be mid-life. I was really happy when my mid-life should have hit hard, and now I find I have maneuvered myself into a situation where I have a brain full of bees. Interesting bees, but bees. There's more, but I'll spare you.

–

My daughter wanted me to see her newspaper before she went to bed, so I took a look. She laid it out in Pages.

It's really good. But there's one problem.

She uses Hobo as a headline typeface.

As you may know, Hobo is a font that gives me hives. And so we had the same old argument about Hobo.

“DAD It's just a font.”

“Fonts are never just fonts. Fonts are clothes. Fonts are hats, jewelry, gestures, opening remarks. Fonts are what you show the world first. There's a reason they're called type faces.”

“But I like it.”

Well, that's different. You like it? Do it. God knows it's no fun when you can't.

90 RESPONSES TO wednesday, feb. 17

Sara says:
February 17, 2010 at 12:31 pm

When's the next Bleatplus?
Joe Broderick says:
February 17, 2010 at 12:38 pm

“We need to petition Airwick or Glade or one of those other companies to do a ‘Childhood Memories’ series: Play-doh, mimeo fluid, poster/watercolor paint, etc.”

How about one for model airplane glue?

LS says:
February 17, 2010 at 12:44 pm

Hobo is indeed ugly — it's got that '70s Pizzaria' look. Then again, if it's good enough for Jim Treacher…

Wagner von Drupen-Sachs says:
February 17, 2010 at 12:51 pm

We had a poor-man's ditto machine, called a hectograph. It used ditto originals, and the copy mechanism was a slab of gelatin in a tray about 10" by 12" by 1/8". The copies smelled like the real thing, too, only not as strong. It worked kind of like half-duplex Silly Putty.

DensityDuck says:
February 17, 2010 at 12:57 pm

Heh. Actually, Dee Snyder is still performing. (In fact, most of the bigger acts from the Eighties are still around, with varying numbers of the original band remaining.)

*****

@Stjohnsmythe: “…I put the original in upside-down and then couldn’t find a hole punch, then realized the blue lines on the paper didn't reproduce.”

I was working on a USAF contract once; they had a formal statement in the contract that blue ink was not to be used on drawings under any circumstances. This was because, as you found out, reproduction machines in the 1960s couldn't pick up the color blue, and the USAF is nothing if not traditional.

*****

Hee. I like the “Titan VII” news story. Also, “JOKES: [blank space]” This are Serious Reporter. We make Serious Newspaper.

raf says:
February 17, 2010 at 1:09 pm

Notice that in the hamster ad, James used to be a Jim. What trauma made that so distasteful, do you think?

hpoulte says:
February 17, 2010 at 1:17 pm

To be honest (why not?) I usually can't tell what's so great or so bad about a stinking font. It's just a font. I realize I'm illiterate. The Hobo font, I read, was designed in 1910 so it is real Art Nouveau. If it resembles all the faux Nouveaux that cluttered up the 1970's, that's not its fault.
To me, nothing says 70s like the Prisoner font – you know, the one used in The Village. OK, font gurus, what was that one called?

hpoulter says:
February 17, 2010 at 1:25 pm

Ok to answer my own question – it's a version of Albertus, specially modified for the show. I thought it was way cool at the time.

Spud says:
February 17, 2010 at 1:36 pm

If Miss Natalie's website-behind-password for filthy lucre project does not work out, there are sites that will host a wiki (i.e. zoho.com) for free. Then she can include her BFF's and give them passwords to make additions to the website. Otherwise she could always print out a “newspage” on a laser printer – I'm sure you have access to one.

It's been over 25 years since I've had to worry about going to classes, but I still get the stupid dreams of being in school, worrying about missing classes and not being ready for a test. I think I'd welcome a “party” with dead relatives about now …

Philip Scott Thomas says:
February 17, 2010 at 1:49 pm

The Hobo font, I read, was designed in 1910 so it is real Art Nouveau.

Ahh. I thought so. I wasn’t familiar with Hobo so I googled it up. Something about it suggested Art Nouveau Vienna or Prague or some such. I'm pretty sure I've seen book covers, even texts, from the era set in something very similar.

Di says:
February 17, 2010 at 1:53 pm

Any dead hamsters at that dead ancestor convention? I'm always dreaming of my dead folks and friends, mostly happily, sometimes not so much. Guess some issues never get resolved.

Maybe the female hamsters cost more because you might possibly get a surprise bonus hamster or two out of her?

Bob says:
February 17, 2010 at 2:13 pm

I would absolutely subscribe to The Fargo Informer. That looks great!

I was into publishing my own stuff when I was a kid too (and I guess I am still am). I also had my own private eye agency when I was around 9 years old. I solved one case: I found my sister’s winter gloves (they had fallen behind the radiator). I had a sign on my bedroom door and everything.

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 17, 2010 at 2:22 pm

JamesS, You reminded me of something from my college years shortly after “Bozo’s” hit our campus. Someone spray painted “I
think we're all Bozo's on this bridge” on a pedestrian overpass over U.S. 51.

madCanada, thanks for that clip if Sting.

**kc says:**
February 17, 2010 at 2:24 pm

I was the “editor” of the school paper in 8th grade. Done by ditto, then hand-colaled & stapled at one corner. David Mastel used to end nearly all of his articles, “And a wonderful (happy/terrific/fun) time was had by all.” In my memory, I can still smell that stuff...

**Bonnie_ says:**
February 17, 2010 at 2:43 pm

I, personally, admire this line the most:

“It is a desire to float numb in a shallow stream, with the only notable sensations derived from striking your head on stones as the current bears you along.”

And he just tosses these lines off like they are nothing special!

Amazing.

**Barry Mitchell says:**
February 17, 2010 at 2:52 pm

Not mimeo fluid — that smell you fondly recall is rexograph fluid. I, too, used to volunteer to run off reams of material for teachers just to get a contact high. Mimeograph involved typing into a waxy, blue sheet that cut out an actual blank spot where the key struck the stencil. Regular ink was then able to blot through onto plain white paper. Rexograph involved a different kind of stencil, in which writing on it caused cakey ink to accumulate on the opposite side. When blank paper and the stencil met with a wick containing the magic fluid, it caused some of the caked on ink to adhere to paper. Rexograph, therefore, was only good for a limited number of copies, until all the cake-on ink dissolved away. Mimeograph, theoretically, could reproduce unlimited numbers of copies.

**Jennifer says:**
February 17, 2010 at 2:55 pm

“brain full of bees” Love that.

Dee Snider–I once witnessed him berate a receptionist with the classic “do you know who I am?” line. Jerk.

**Dr Alice says:**
February 17, 2010 at 3:02 pm

It's somehow comforting to know someone else has that “what am I going to do with my life” knot in the stomach. I keep fantasizing about quitting my job and going off to practice medicine in Eastern Europe, or Central Asia or somewhere, but I don't somehow think it's gonna happen.

**Kevin says:**
February 17, 2010 at 3:37 pm
Bonnie, I am totally with you on that! The phrase I have come up with to describe our host's ability with words is 'casual brilliance.' It stuns me how effortlessly he can come up with these absolutely magnificent distillations of all kinds of things.

Mr. Lileks, you and your family are a huge blessing to many people!!

**Petronius says:**
February 17, 2010 at 3:47 pm

I read the other day about a British jouro who won a bet with the most boring headline that would get past an editor: “Small Earthquake in Peru; Not Many Die”.

**Doug says:**
February 17, 2010 at 4:55 pm

Isn't it actually a ditto machine or spirit duplicator, instead of a mimeograph?

**John Smallberries says:**
February 17, 2010 at 4:56 pm

Mimeo fluid smells so good it sometimes makes you forget how to spell “Apollo.”

**bgbear says:**
February 17, 2010 at 5:10 pm

OK power out because a small plane w/three folks working for Tesla Motors plunged into n East Palo Alto neighborhood. Luckily no one killed on the ground.

I went home.

**hpoulter says:**
February 17, 2010 at 5:49 pm

Wow. Our power goes out because of fallen trees and ice on the lines. Sorry about the crash victims, but glad they didn’t land on the populace.

**Chaka says:**
February 17, 2010 at 6:17 pm

And THAT, my friends, is how you write a Bleat. Well done, James.

**hpoulter says:**
February 17, 2010 at 6:34 pm

No kidding. The guy was a funny writer when he was 9 or 10. Now he is a writer who shrugs off beautifully crafted phrases. I hope I live long enough to see Natalie Lileks’ professional work. I’m saving space on my bookshelf.

Real writers write. Lileks has spent his whole life writing. When he was a kid, and later when he was an adolescent and a college student, he wrote every day – I’ll bet he has a pad and a good pen on him at all times. Constant writing, coupled with constant reading, and a generous measure of native talent, make a good writer. None
of those would succeed without the others.
Bravo, James – brava, Natalie. Writers enrich the world.

Jennifer CSU says:
February 17, 2010 at 6:51 pm
I want my life to rock. I want it to be vibrant and exciting and hectic with the occasional “ballad” for R & R. Also, I want to win Power Ball AND have the Pope pocket dial me.

RickRick says:
February 17, 2010 at 7:14 pm
I LOVE Hobo!

Di says:
February 17, 2010 at 8:53 pm
Fargo Informer is perfect on many MANY levels 😊
And ditto was not my friend in my early office worker days – the purple stuff somehow flew through the air and landed on my underwear...how...?

cgm says:
February 17, 2010 at 8:59 pm
I think the Fargo Informer is totally awesome. I mean that. I would definitely have paid 10 cents for it.

Bob says:
February 17, 2010 at 9:42 pm
“I was really happy when my mid-life should have hit hard, and now I find I have maneuvered myself into a situation where I have a brain full of bees.”
Gahhh. Precisely. The bees are loudest at about 4am.

Grebmar says:
February 17, 2010 at 10:30 pm
I also like Hobo. Its just not for everything.

NeeNee says:
February 17, 2010 at 10:48 pm
Remember the smell of school paste??
Some of us brought our own “Lepage” glue in the clear glass bottle with slanted rubber applicator.

Forty years later, I’m cleaning the bathroom and wondering why the crystal Sani-Flush smells so familiar.

Both hubby and I finally figured out it's quite similar to school paste. Anybody else out there ever notice this?
By the way, I've noticed that at the grocery store these days, crystal bathroom bowl cleaners like Vanish & Sani-Flush no longer fill the shelves in the cleaning section. It's all gels & liquids that don't do squat.

raf says:
February 17, 2010 at 10:57 pm

Maybe Natalie can do Bleetplus....

browniejr says:
February 18, 2010 at 1:48 am

“So turn on, tune in, and drop dead 'cause it's 1969: the moon year.” (!!!) The reference to the Titan blowing up in 1966 intrigued me, so I found this: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJHtkjijwoeg&feature=related

browniejr says:
February 18, 2010 at 1:57 am

“Titan 1966” as a search string also revealed this campy Hulk cartoon: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AVpwxtK64M

Kev says:
February 18, 2010 at 9:04 am

Reminds me of an old line from somewhere, Sandra Bernhardt perhaps: I rely on my personality for birth control.

Heh. We musicians use that same joke at the expense of violists. 😊

marjorie j birch says:
February 18, 2010 at 9:43 am

Tell Natalie I just saw Hobo used as the headline for a Swine Flu poster.

when pigs fly — swine flew?

Di says:
February 18, 2010 at 8:47 pm

I love LOVE the smell of crayons. Of course, that's not a lost smell. I have no kids in my life at present, but I still occasionally pop open the crayon box at store and take a few deep sniffs. mmmmum

zefal says:
February 19, 2010 at 3:07 am

Can anyone make out what's in parenthesis after “keep it under lock & key”?

If you said the first three....
The clouds parted today, so things are a little brighter, he said, obscurely. I just need a hiatus, I think, and I have one pencilled in for the future. The only way to keep things from overwhelming you is to step back and watch some things dissolve of their own accord. Or dissolve because you splashed them with acid, after luring them into your trap with a cunning plan whose deviousness was only apparent to the victim when they realized it was too late. I should never have spoken to that woman in the Hong Kong bar; I see now she was in on it from the beginning.

Have to go help child do piano, so back in a second. Previously we have worked on a persuasive argument assignment. Her first idea: persuade the principal to shorten the school day. I advised something that did not suggest a distaste for academics and the caged environment in which the students must live; perhaps something about her art. Persuade people to hire her to draw their dogs. She wrote some sparkling ad copy; most kids can, I think. From early on they absorb the logic and reasoning of commercials.

 Interruption from the other room

Hey Dad have you heard the song Let's Dance to Joy Division


She came into the room. “No it's 'Let's Dance to Joy Division.' The lyrics are kind of awkward. 'Let's dance to Joy Division and celebrate the irony.
everything is going wrong but we're so happy.' Why would they be happy?"
Because they're tripping on E, dear. "Because they're ironic."
Pause.
"Okay whatever."

Okay; piano's done. You'd think with the agonies kids go through to practice they'd be better at the blues. They should make Robert Johnson sound like Paul McCartney on a sugar high. If I'm not repeating myself. Speaking of which: since I came of musical age after the Beatles, I had no investment in the later career of any Beatle, and didn't care whether they sullied the Holy Legacy by turning out something cheerful and inane. I understand why some people replied to McCartney's query about filling the world with silly love songs – "what's wrong with that? I'll tell you: You wrote FRICKIN' ELEANOR RIGBY and NORWEGIAN WOOD, that's what" but I prefer anything he did to Lennon, who bored me dead. Everything he did bored me. "Imagine" was soaked in faux-somber gravitas, and lyrically fatuous; the other day on the way to work I heard "Mind Games," which has something in the background that sounds like a dental drill slowed waaaay down. Yes, he was the serious rock-and-roller. That's why he did a duet with Elton John.
I don't like "Silly Love Songs," because it's annoyingly chipper, but it's one of those songs you can tell was written by someone who knew his way around a bass guitar, and saw it as a melodic instrument, not a gut-pumping funkbucket (which is what the bass is, and does so well, but doesn't have to be.) Then again, I'm one of those snobs who says Jaco Pastorius is his favorite bassist, because it's so arty and different, you know? But it's true; one of my top ten albums is "Hejiri," by Joni Mitchell, and I can live without everything else she ever did. Except that album.

My first experience with George Harrison was "My Sweet Lord," which was just spinach; it had to be on the radio because he was a Beatle and hence we had to listen and nod soulfully and explain to the ignorant who Harry Chrishna was. Ringo at least seemed to be having fun, and I can say nothing bad about him because his nephew works in my building. (Really.) The only tune that really hit me as a kid was that long strange episodic thing about Uncle Albert, and the sorrow extended for not doing bloody thing all day.

**Hey, Star Wars!** Look what I found: some old Star Wars poster books. It's the work of Ralph McQuarrie, who belongs up there with Sid Mead and the other illustrators of imaginary worlds.
I've always loved this style of drawing – it's a look at what magazines might have looked like in the 60s and 70s if photography hadn't killed commercial illustration stone dead. Now that I think about it, advertising was changed – FOREVER! – but the rise of photography, and not entirely for the better: the old style was fake, but obviously so, and it was unrealizable and idealistic. Advertising that relied on photos was still idealistic, but it was more realistic, and hence seemed more attainable. In fact you should be experiencing the reality these models inhabit. Now. Why aren't you? What's wrong with you?

It's a gross over-generalization, of course, because photos were widely used
in ads from the 20s on, but they never had the lush artistic glory of a fine piece of illustration. Now we're in the world of CGI, where nothing is real, which somehow adds a note of sadness to the images. (For me, anyway. If only; if only) Maxfield Parrish wasn't real, but it had the quality of a dream, and made selling light-bulbs an exercise in romance and abandon. (Fun fact: the light bulb, and I presume he car, was named after an early Persian God of Light.)

Okay, one more:

![Image](https://example.com/image.jpg)

Name that scene! What, you can't? THEN I'LL SEE YOU IN HELL!

Or here, later.

79 RESPONSES TO *thursday, feb. 18*

**Kim** says:
February 18, 2010 at 8:11 pm

Sat glued to the TV that February in '64. Beatles on Ed Sullivan. I was six and I was hooked. First Beatle album for seventh birthday that July.

Absolutely the most fantastic music ever made. Period. Hands down.

Favorite songs: Paperback Writer and And Your Bird Can Sing.

Have the stereo remastered boxed set – un-freaking-believable. Every note.

So what the hell happened to them solo? McCartney can be amazing but he writes pablum. Lennon just wrote self-indulgent blech (including Imagine).

George had a FANTASTIC solo album called “Cloud Nine” – I believe Jeff Lynne produced (and sang) on it.

And Ringo was always just fun and “It Don't Come Easy” is my favorite Ringo song.
But I’ll take ANYTHING they produced from 1962 – 1970.

The soundtrack of my life to this day.

Joe Broderick says:
February 18, 2010 at 8:20 pm

You tell ‘em, Canada. I’m with you all the way. What’s not to like ‘bout a message of peace, love & understanding, anyway? Although I never liked “Imagine” much either, as songs go. Not because of the sentiment expressed, but it was a tad sappy. But not pandering twaddle, either, I dare say.

madCanada says:
February 18, 2010 at 8:25 pm

The “Sermon on the Mount” was pretty naive, offensive and fatuous too. Luckily, it’s much less popular today than that great oldie, “An Eye For An Eye,” which is much catchier and you can dance to it.

madCanada says:
February 18, 2010 at 8:29 pm

Not to mention “Kill Homos, Crush Women” by that swinger, Leviticus. If anyone’s more popular than that hippie Jesus, it’s Leviticus. He’s more in touch with mainstream values.

Joe Broderick says:
February 18, 2010 at 8:35 pm

Well, “Imagine” was a pretty good song for a slow dance. (Do kids call it “slow dancing” anymore? I doubt it.)

And about Elton John & John Lennon: I liked that “Whatever Gets You Through the Night” song.

madCanada says:
February 18, 2010 at 8:39 pm

Matthew 5:9

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

… Yeah, whaddever you say, Jesus ONO Christ. (Tap his phone!)

res says:
February 18, 2010 at 9:04 pm

I know Syd Mead. Syd Mead is a friend of mine. Ralph McQuarrie is no Syd Mead.

;o)

(sincerely)

madCanada says:
February 18, 2010 at 9:14 pm

Now if Jesus had only done a tune like: “I Wish Guns Were Sold in
Hardware Stores,” your average person could relate. But he's such an elitist snob.

**HelloBall** says:
February 18, 2010 at 9:19 pm

Rearranging the letters in the pseudonym “madCanada” yields “fatuous blowhard.” Or, it should.

**Cory** says:
February 18, 2010 at 9:34 pm

For some reason, the Beatles earlier music, pre 1965 doesn’t get played much anymore (except for I Wanna Hold Your Hand and She Loves You). Many of those songs are arguably better than anything they did after the drugs kicked in. Please Please Me, Love Me Do, What your Doin’ and most of the stuff from Hard Days Night are excellent music for any period but get short shrift today. As for Harrison, underrated musician today – wrote Something (which many people say is the best love song of the second half of the 20th Century), My Guitar Gently Weeps and some good stuff that other people here have mentioned. Maybe he’s not the songwriiter Lennon and McCartney were but he is one tier down from them. Maybe he’s not the guitarist Clapton or Page was, but he’s one tier down from them. You can count on one hand the number of musicians/songwriters who could say that, on any instrument, and you’d still have fingers left over. If George Harrison had been in any other group, he would have been the most talented member- and that includes the Stones.

**Ed Singel** says:
February 18, 2010 at 9:59 pm

I was a natural Beatles fan. When their first songs hit the radio I was 13, and when they broke up I was 20. So, I've always considered them the best ever. Even as a kid, though, I never looked to them for social or political wisdom – just good tunes.

I was not particularly enamored of Lennon's or McCartney's post-Beatles work. Particularly “Imagine” which I consider the second most overrated rock song ever (the first being “Southern Man” by Neil Young, but that's another subject, and will no doubt make somebody mad).

Considering the stuff they did individually post-Beatles, versus the great stuff as Beatles (when they wrote songs separately anyway) is starting to make me believe that my “favorite” Beatle is actually George Martin, their producer, who supplied a lot of creative input in pulling their music together.

**Waterhouse** says:
February 18, 2010 at 10:41 pm

*Right above Lando's head is a ship, which looks very suspiciously like the design of Queen Amidala's ship in “The Phantom Menace”, nearly 20 years later.*

Queen Amidala's ship is a chrome SR-71 with the cockpit moved back.
Gene Dillenburg says:
February 18, 2010 at 10:52 pm

I believe Mark Steyn put paid to “Imagine” some years back.

I'm a year younger than James. I knew the four Beatles as solo artists before I knew they'd ever been a group together. Discovered them as a group in August '76, when a torrential rain washed out a weekend of baseball, and I was stuck home listening to an all-Beatles weekend on AM radio. For years, the DJs had been filling the last two minutes before the news with these great songs, and never announcing who sang them. (The first time I heard “Hey Jude” I ran to my local Woolworth’s, which carried the top forty 45s. Couldn’t believe it wasn’t on the charts.) Anyway, that weekend I discovered that all those great little tunes were by the same group. I was hooked.

Eleven years later, I was over it. Not out of any disgust or disdain — I still think they're fantastic. I just had heard them all too many times. I recently bought the boxed set, and am working my way through it. It's the first time I'm hearing the songs digitally; it's the first time I'm hearing them in their original format; it's the first time I'm hearing many of them in 20+ years. And...

Eh. The sound is fantastic. And I'm newly aware of how prolific they were, and so young. But, with apologies to Cory and Grebmar, most everything before Rubber Soul is drek. I'll take A Hard Day's Night (LP) and a handful of other songs, but the rest... what did I ever see in it?

Their best song: “For No One.”

Their most misunderstood: “All You Need Is Love.” Thanks to the Yellow Sub movie, everyone *thinks* the song is saying love conquers all, love makes all things possible. Not at all. Listen to the lyric, and you'll see John spends most of his time explaining how much is IM-possible — things you can't do, can't see, can't know. But those things aren't important. What is important is “learning to be you” and being “where you're meant to be.” And for that...

LOVE the revved-up version now being used in cell phone ads.

As for the solo years, I loved the quirky stuff — McCartney II, 33 1/3, Rotogravure.

cgm says:
February 18, 2010 at 11:12 pm

Ditto on Hejira. I'm not interested by most of Joni Mitchell's stuff but, wow, Hejira is amazing. I've got "Coyote" from that album playing on iTunes right now.

chrisbcritter says:
February 18, 2010 at 11:39 pm

Anyone else ever see McCartney's “Another Day” as a sequel to the Beatles' “She's Leaving Home”?

jamcool says:
February 18, 2010 at 11:52 pm

Judging by the clothing, that first painting could be called “Star Wars meets the Reinassance Festival”!
**juanito - John Davey** says:

February 19, 2010 at 12:36 am

Waterhouse:

February 18, 2010 at 10:41 pm

“Right above Lando's head is a ship, which looks very suspiciously like the design of Queen Amidala's ship in “The Phantom Menace”, nearly 20 years later."

*Queen Amidala's ship is a chrome SR-71 with the cockpit moved back.*

So then, a Chromebird, instead of a Blackbird?

**gottacook** says:

February 19, 2010 at 12:46 am

Someone wrote above that “Instant Karma” is from Lennon’s “post-Beatle days,” but actually it was recorded in late January 1970 and released (on Apple of course) in February alongside the new Beatles singles that were still appearing.

As for Paul's solo career: I bought “Another Day” when it came out and still enjoy it; was he the only solo Beatle to continue (pre-Wings, at least) their practice of releasing 45s that were not album tracks? I always hated “Silly Love Songs” more for the insipid music than the insipid lyrics, and Paul’s own re-recording of the song (for his 1984 vanity movie Give My Regards to Broad Street) is evidence that he also thought it lacking – the 1984 version has a modulation to a different key region for 16 bars, among other features of interest – but of course it never superseded the original radio hit. Oh well.

**Joe Broderick** says:

February 19, 2010 at 8:13 am

“Someone wrote above that ‘Instant Karma' is from Lennon’s ‘post-Beatle days'...” That was me. I stand corrected!

I think it interesting that all four of my children—ranging in age from 13 to 30—like the Beatles, but have little or no interest in other music from the 1960s. My youngest daughter, for instance, loves the movie “Across the Universe,” which is a love story set to Beatles tunes. (She also thinks the leading male actor is really cute.) And all the kids loved “Yellow Submarine” and “A Hard Days Night.”

**Brerarnold** says:

February 19, 2010 at 9:29 am

I was eleven when the Beatles played on Ed Sullivan. Couldn’t have been more excited. Grew up on this stuff. Loved them all, including their post-Beatles work. And yes, mature reflection sets in. As follows:

All the Beatles music is fantastic. Sorry for those who don’t appreciate “Sgt. Pepper” or “Abbey Road” — the latter being their best album ever. Whatever you are looking for, I’m glad you find it in their earlier work, which is also fantastic. Hard to beat “Hard Day's Night” and “Help.”

But here's the thing: If you compare, say, “Let It Be” to “Hard Day's
Night”, it’s easy to shrug it off. Eh. If you compare it to most of the rest of what was on the radio at that point in time (1970), it’s great stuff. (“Candles in the Rain” anyone? “Close To You”?) No fair comparing it to “Bridge Over Troubled Water” or “Layla”, either — same problem — now you’re arguing “what’s the greatest of the great albums?”

One more comment, on George: “All Things Must Pass” is the greatest solo album by any Beatle, ever, period. If all you think of when you think of George is “My Sweet Lord” then your opinion doesn’t count because you haven’t done the homework. Yes, Mr. L., this includes you. 😏

If your introduction to “All Things Must Pass” was actually listening to “All Things Must Pass”, then the first song you heard was “I’d Have You Anytime”, which opens with a suave, smoky guitar riff, and gets down and rocks in the bridge (Clapton!), and then song after song comes up to the same high standard, including another Dylan tune, all performed by one of the all-time great session bands with names too numerous to mention — what can I say, except that “The Concert for Bangla Desh” is a helluva album too.

And then there’s “Cloud Nine.” And some other tasty singles from some merely OK albums along the way, like “Crackerbox Palace”. And The Traveling Wilburys — oh my yes.

Like someone said, in any other group — any other group — George would have been the stand-out.

As far as the rest of the guys’ post-Beatle work: if there had never been the Beatles, this music would still have been outrageously popular. I’m not wild about a lot of it, and don’t own any of it, but I don’t own any Led Zeppelin either, and that is not because it wasn’t top notch rock music for its time.

Summation: people will still be listening to the Beatles — most if not all of their music — long after we have all been forgotten.

Tuffy the Tuna says:
February 19, 2010 at 10:01 am

Hejira is an all-time favorite. I bought it right around the same time I saw Jaco in concert as part of Weather Report – one of the best live shows ever.

Joe Broderick says:
February 19, 2010 at 11:00 am

I'll have to give “Hejira” a listen—I sorta gave up on Joni after “The Hissing of Summer Lawns.”

LS says:
February 19, 2010 at 12:51 pm

I still have some of those old Ralph McQuarrie sketchbooks. I think he was a mechanical illustrator for Boeing before doing the Star Wars stuff. Definitely knew what he was doing.

raf says:
February 19, 2010 at 1:53 pm

I was a Beatles era adolescent and never much cared for them. That pretty much defines me, I'm afraid.
But what I got out of this Bleat is that anyone who drives a Mazda is probably committing sacrilege. Better hope those Zoroastrians (from Persia = Iran!) don’t do fatwa.

Emily says:
February 20, 2010 at 4:56 pm

In one of the Sam & Max games there’s a spot where they don goggles to see “Reality 2.0.” Your world, only cooler.

It would be the end of the world as we know it.

browniejr says:
February 20, 2010 at 9:07 pm

As someone born in ’61, the Beatles were slightly “before my time” in terms of being a teen and buying their records. The group that was hot when this time if my life occurred was The Bee Gees/the disco era. GAWD AWFUL… So me and many of my contemporaries looked to the Beatles for something worthwhile. Then Elvis Costello and Punk came along.

Steve Jenkins says:
February 22, 2010 at 3:41 pm

I’m late to this. Yes, their solo work was inferior, with the exception of “All Things Must Pass” and even that is shaky with the perspective of 40 years. Too much Phil Spector (Lennon, Harrison), not enough George Martin (all of them). But, Live and Let Die was the perfect Bond movie song. Paul nailed it with that one. The Ringo songs were cheerful but weak; okay “A Little Help From My Friends” works when reworked, but there is no saving “Yellow Submarine” or “Octopussy’s Garden”. Love George, but the Stones comment is, well, ignorant. Made by a non-musician.

Darrin says:
February 24, 2010 at 11:24 pm

McQuarrie is awesome! My buddy has all kinds of stuff autographed by him. Wish I would have went to some of those conventions with him to get some stuff myself =^(

mk says:
March 8, 2010 at 3:13 pm

Note that “Norwegian Wood” was Lennon’s song, not McCartney’s.
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
Screedblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

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A wall to wall day, Thursday. Read headlines, wrote a piece, finished a column, did an interview with two reporters who just got back from Haiti, then – as I was gearing up to fine-tune the column and put it in The System, NEWS HAPPENED. I heard some chatter at the desk called Patina; I inquired; fire. Damn. The video team editor asked if I knew the neighborhood.

I said it was my neighborhood.

Damn.
This was the greatest little gift shop in the neighborhood, the place where you went to get that one unusual unique thing for a gift. Everyone here goes there. Everyone got a last-minute gift, a Christmas ornament, a Dad-thing for Father's Day, a necklace for a spouse. The block has two other restaurants that gave the intersection a wonderful urban brio, and everything was gathered in the arms of a 1920s brick building constructed to house shops for weary workers who stumbled off the trolley and shopped for necessities before they headed home. Patina was once a drug store, and if you had any sense of urban archeology you could see the circles in the ancient linoleum
where the stools were bolted. Once you know where the stools were, you know where the counter was; once you have that in your mind, the rest follows swiftly. The chrome-trimmed soda fountain, the big red Coke dispenser, the fan up on a shelf clattering back and forth, the phone booth in the back with its heavy receiver and dial (it fought your finger just a bit, rolled back at its own pace), the REXALL orange in the signs over the aisles, the cardboard displays for creams and combs and cigarettes, the slam of the screen door on a summer afternoon. You could stand in the door today and see the building across the street that held down the south side since 1919; the gas station on the other corner, the building where the butcher ran his trade.

I stood outside and watched the pressed tin roof fall.

Ran into a comrade who’d come to watch, and we greeted each other with a single curse, because that was all you needed to say.

But I had to interview people, and that meant Vulture Mode. I hate Vulture Mode. I am a bad reporter, because I hate to ask people obvious questions. I know it’s part of the package, a necessary part; goes without saying this rips out the heart of the neighborhood, but you need someone to say it for you. I found the owner of one of the restaurants, standing on the sidewalk, tears in his eyes, and I asked if he’d speak on camera because I had to ask. He was very kind and said he needed to absorb this and think about it, and, bad reporter that I am, I said no problem I’m sorry to bother you you have your deepest sympathies and I’m sorry to bother you. Bad instincts, I know – sometimes people need to talk in these situations, but there’s no way I’m going to pretend I’m fulfilling a civic duty by letting them get it out. No, you prize those moments because it’s killer stuff. If he had talked, because a mike was in his face and he felt it was his duty to talk, and I’d gotten that evanescent high that comes when you nab the right moment for the story, I would have felt great about the day’s work. I wouldn’t be sitting here now feeling like a vulture. I would be feeling great about doing a good job. And would I be wrong?

Agonizing about such junior-level things is revealing, I know. Whatever.

So. The block is gone. The good news is that it was architecturally undistinguished, and I’ve no doubt they’ll rebuild. It will all be back. I predict Patina will anchor the corner next Christmas.

The floors won’t creak the same way, though. Fire eats history for lunch.

One minute of video I shot on the sly, with hasty music. Damned Garageband cut the first chord out, and I didn’t notice until I’d crunched and uploaded. Well, a man can only do SO MUCH.
After the fire I picked up Child and Friend at orchestra practice, and they'd heard. Everyone had heard that Patina burned. They were sad and somewhat unmoored: “It's weird to think that it's gone,” Natalie said. “It's been there my whole life.”

“Every Christmas stocking,” I said, “had something from Patina.” She fell silent, as if learning Santa's workshop had burned. I suppose it had, really.

Afterwards: a parent-teacher conference (boffo reading / writing, math could be better) and a radio interview and an evening of homework, piano practice, and other delights. (This, and all the links below, were written while I was taking small breaks from fatherly duties, so excuse the quality.) At one point while working she came into my room to show me all the tunes she'd loaded on her iPod, and I said: later? Okay? I'm trying to -

Then I realized that she wanted to share her music with me, and I would be absolute A#1 idiot not to start this exchange on a good note. So we listened. I like her taste. But I had to reset the max volume settings on the iPod. “WHY?” Because you'll go deef, that's why. “You listen to loud music.” Yes, because I am deef.

“Jeez Dad.”

“Jeez Daughter.”

Then I put her to bed and wrote this.

Today: the World's Fair section begins, with a minor entry. Sorry, but it's the only piece I had in the pipeline that was written. Go HERE.

Comic Sins concludes the 40s comic ads, HERE.

100 Mysteries! “Inner Sanctum.”

The Column.
72 RESPONSES TO the fire. and more

madCanada says:
February 19, 2010 at 5:29 pm

DISASTER GIRL!!
http://www.buzzfeed.com/scott/disaster-girl

RJ says:
February 19, 2010 at 5:46 pm

@Al Federber “I’m just not that broken up.”

Much like my reaction if I learned you would not post here again.

grs says:
February 19, 2010 at 6:07 pm

“ . . . at a cost of zero dollars.”

Ignorance is bliss.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 19, 2010 at 6:20 pm

and I thought today would degrade into schoolkid bon mots about vibrators.

Come on everyone:

I’d like to buy the world a home and furnish it with love,
Grow apple trees and honey bees, and snow white turtle doves.
I’d like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony,
I’d like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company.

Joe Broderick says:
February 19, 2010 at 6:24 pm

John Lennon would want all the Bleatniks of the world to live as one.

madCanada says:
February 19, 2010 at 6:37 pm

hey! Those firefighters look tax-funded to me. Cooties! Commies!

@ Joe Brodrick

John Lennon (if not perforated by over-the-counter, no-questions-asked, Atlanta-bought bullets) would probably be sitting in the Dakota right now, reading The Bleat, laughing & smiling, and posting hilarious comments under three different pseudonyms.

Joe Broderick says:
February 19, 2010 at 6:45 pm

madCanada,

Imagine.
Di says:
February 19, 2010 at 6:49 pm

@madcanada -
" A firefighter friend of mine tells me that 90% of business fires are arson. "
I've also heard that from firefighters, but not quite such a high percentage. I think restaurant kitchens are more prone due to the nature of what they do. Though, of course, it would make it easier to explain away, wouldn't it – hot oil, malfunctioning ranges. Yeah, when you're about to go under, in desperation you go for the insurance payoff. And never mind the random charred bodies next door, or injured firemen ...

I hope that wasn't the case in Mr. Lilek's cheerful neighborhood.

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 19, 2010 at 7:00 pm

My thanks to our genial host for what was no doubt major cognitive shift from work to home. I appreciate you tolerance more than I can say Mr. Lileks.

canajun-eh, I accept your apology in the spirit in which it was offered. I trust it was sincere. I have no intention of pushing any of your own buttons re: Gollum. My remarks in that regard are aimed at one person and one person alone. Not you. Eeyore fits quite well too, and I'll refer to my least favorite person in that vein if it will not cause conflict with you.

I sincerely hope and trust that you and I can proceed henceforth with a more more civil level of conversation. I'll do my best.

madCanada, I apologize again. This time for inadvertently embroiling you in some heat you did not sign up for. I just don't deal well with negativity.

madCanada says:
February 19, 2010 at 7:13 pm

@ Mark E Hurling

No apology necessary. Hope the Bleatmaster posts my longer answer to your S.A.D. question.

Bleatmaster ...

What for you screen me? Me no troll!!!

Stjohnsmythe says:
February 19, 2010 at 7:17 pm

James, your description of Patina and the palimpsest within is exquisite. It is timely that the loss of this building coincides with this headline:


Regardless of the building's architectural character, losing something from that era causes the echoes of history to fade even further. It is good to know, though, that a replacement will come even though it will most likely be a utilitarian box clad in EIFS to imitate a bygone style.
madCanada says:
February 19, 2010 at 7:24 pm

HERE'S a Friday night treat for everyone. Especially you, Lileks! ...
Video: THE BEAU HUNKS recreate (exactly!) the music of LeRoy Shield. ie. soundtracks for Hal Roach / Laurel & Hardy / Little Rascals ... Pure Deco Joy. Hotcha! Dig.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9N-StkaCMA

Stjohnsmythe says:
February 19, 2010 at 7:30 pm

madCanada: Thank you for the link.

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 19, 2010 at 8:00 pm

madCanada,

Gracious as always. I thoroughly enjoy our (albeit indirect) correspondence. Enjoy your weekend. Perhaps we'll communicate next week.

swschrad says:
February 19, 2010 at 10:22 pm

I'd like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company.

diet decaf for me, thanks. I brought the ice. no, it's not from my driveway😊

Bleatmaster! What for you screen me? I'm no troll.

there is a "slow down cowboy" filter on this thing, I don't know what settings Our Genial Host has on it, but it smells to me like 3 in 2 hours, and then it's the time-out corner.

occasionally things disappear if they are posted in chapters with footnotes, also. that is not automatically done. the whole world's an editor, and, alas, I get paid by the word.

Stewart says:
February 20, 2010 at 12:49 pm

I'll add a voice of condolence to our host on the fire loss to his neighborhood. Fires are such nasty, unforgiving things. Glad it was 'just stuff' and no lives lost. And kudos to my fellow Bleatnics for the overall civility here. So glad the Intartubes allow such sharing and, yes, caring, amongst the crowd who congregate here.

May this winter soon be done and sunshine gently enwarmen us all. I'll quit mangling the language now; no coffee yet, obviously.

GardenStater says:
February 20, 2010 at 12:52 pm

@madCanada: I never heard of the Beau Hunks before, and now I love them! Thanks for passing that one along!
madCanada says:  
February 20, 2010 at 2:18 pm  

The (Amsterdam-based) Beau Hunks are available on iTunes. There's a Laurel & Hardy collection and a Little Rascals collection.  

The Little Rascals collection may just be the greatest thing ever made available to the world.

Deana says:  
February 20, 2010 at 7:02 pm  

So happy to see the World's Fair stuff going up, even if it is a bit wonky right now. I'll be crouched in my house, surrounded by 1939 NYWF tchotchkes, waiting for more.  

Sorry for the loss of the neighborhood store. I always feel a bit guilty when I'm super-bummed about a loss of a building, but it IS a loss, nonetheless.

Lileks fan says:  
February 21, 2010 at 8:48 pm  

(off topic) How about a Bleat app? I'd happily pay to have the only blog I read nicely formatted.

GardenStater says:  
February 21, 2010 at 10:09 pm  

@madCanada: Yes, I've now become the greatest Beau Hunks fan in the world. It appears that the Little Rascals CD is out of print. Cheapest price I could find on Amazon was $44. Since my boys are iTunes-savvy, maybe I'll get them to download some tunes. Great stuff.

harmon says:  
February 22, 2010 at 3:10 pm  

We had a fire like that in our neighborhood several years ago. Burned down the local chain grocery store, which has never been rebuilt. It was out the front door, halfway down the street, duck through the alley from us. Its loss changed our supper and weekend eating dynamics from quasi-European (stop & get supper stuff) to American (plan ahead, stock up every week or two.)
I think I know what this means. No, I don’t. Go HERE.

I went shopping for some clothes on Saturday, since my job now requires an actual wardrobe. Wanted a nice light sport coat – so named because no sport is involved, I presume – for spring, and this took me to H&M. I think it stands for “Horrid and Meretricious,” at least when it comes to [...]
THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

FEBRUARY 2010

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« Jan Mar »

THE DISTANT PAST

July 2013
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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!

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Search

Still not finding what you're looking for? Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

VISIT OUR FRIENDS!

A few highly recommended friends...

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3: Black & White World
4: Sears 1934
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Institute of Official Cheer
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ARCHIVES

All entries, chronologically...

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developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?
Hmm. So. Dentist today; no big deal. I have a great dentist I trust completely, and besides, he reads this site, so if I complain he brings out the wrench and finds a good nerve. I do have another substantial procedure coming up, but that's what happy pills and clown sauce are for, right? That's the great thing about modern dentistry: you don't have to be there, really.

If I have one complaint, it's the machinery. It all looks designed to do something unnatural but horribly necessary. There's an X-Ray Machine, of course, quite different from the ones of my childhood: then they'd roll a cannon up the side of your head, put a lead apron over your regenerative organs, then send the tech out behind a foot-thick lead wall. Now you step up on a plate, hold on to some handles, and bite down on a piece of plastic while the device irradiates your noggin. You feel like you're dancing with a dead robot. It would be better if it came in the shape of attractive people, and you could have a moment of wild fantasy. Come with me to ze Casbah BZZZZZZZZ Ca-CHANK

I listened to an old radio show, X-Minus One, and was taken out of the story somewhat by the fact that Mason Adams was one of the vocal actors. He did a lot of 50s radio. I knew him growing up as the Voice of Smuckers, and then the irascible editor on “Lou Grant.” That's the interesting thing about the transition from radio to TV culture; people recognized actors they'd never really known, because they sounded familiar, but couldn't quite place them.
Paul Frees is probably the one that made everyone pause, and think I know that guy. But from where? Everywhere, probably. I watched “In Cold Blood” the other night, and there he was.

Speaking of “In Cold Blood” – I had to watch it, because it was on, and because it’s just a damned fine movie. I learn something every time: in this instance, it was the jarring use of the word “shit,” and it turns out that was the first time the word was uttered in a major American film. It's all the more bracing because the movie seems like it takes place in 1959, even though it was made in ’67. Oh, but there's more: while googling around, I discovered that the house in which the idiots killed the good & decent Clutter family was up for sale, and of course this meant a realtor’s page with lots of photos. They looked familiar – and sure enough, it appears the movie’s horrible depiction of the crime was shot in the house.

There’s a photo on this page I would have advised the realtor not to use. Which one? Yeah, that one.

Anyway. Finished up, stood up, went downstairs, saw the same sign that always makes me pause:

What happened there, I wondered? Did one person fall, or a dozen? Behold
Hey, speaking of Chuck Taylors, again: it was noted in the comments that Men seem to DESTROY them quickly, but women make them wear like iron. This may be so. Men may have acid-spraying glands below the ankles. I mention this only to tie yesterday's post about the shoes and the 80s together with this: more proof the 80s are back!

the Stairs of Doom:
I’ll be busy today, so I’m going to deploy the linkage now. Here’s this week’s Comic Sins.

Here's a small addition to the 30s magazine ad site.

The growth of the 30s site still surprises me; once I committed to giving you eight songs from each year, well, I had to build a page for the subject. It'll be posted when all the years are done. Here's 1931 if you like such things:

Pass it along, if you wish

76 RESPONSES TO tuesday, feb. 23

juanito - John Davey says:
February 23, 2010 at 12:59 pm

bgbear (roger h):
February 23, 2010 at 12:51 pm

don't forget:

Aww..Star Wars, Nothing But Star Wars
Give Me those Star Wars
Ah, the soul soothing vocal stylings of Nick Winters!

hpoulter says:
February 23, 2010 at 1:05 pm

I prefer Tom Monroe:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJrdYLMRjGo

Charlie Young says:
February 23, 2010 at 1:07 pm

The new imaging sensors in dentistry are more “green” in that, you are correct, the film, developer, and lead lining the films are no longer an issue. They are much more expensive, however. The eventual savings from not buying film and chemicals, plus not having physical storage should pay for that digital sensor in about 5 years.

Brisko says:
February 23, 2010 at 1:07 pm

@Juanito-John Davey.

War Machine is a more interesting character, and a better hero, than Iron Man ever was. How many times has Tony Stark run away and hid when the going got tough? You’d never see Jim Rhodes doing that.

Rhodey lost his arms, legs and half his face and he’s still kicking butts all over the world.

Jim A says:
February 23, 2010 at 1:15 pm

Love the “Star Wars” lyric. I still think of them and Nick every time I hear Williams's theme. 😊

I never heard of Capt. Savage and his Leatherneck Raiders, but I gotta concur the cover has it all. They had me at the surfboards, but when I saw the title at lower-right, I pretty much cheered.

Marvel was so great at that cross-mythologizing stuff. At least until their universe got so huge and entwined that everyone's widowed aunt is the spawn of mutants from the future, or a disguised skrull with adamantium bones.

That Capt. Savage story may have been the only tale *set in WWII* that told of Ben Grimm's flyboy days, but I recall at least one time-travel tale from the 70s that transplanted the Fantastic Four back to the 40s, where they teamed up with the Invaders (Capt. America, Bucky, Sub-Mariner, the original Human Torch and Toro). As they stormed a Nazi stronghold with Cap and co., Ben and Reed briefly talked about their younger selves, fighting the good fight elsewhere.

I hadn't realized Ben was in the Pacific.

fizzbin says:
February 23, 2010 at 1:27 pm
ATTENTION ALL BUZZARATTI: “Please watch for the last step”, last seen wearing stilettos, a pink tu-tu, black leather peek-a-boo bra, carrying a whip and a fifty-five gallon drum of Bear Nair. Use caution! The last step is known to be suffering from Irritable Bear Syndrome. That is all.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 23, 2010 at 1:38 pm

@fizzbin:

hee hee.

Actually looking at that pic again I see the floor tile is the same color pattern as the steps, could have made that last step near invisible. The added carpeting probably helped more than the sign.

Is this at the paper or the dental office? If dental office... oh, I won't go there. There are dentist reading and I don't want to be accuse of being an antidentite.

fizzbin says:
February 23, 2010 at 1:38 pm

@winterhawk....

You bad, dawg 😊

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 23, 2010 at 2:06 pm

@winterhawk....

You bad, dawg 😊

I know, some people can't keep their mind out of the gutter. I for one would never mention the Texaco attendant working his hose as he looks over the women in the car.

Oh Mrs. Crane, you're a little monkey woman. Yeah, you're lean, mean, and I bet you're not too far in between are ya. How'd you like to wrap your spikes around my...

Mxymaster says:
February 23, 2010 at 2:21 pm

Nick Winters was much more deadly than Nick Fury.

juanito - John Davey says:
February 23, 2010 at 2:28 pm

Mxymaster:
February 23, 2010 at 2:21 pm

Nick Winters was much more deadly than Nick Fury.

True, but Nick Winter had no Howling Commandos. As with everything life... balance.
swschrad says:
February 23, 2010 at 2:33 pm

balance.

there was a little incident in the public prints today... seems a pistol-grip shotgun with 5 deer slugs in it was found in a break room cabinet in the Grand Forks newspaper offices.

that's not balance in any direction. what, you don't have enough broken wrists so you have to hack off the stock of a 12 gauge?

oh, well, if they find the character, Bruno and Lefty down at the county slammer can work on those wrists, no charge.

Brian Lutz says:
February 23, 2010 at 2:40 pm

Hmmm... I didn't know Saxton Hale was around in the Forties...

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 23, 2010 at 2:45 pm

@swschrad:

Someone was just planning on “mopping up” the break room.

Funny, guys are dumb enough to bring weapons to work, usually for “show and tell”, I have seen it a couple of times (the loaded part is a little concerning). I can imagine someone stashing the shotgun out of sight and hoping to retrieve when no one was around.

On the other hand, any Harvard graduates working at the Grand Forks Herald?

fizzbin says:
February 23, 2010 at 3:03 pm

@bgbear...

Heh, good one. I must admit when I looked at the picture my minds were busy trying to figure out which one was Ethyl and how much she wanted.

@swschad...

Oy! Deer slugs! In another life I was issued a Remington 870P with a fold-over steel stock. If you pull down the stock and put it up to your shoulder, it was no big deal. If you left the stock folded over, you'd best rest the pistol grip and hand on your hip or your wrist would get an owie. Thank God, The Great Mystery, I only had to fire it at the range. I really, really loved that gun. Illegal for us civilians to own one.

browniejr says:
February 23, 2010 at 3:37 pm

@jeischen: You left out that one of the dolphins in sailor caps should talk like an idiot, and have a name like “Skip Skip”...

@hpoulter, bgbear: I prefer Perry Como:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1yvS_m_7eE
Rex V. says:
February 23, 2010 at 3:37 pm

Captain Savage knows “Tojo don’t surf”.

Loved the Texaco ad for the gasoline with the Ethyl additive, especially when the woman notes that Fred says “it’s the gasoline to which Ethyl is added that counts” Makes me imagine all sorts of explosive hijinks at the Mertz household.

swschrad says:
February 23, 2010 at 3:39 pm

shotgun… saw off the barrel as well, you got’cha a street sweeper.

nothing says, “hunt me down and vaporize me, I’m devil spawn” like carrying a street sweeper around, say, an apartment building. happened one week while I was in the boundary waters in the rabbit warren I lived in. sent in a police dog when the perp was under a car in an open garage.

shot the dog.

perp absorbed something like 11 bullets.

expected result occurred.

hpoulter says:
February 23, 2010 at 3:41 pm

(even back in the 60s, people called him Perry Coma)

Hey, did anyone notice that Fred told her about Ethyl? Well, he would know, wouldn’t he?

Chris M. says:
February 23, 2010 at 3:42 pm

The theme song to Hogan’s Heroes actually had lyrics. And it’s awful.

And I can sing them all from memory 😏. My dad had the Hogan’s Heroes LP. No, he didn’t inflict it on me; I don’t recall him even ever playing it. I did it to myself. You have weird musical tastes when you’re a kid…

juanito - John Davey says:
February 23, 2010 at 3:53 pm

Chris M.:
February 23, 2010 at 3:42 pm

The theme song to Hogan’s Heroes actually had lyrics. And it’s awful.

And I can sing them all from memory 😏. My dad had the Hogan’s Heroes LP. No, he didn’t inflict it on me; I don’t recall him even ever playing it. I did it to myself. You have weird musical tastes when you’re a kid…
I tried looking for that LP back in July without luck. Just for the sheer abomination aspect of it. My loss.

My father inflicted the Statler Brothers on me. In comparison, I guess I didn’t have so bad...

Kim says:
February 23, 2010 at 6:15 pm

I have a million of those yeast ads – they are hilarious. If you eat the yeast cake and sit in a warm environment, do you rise? All of them get around to constipation, somehow, someway.

It was an obsession in the 40s – any future creatures studying earth through ads will think so!

Robert says:
February 23, 2010 at 7:40 pm

Did you build that embedded music player from scratch or tweak an existing one? Is it possible yet to stream music from websites on an iphone? I expect you of all webfectionists should know.

JamesS says:
February 23, 2010 at 7:53 pm

Ah, the soul soothing vocal stylings of Nick Winters!

I knew that Bill Murray had truly become a serious actor when he sang karaoke in “Lost in Translation” and did NOT do it “Nick Winters”-style.

chrisbcritter says:
February 23, 2010 at 11:46 pm

That cover made me think of Col. Kilgore's other great line from “Apocalypse Now”:

“You either fight – or surf!”

Why not both?

Darrin says:
February 24, 2010 at 11:18 pm

I saw a pair of Chuck's the other day with dual layered canvas. Why didn’t they have these when I was a kid??!
can take care of it!

4: Sears 1934
5: Comic ads
6: 100 Mysteries
Institute of Official Cheer
Lint: the Institute Tumblr
PopCrush
Screenblog
Shorpy.com
StarTribune Column

Please install and activate the “Twitter for WordPress” plugin to use this section.
You learn things from putting a child to bed. You learn a lot about robbers and boogiemen. For creatures who sneak around in the crepuscular shadows, they are remarkably sensitive to subtle gradations of illumination. We have dimmers everywhere, so I have learned to calibrate the light just so. Doors are a simpler proposition – either they are closed completely, or they might as well be wide open. If the door is slightly ajar, all sorts of evil can flow into the room. Close it completely, and the robbers are utterly confounded. A knob! Curses! I thought the alarm system was bad enough, but now a knob stands in our way? Let us retreat through the skylight from whence we came, lads.

Cold day. Damned cold, with a mean wind full of hatpins – pure raw winter eternal, laughing at the conceits of spring. In some parts of the country I believe winter dies easy and early; here it goes down like the Third Reich. You can hear it laugh: You like this? I got more! I call it March! I've heard people say they don't like Arizona because everything is so prickly, but the boulevards are like heaps of broken glass studded with razors – slip, fall, put your face in a bank and you come up looking like you shaved with a cheese grater. The sun is getting stronger, but it still feels like it's just studying us for research purposes. At least we wake in the light and drive home in the light.

Not to repeat endlessly something I posted in two other venues, but:
Obviously, all doors are temporarily closed, until they are temporarily open. There’s a reason for this note, though. Last year we closed off an entrance. FOREVER. It was on the south side of the building; it was the door I always took. In the salad days of the paper – so named for fellow who walked through the newsroom with an enormous bin of tossed lettuce and romaine, doling out croutons from a modified change-dispenser hooked to his belt – we had four entrances. The main door, through which employees, managers, and supplicants seeking to petition the journalists had to pass; the West Entrance, which disgorged the smokers from the ad sales department; the South entrance, which was favored by people who handled classified and transcribed obituaries over the phone, and the East Entrance, favored by promotional people riding down the elevator from fourth. Each compass point had its own Smokers’ Clique, people who’d synced their nicotine needs. When the South entrance was closed, it was because part of the building had been walled up forever, shut off from juice and heat.

This was the entrance I used, and it was a bit morbid to enter and leave by a sign that said OBITUARIES QUIET PLEASE. Especially after it had emptied out, and the cubicles were vacant spaces spattered with the sad banal detritus of the modern veal-pen. The power strip. The ethernet cable that would never

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**THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS**

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**THE DISTANT PAST**

- July 2013
- June 2013
- May 2013
- April 2013
- March 2013
- February 2013
- January 2013
- December 2012
- November 2012
- October 2012
- September 2012
- August 2012
- July 2012
- June 2012
- May 2012
- April 2012
- November 2011
- October 2011
- September 2011

http://lileks.com/bleat/?p=5953
carry another bit. In boxes and out boxes. A cork board with no notes, only pins (someone had removed the last bits of paper, but put the pins back; where else would they go?)

So: “Temporarily” is a reassurance. This door isn’t going anywhere, folks. Last week one of the doors developed a hideous squeak, an awful metal peal of pain. The Temporary Closing may be related. I saw one of the building’s numberless Moties working on the door. (Don’t mean to demean building maintenance – we see a few specific fellows in the newsroom configuring this and that, but even after all these years I run into someone I’ve never seen before, bent over a task that seems his specific duty.) I thanked him for doing something about the ghastly screech, and he explained: the ground beneath the building had changed.

What, the internet screwed with our literal foundation, too?

The door wasn’t the problem. It was a slab of marble beneath the door. After half a century it had . . . moved, slightly, enough to cause contention with the door itself. He had a circular grinder. He put on a mask and bent to his task, and the dust of some ancient quarry filled the vestibule. Wonder if someone inhaled it, and will carry a molecule of an Italian quarry for fifty years and leave it in the ground on the other side of the world. Every day has a mystery like this; we’d probably go mad if we knew them all.

**Speaking of mysteries:** enjoy a little Black-and-White World right now. Can you name the actor? It’s unnerving, in a way. Enjoy! See you around

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**49 RESPONSES TO wednesday, feb. 24**

**Mumblix Grumph** says:
February 24, 2010 at 3:27 am

That elevator indicator is fan-freaking-tastic! I'm going to try modeling it in in 3D.

**ed in texas** says:
February 24, 2010 at 6:24 am

“A knob! Curses!” Yeah. (The guy is probably one of the miscreants in the Brink's commercials.) And don't get me started on hiding under the covers. Absolutely monster-proof.

**Bob Lipton** says:
February 24, 2010 at 6:30 am

He started out as a harmonica player. The guy in 100 Mysteries today.

Bob
Michael Rittenhouse says:
February 24, 2010 at 6:57 am

Doors like that can be monstrously expensive to fix.

How sad to see the building die off a section at a time, like cutting away dead limbs from an old favorite tree.

Lohwoman says:
February 24, 2010 at 7:12 am

The 100 Mysteries guy. The forehead, the mustache, the voice are so distinctive. I have a hard time imagining him in a comedic role, though. He was in a film noir with Jane Wyatt that was pretty depressing.

hpoulter says:
February 24, 2010 at 7:20 am

Wow, seems like he was around forever, doesn’t it? On the other hand, he got a latish start in the movies – he was 27 when he played Tony. On the gripping hand, he was only 65 when he died. He was one of those guys who looked old long before he got there.

SCOTTtheBADGER says:
February 24, 2010 at 7:22 am

You had the kind of wind that the British call a lazy wind, because it can’t be bothered to go around you?

Cuneo says:
February 24, 2010 at 8:01 am

Oh yeah, Lee. J. Cobb, the man who was everywhere on TV and the big screen. I was watching a movie a while ago with Humphrey Bogart playing a missionary priest in the far east facing up to the war lord, a former partner in crime, Mieh Yang. Wait, he looks so familiar, in spite of the makeup, that voice, it's LEE JAY COBB!

RPD says:
February 24, 2010 at 8:13 am

At first I thought it sounded like DiNiro. Ah well, Cobb waws never on my radar, so i wouldn't have ever recognized him.

Cory says:
February 24, 2010 at 8:42 am

He moved on to the waterfront, ran the rackets for a while, then some stoolie got him sent up the river.

FreeState says:
February 24, 2010 at 8:51 am

Thanks for the Motie reference. Especially these days, when I feel like a Meat.
Cristiane says:
February 24, 2010 at 9:03 am

Lee J. Cobb was one of those multi-purpose “ethnic” actors. Not only Italian, but Chinese (as noted above), Siamese (in the 1946 non-musical version of The King and I – with REX HARRISON as the King), Arab, etc. Pretty much everything but Jewish, which he actually was.

MDG14450 says:
February 24, 2010 at 9:03 am

Didn’t realize how much work he did in Europe in the 70s, when just about any american actor lended some weight to the project. And a lot of them are damn good action movies.

Jennifer says:
February 24, 2010 at 9:17 am

I have noticed the same thing about Mr. Cobb. How does he look older in 1938 than he does in 1954? Or 1957? Freaky.

Regarding kids, I know I can count on two things if my son is upstairs after I’ve been tidying: his closet door will be open and the shower curtain will be open. I’ve never asked him, but I’m certain it’s because of what “might” be behind them if they are closed.

juanito - John Davey says:
February 24, 2010 at 9:18 am

B&W World: Biff and Happy's Dad!

Leaving the Child's door open or closed is for naught when your 75 pound Labrador pushes open doors at his convenience in the early evening hours. If said Labrador is blacker than night, he becomes the source of robber and boogieman histrionics.

Two entrances in our satff downsized facilities. One is a street entrance, with a foyer where the elevator from the parking garage delivers it's load. The other, the entrance from the public parking area. With 3/4 of the staff no longer in the building, only the Public Parking entrance remains in use. A sad sight indeed, to enter from the Parking Garage and see the swirling sea of empty cubicles. Took a year before we finally went through all the old desks and collected the office supplies. We’re set for supplies for at least another year. I’ve already sent 70 monitors and desktops off to the recyclers. Waiting in the wings, old Linux servers from 13 remote locations.

February is a slog, regardless of location, even here in the Nor Cal foothills. We had a glorious week of near 70 degree days, following a solid two weeks of rain and cold temps. Pear trees, plum trees were all fooled. Started their picturesque spring performance as they frequently do in February. Then, this week, back to rain, wind and 40 degrees. Consequently, white, pink, and lavender blooms litter the wet ground. As the old Imperial Margarine commercials used to say, it may not be nice to fool Mother Nature, but well, she's kind of asking for at this point. No?

Lars Walker says:
February 24, 2010 at 9:51 am

I recall that when I was a kid, I was certain monsters couldn’t get
me as long as I had the blankets pulled up under my chin. Any neck or shoulders uncovered, I was in peril.

It's not supposed to make sense.

Phoebe says:
February 24, 2010 at 9:56 am

The first photo of Lee J. Cobb on Black and White is a dead ringer for DeNiro.

Bob Lipton says:
February 24, 2010 at 10:12 am

I think the closest he came to playing Jewish was in MEN OF BOY'S TOWN where he takes over the role of Dave Morriss, played in BOY'S TOWN by Henry Hull.

Bob

HunkyBobTX says:
February 24, 2010 at 10:15 am

“Crepuscular”
Fantastic. Another word for the vocabulary! Thanks, James! I plan to use it when referring to my cats this evening.

I thought Lee J. Cobb was DeNiro, too. An amazing likeness. If someone wanted to make a movie of Cobb's life, the casting agent would have the lead actor immediately.

I don't suppose there's any relation? Nah.

Jennifridge says:
February 24, 2010 at 10:47 am

I'm another voice in the choir who thought Lee J. Cobb was Robert DeNiro for a second. He even has the mole on the cheek. But as soon as I saw the link I was embarrassed for not recognizing Cobb. But then I always confuse LJC with Keenan Wynn for some reason (or is it Keenen Ivory Wayans?).

About the sign on the door: I used to work in a building where someone had posted a sign that said “DOOR MUST REMAIN CLOSED EXCEPT WHEN IN ACTUAL USE.” Some wiseacre had come along at one time or another and crossed out “ACTUAL,” only to replace it with “SIMULATED.”

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 24, 2010 at 10:57 am

In “Golden Boy” Cobb plays William Holden's father although they are only a few years apart in age. Holden's love interest, Barbara Stanwyck, is actually older than both of them.

Holden is almost unrecognizable in the 1939 film. He actually got better looking as he aged.

swschrad says:
February 24, 2010 at 11:19 am
(snif) they don’t let you pull up the covers at work to ward off the monsters. waaAAAAHHHHH!

my business requires multiple (like 70+) central offices around the metro. there are a screaming tubeload of remote systems that feed into them, for all your communications needs.

the definition of “communications needs” has been changing since 1984, and drastically since 1998. you wouldn’t believe the changes in the past several years.

our building only has one echo chamber whence once there was activity, and that’s Mahogany Row, closed off a year plus ago by Real Estate. ooh, there’s a boogeyman, Real Estate. they come by and take your coffeepots!

but in the COs, man, there are 8-foot racks in whole sections of the building vacant, but occasionally dusted to keep the filters of the live stuff clean. lights off. to the ceiling, grey-brown racks with empty tube sockets in some places, thousands of empty card slides in others.

and then you walk by another section, where there is a new access badge reader. all new equipment, shining, warm, “caution – laser” signs all about, and the fibers march step by step, row by row, down the yellow chases to new and wonderful things.

the fibers are taking over the old teletype system and frequency-division racks.

the buckets are changing, plastic instead of metal, but we keep getting new buckets as the old ones are carted off, or depowered in place.

new buckets are a wonderful thing.

D Palmer says:
February 24, 2010 at 11:20 am

I didn’t have to listen to the clip, Cobb's name popped into my head immediately. Something about the chin I think. I have long been a fan, 12 Angry Men (one of my top 5 favorite movies), the Flint movies, some bad 70’s TV. A great American character actor.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 24, 2010 at 11:31 am

Hey, I never thought about it before, as Barbara Stanwyck was ranching on “The Big Valley”, old Leo Jacoby was ranching on “The Virginian.” Too bad Holden did not do TV, there could have been a showdown/reunion.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 24, 2010 at 11:35 am

Glad you mention Flint films. Lileks a few Bleats back confused Derek Flint’s “boss” with Matt Helm’s.

*no one is flint’s boss

Matt says:
February 24, 2010 at 11:36 am
D Palmer: “I didn’t have to listen to the clip, Cobb's name popped into my head immediately. Something about the chin I think. I have long been a fan, 12 Angry Men (one of my top 5 favorite movies), the Flint movies, some had 70's TV. A great American character actor.”

That was my reaction exactly. I am also with Jennifridge in placing him with Keenan Wynn. I am always surprised to see Cobb in the “light” Flynt movies.

Richard Heft says:
February 24, 2010 at 12:00 pm

Cobb appears, believe it or not, in two Hopalong Cassidy pictures about this time; in one he plays a bald banker, in another he plays a villainous rancher; he looks about 45 years old in both. He plays a Jewish character in THE EXORCIST, Lieutenant Kinderman.

Spud says:
February 24, 2010 at 12:12 pm

Juanito-John Davey:
Have you ever tried to sell or give away old computer (CRT) monitors lately? Any takers?? I have over a dozen at a remote facility that are just sitting in a storage room. They all work to varying resolutions, and it seems a waste to just chuck them (ahem, dispose of them in an environmentally responsible fashion). Most folks want the big screen LCD's on their desk, and they're relatively cheap now ($150).

It won't be too much longer when we'll see old movies panning an office cubicle farm where everyone has CRT monitors – then we'll get the kids quizzical “Whazzat?!” prompts. The CRT's are bulky and heavy, but I like their bright and warm display. I keep one in the attic in case one of my LCD's goes bad. She-who-must-be-pleased wants the LCD monitor, so she gets the LCD.

GardenStater says:
February 24, 2010 at 12:15 pm

@Jennifer:

Consider this: When he played washed-up salesman Willy Loman, a man with two grown sons and success long behind him, he was only 38 years old.

Lee J. Cobb is one of those guys who was born looking like he was in his 50s.

Another one is James Gandolfini.

Tim says:
February 24, 2010 at 12:16 pm

Had Spiderman been made into a movie in the 1960's Lee J Cobb would've made an excellent J. Jonah Jameson.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 24, 2010 at 12:20 pm

Sam Jaffe always seemed the same age from the 30s to the 70s.
juanito - John Davey says:
February 24, 2010 at 12:41 pm

Spud:
February 24, 2010 at 12:12 pm

Juanito-John Davey:
Have you ever tried to sell or give away old computer (CRT) monitors lately? Any takers?? I have over a dozen at a remote facility that are just sitting in a storage room. They all work to varying resolutions, and it seems a waste to just chuck them (ahem, dispose of them in an environmentally responsible fashion). Most folks want the big screen LCD's on their desk, and they're relatively cheap now ($150).

NO takers on the CRTs – half were 15 inch, the rest 17 – 19 inch in various states of service. Called Schools, school districts, and churches. No one wanted them. In fact, in my youngest daughter's kindergarten class they were fishing for donated flatscreens this year. I had enough CRTs to equip every classroom in the school with 5 each. In fact I have six old Pentium4 Small form factor desktops, each with 512 RAM that I am imaging for the Kindergarten classroom right now, and those are just from my house. The problem with the classrooms is space. Small form factors and LCD screens solve the space problem, but at this point the schools have no $$$ (CA schools get 51% of all sales tax, and it's still not enough). Our school is the largest in the district with 700 kids, and they will be losing 6 teachers, and the assistant principal next year due to budget cuts. We're going from 18 kids in a class last year to 30 or more next year. You'd think that beggars wouldn't be choosers, but...

I recycle locally with YNot Recycle. They will come to your site and pick everything up – gratis. Even old broken copiers. They cleared out about 300 items for me in the fall of 09, and about 400 items back in early 2008 when we cleared out our old corporate building.

swschrad says:
February 24, 2010 at 1:00 pm

a reminder that it is I L L E G A L to dispose of old monitors by dumping them, behind a hill, like that hill. by this ravine, which seems to be half-full now. geez, get in, get in, lights!

most retailers periodically have free drop-off days in the spring, and best buy will recycle the old all the time. in Europe, it's the law that if you sell (or ever sold) electroStuff, you have to take the ugly old crud in for recycling.

in the dark.

down a dirt road.

because these guys don't have up signs so everybody knows they take the old stuff in.

RKN says:
February 24, 2010 at 1:01 pm

In some parts of the country I believe winter dies easy and early; here
it goes down like the Third Reich.

Here (Alaska) winter goes down like a call girl in rehab – reluctant, ornery, fighting to resist prior behaviors. Spring feels like winter tossing us a bone. The joke here is what do you do in Alaska in summer? Answer: If it falls on a weekend you barbecue!

Love this place nevertheless.

Chris says:
February 24, 2010 at 1:02 pm

“Lee J. Cobb is one of those guys who was born looking like he was in his 50s.

Another one is James Gandolfini.”

Wilford Brimley always looked about 20 years older than he actually was.

bgbear (roger h) says:
February 24, 2010 at 1:17 pm

Was Roddy McDowall the opposite of a Lee J. Cobb?

fizbin says:
February 24, 2010 at 1:33 pm

@juanito-John Davey

California class size of 18!!! I don't mean to be a ackjass (yeah right fizz) but at that ratio all the kids should be genie-uses, or at least know how to spell. Why, in MY day, the typical class size was around 36. It dwindled some after the T-Rex found the cave.

Morgenstern says:
February 24, 2010 at 1:43 pm

The only thing that ever creeps around my house at night is the dachshund looking for the doggie door. I think that makes her “crapuscular,” right?

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 24, 2010 at 1:45 pm

Fizzbin, you just reminded me of the schoolhouse I went from 1st through 6th grade. It was a village of 200 people with some kids from the surrounding township farms bussed in. Mrs. Voss had grades 1-3 and Mrs. Eakin had grades 4-6. I'm guessing there were about 15 kids per classroom. Imagine keeping order and a coherent lesson plan spanning 3 grades and kids with varying abilities to “get it.” It wasn't easy, and I must confess to having driven Mrs. Eakin to use the board of education on me a few times to focus my attention.

juanito - John Davey says:
February 24, 2010 at 1:47 pm

February 24, 2010 at 1:33 pm

@juanito-John Davey
California class size of 18!!! I don’t mean to be a ackjass (yeah right fizz) but at that ratio all the kids should be genie-uses, or at least know how to spell. Why, in MY day, the typical class size was around 36. It dwindled some after the T-Rex found the cave.

California passed a law (or was it a ballot initiative – can’t recall…) regarding class size when the state was flush many years back. Our rural school has been at the 18 – 22 class size for the past four years. The rooms can only hold about that many before it becomes unworkable. Kindergarten class this year has four tables of six kids. Should be up near 40 next year.

I grew up in the 70s in California Public schools before I attended Catholic High School in the 80s. Classes were always around 22 – 25 students. In fact my parents pulled us out of our neighborhood public school in the late 70s because the class sizes had grown so much that the school had basically become subsidized daycare. The City Schools in Sacramento had started a “Basic School” pilot program (Reading, Writing, Math, and tons O’ Homework). Sort of a Carter School Pre-cursor. So my parents enrolled us in that school. All the way across town, but worth it.

I guess I should start attending Mass more regularly since I’ve heard that the six year old Catholic elementary school at our local church is doing very well…

fizzbin says:
February 24, 2010 at 2:52 pm

Man! All this talk about school and class sizes has broken some of the plaque off of my neurons. I grew up in th ’50s (B.C.) and was educated by Dominican nuns. Those ladies were hard core cadre. My 5th or 6th grade teacher would often rant about the Soviets, saying we should A-bomb them all, but then quickly saying that wasn’t God’s way while she fingered the beads of her monster rosary. My 4th grade teacher, Sister Giovanni, used to make me sit in the tall waste basket next to her desk because of my smart-mouth. I’ve mellowed some since then 😊 I’m going to dig up my HS yearbooks and see if I’m right about class sizes.

Grebmar says:
February 24, 2010 at 4:35 pm

Walther Matthau also always looked about 30 years older than his actual age. How he ever became a star, I’ll never know.

Aleta says:
February 24, 2010 at 4:41 pm

Ah, to name someone a Motie is not an insult, especially a technical person. We “Motie” things here at XCOR. It’s a verb. And Larry and Jerry are aware of this: we have a photo of Niven in the cockpit of the EZ-Rocket, running one of the engines. He has a very large grin on his face.

Mark E. Hurling says:
February 24, 2010 at 4:45 pm

Well fizzbin, it sounds like we were (maybe still are) birds of a feather from the 50’s. I didn’t grow up Catholic although I did convert as an adult, so I only have accounts of those I went to high
school with about the nuns. My sisters had the good fortune of going to the local convent school in Beaverville where Al Capone was reputed to have sent his daughters in the 20's. Apparently the nuns there were a pretty tame lot. No tales of misery and woe from my sisters. The nuns in St. Anne's about 8 miles away, well, let's just say they could give Torquemada a good run for his money, according to some of my high school acquaintances.

**WatchWayne** says:
February 24, 2010 at 4:51 pm

All this time, I didn't know I was a Motie, except I guess I am some bas-tard crossbreed between Engineer and Watchmaker, since I am both. They got just about all the characteristics right, except that I am about a third "larger" than other Moties.

I am going to have to go to the library and see if they have that book!

**Borderman** says:
February 24, 2010 at 5:13 pm

First thing I thought when I saw the guy in the Black-and-White World picture was, “Hey, that's Marshall Lou Ramsay, dressed like a janitor.” Interesting how one particular role an actor does sticks with you, despite their very best efforts in other performances. Lou Ramsay was the Arizona lawman in *How the West Was Won* who helped George Peppard fight a running gun battle with the bad guys on a train that, the first few times I saw it in a genuine three-projector Cinerama theater, literally came off the screen aimed at my 11-year old head. Maybe that's why I remember that role first in Lee J. Cobb's career. His voice in the clip only confirmed it was indeed Lou, as we who saw HTWWW eleventy thousand times the summer it was released felt privileged to call him. Yes, there is a certain DeNiro element about him in the B&WW picture. Never noticed that before. Very interesting.

As far as playing Jewish characters goes, I remember his terrific (although brief screen time) performance as Judge Bernstein, in *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*. The judge literally saves the main character (Gregory Peck) from a fate almost but not hardly worse than death if you ask me. Even more prominently, in *Exodus*, Cobb played Barak Ben Canaan, head of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the father of Paul Newman's character, Ari Ben Canaan. I can't imagine getting a much more Jewish role to play than that. Moses maybe, but Mr. C. Heston of Los Angeles had sewn that up four years previously. Don't know if he could sing, but I think Cobb would have been a great Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*. There must be some reason he never played Tevye. Or did he?

Still, that train derailing in the Arizona desert and a flatcar dumping a steam tractor in my Cinerama-enhanced lap is fixed forever and all time in my brain. Lee J. Cobb is Lou Ramsay, Frontier Marshal. There's a poster cutline if I ever heard one. Good old Lee, shooting bad guys in perpetuity with his Winchester, much like the mote of Italian marble dust now in someone's lung that is enroute to planet Nivenpournelle in the Rigel VII system.

And it was a night light that kept the boogeyman at bay at our house. My grandad's solution for my vexed parents as I recall. As long as it burned, nothing could get to us (kids). Not even the bad guys from the train that Lou hadn't shot yet.
RickRick says:
February 24, 2010 at 6:28 pm

In that Italian janitor still, Lee J. Cobb looks like the bastard offspring of Kevin James and Robert DeNiro.

GardenStater says:
February 24, 2010 at 9:32 pm

“Was Roddy McDowall the opposite of a Lee J. Cobb?”
Yeah, him and Dick Clark, up until a coupla years ago.

A little weekend Lileks « The TrogloPundit says:
February 27, 2010 at 8:19 pm

[...] little weekend Lileks Yeah, I know what you mean: Cold day. Damned cold, with a mean wind full of hatpins – pure raw winter eternal, laughing at [...]
reading this? Really?
UPDATE on that non-MSG almost-no-health-risk sign I posted at the Stribblog the other day. Ready?
Now we know what it is: MASTER FLAVOR FOOD. I swear, English and Chinese are like apples and bricks sometimes.

I feel a bit guilty taking a hiatus here, because it's not as if I WORK in the sense that people who really WORK, er, WORK. I don't. It's all mental and it's all cerebral effervescence that trickles out the fingers. My gold standard for WORK is still my father, who ran his own business – hell, he still works, at the age of 83, which is possibly why he's 83 with a sloshing tank of fuel in reserve. He loved working, which I never quite got as a kid: it was smelly stuff and I didn't get it. When he got up in the middle of the night to fill someone's oil tank because they were out of fuel and it was 20 below and they'd been cut off of "keep-full" service because they hadn't paid their bills for a few months, I picked up on the irritation, and I certainly heard my mother remark how unfair it was that he should go out in the middle of the night for someone who hadn't paid. (There was also one night I remember clearly: someone had run out of heating oil, and they were keep-full, and my dad seemed to wince down to his marrow.) He worked because he came from nothing and took pride in the Something he'd built, and to this day when he gets behind the wheel of one of his enormous trucks and drives it hither, drives it yon, it all surely goes back to being a 14-year-old kid who was sent to a farm miles away to work for the summer for no money, just food and a cot, to take the pressure off the rest of the family. As he told me once: his twin brother was usually sent to another farm for the summer, but come Sunday a farmer might give a boy the use of a horse to visit his kin.

He always knew work; work for himself was something else. But the smell! I
grew up with the stink of gas, but it was never a bad smell. It was the Dad smell, infused in the threads of his Unitog shirt with RALPH over the big red Texaco star. He had lost his sense of smell by the time I was in high school, I think. Small price to pay for getting the contract to supply the lubricant for a local tractor maker whose Bobcats went all around the world – oh sure, they'd add their own oil and grease eventually, but when that little tractor rolled out in god-knows-where, it had Lileks Oil lubricants. Not bad for a fella who grew up with a dozen siblings in a drafty shack, eh? Not bad.

Then there were the barrels. The station always had a barrel field, and the bulk plant – an adjunct facility he bought at some point, and later defended at gunpoint – had great mountains of barrels, color-coded to indicate the flavor of Texaco oil within. He could pick one up if it was empty, but when you're a little kid you don't question whether they're empty or not: you see your Dad picking up a barrel and putting it over there, and it's like you have Hercules for a forebearer. This makes it hard when you know you're so far from Hercules status yourself. But still. I'm convinced this is why I do not, never have, and never will, have any interesting in anything Mario-related: all goes back to Donkey Kong. So the bad guy is the one who can pick up barrels and throw them around? Not in my world.

So that's work. I've never had a job that didn't have an element of Fun. My father's generation separated Fun from Duty, and while a few may have combined the two, most expected, and experienced, a bright line between the concepts. Me, I waited tables: fun. Had a late-night radio show: fun. Worked at newspapers: fun. I expect fun. It's a sad comment that I feel stress at all about anything, really: if it's not something I've screwed up through laxity or sloth, it's overreaction to the pesky deets of office life and the ego-jostle that goes with it. WORK is when you come home with your muscles aching and you lost a contract and the payroll's due and all the rest of the joy that goes with owning your shop. Me, I confabulate.

That said, let me undercut everything by saying I do need, and will happily take, a hiatus now. Maybe! I could be back tomorrow and will probably add some updates next week, just because.

I mean, what did I do today that was so dang-fired hard? Nothing. I got up, went to the office, wrote a script in 30 minutes, performed it; boiled down some headlines, stood in front of a camera, read them; went down to the studio to interview a co-worker about a Sunday piece, and since he's voluble and we're friends, it was just a matter of turning on the cameras, talking, then wrapping it up after five. I will admit with no small amount of pride that there is a certain ability involved in facing a camera and talking without a script, but if YouTube and the rest of the internet has taught us anything, it is a skill shared by millions, so. The fact that the skill may not be excessively common in newspapers is like saying that few journalists can extract a bullet with a tweezers and cauterize the wound: a few can, but there are many more outside of the profession who have the skill. So don't get cocky.

So then: other things, for a while. Back in a week or so. I'll toss up Comic Ads:
the Fifties tomorrow, and drop in for some open threads as well as links to the column; WORK must go on, bleat-hiatus be damned. For now: bleatplus is up for the subscribers. (Seems I forgot the last update, so you can now enjoy #4 and #5 in one swoop.)

And here's a small update to the World's Fair site: the 1933 Heinz Exhibit. Navigation is still hinky in this quadrant of the site, so pardon. Have a great day! See you soon.

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**225 RESPONSES TO *master flavor food for the goodness***

**shesnailie** says:
March 6, 2010 at 10:45 am

_@_v – and this is post 200 for those of you scoring at home... and if you're scoring at home... well... as the aussies say, good on you!

**hpoulter** says:
March 6, 2010 at 11:40 am

bgbear scores again – pictures of the Iverson Ranch, here:


are instantly recognizable.

**bgbear** says:
March 6, 2010 at 12:15 pm

If you ever visit these repeatably used filming locations, you get a deja vu type feeling you have already been there. The LA river and bridges is an example.

The last time I got the feeling was when I went to a wedding at the mission in San Juan Bautista and besides having not really having a tall bell tower, the movie “Vertigo” made me feel I had been there before.

**hpoulter** says:
March 6, 2010 at 3:14 pm

My brother-in-law, an English professor, grew up in Sacramento. When he visited San Juan Bautista for the first time, he asked a lady working in the gift shop “what happened to the bell tower?” and she blew her top. I guess she was sick of being asked. Turns out it was completely faked, like the imaginary and totally fake Frank Lloyd Wright house in North by Northwest. On my visit to SJB, I remember the livery stable in the courtyard, and other locations from the movie, but as an easterner, the thing that blew my mind was all the beautiful olive trees loaded with olives in the picnic area.
Mark E. Hurling says:
March 6, 2010 at 7:26 pm

It's alive, alliiive, aaallliiiive, I tell you, alive! Ah, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Shades of Gene Wilder and his predecessors. Oh, let's not forget Edgar Winter either. This has taken on a life of it's own. Love it.

I got to thinking about movies and places you recognize. The Sheen boys, Charlie and Emilio, were in a movie about trash collectors, called “Men at Work.” There's a scene where you see a trash can arcing over a front lawn and hitting the ground unceremoniously. That scene was filmed in front of our house. Not a memorable movie or scene, but . . .

juanito - John Davey says:
March 7, 2010 at 1:07 am

Now that Eddie Lileks And The Hugh Crusiers have returned, I'm giddy for a new blog post.

I wonder if a spring return to Disney can be squeezed in? Those are almost like reading an old LIFE magazine pictorial.

bgbear says:
March 7, 2010 at 1:24 am

at San Juan Bautista you can also look out over the valley and get a good look at section of the San Andreas Fault.

Jen in CO says:
March 7, 2010 at 1:32 am

Have a good break. We'll be here when you get back.

Grebmar says:
March 7, 2010 at 9:24 am

It's a Bleat, not a blog.

Tommy says:
March 7, 2010 at 10:15 am

James, you clever Boosterd! My addiction to your wry apercus is in full blown mode now. Sneaky. Left-handed. And effective.
But-must-not pay
Must-not-pay
Must-not...
KAHNNNNNNNNNN!!!

Tommy says:
March 7, 2010 at 10:16 am

Er.
Make that “Khan”.

Kim says:
March 7, 2010 at 11:15 am
A blog by any other name…..

I wonder if our host will come back all sunburned. Lord knows Hugh is so pale he would shrivel up in sunlight. This oughta make for some interesting bleating….

Kim says:
March 7, 2010 at 11:15 am

A blog by any other name…..

I wonder if our host will come back all sunburned. Lord knows Hugh is so pale he would shrivel up in sunlight. This oughta make for some interesting bleating….

madCanada says:
March 7, 2010 at 11:40 am

So who's watching the “hiphip hooray and ballyhoo" tonight? The only real question remaining: will Jim Cameron be presented with special “blue" Oscars, or just ordinary ones?

writeaway says:
March 7, 2010 at 1:36 pm

I won’t watch the Oscars, but I will watch the red carpet interviews, if it rains here in So Cal. It's amazing how much the interviewers can moan and groan about a few drops of water.

There was much bitter complaining when the Emmys aired and there wasn’t a covered walkway. The local interviewers were VERY distressed and mentioned it constantly, which was funny to me. On the one hand, I do appreciate the fact that after getting ready for hours, you don't want to get rained on, on the other hand, it’s not like you're being asked to stand out in a typhoon.

Grebmar says:
March 7, 2010 at 2:45 pm

Let's see, 210 comments and to my knowledge, no one has mentioned Hitler or Nazis yet...

Oops.

Grebmar says:
March 7, 2010 at 2:45 pm

#212 right here…

hpoulter says:
March 7, 2010 at 2:47 pm

..but who's counting?

madCanada says:
March 7, 2010 at 4:26 pm

I hope Cameron wins Best Pic, only because I want to see him make a great big flaming fool of himself … again.
Anyway, Avatar is a better film than Titanic … for what that's worth.
(Me, I'm rooting for Quentin! Just to bug “certain people.”)

madCanada says:
March 7, 2010 at 7:33 pm
Hey Bleatmaster … are you boycotting Avatar? Just asking.

shesnailie says:
March 7, 2010 at 8:50 pm
_@_v – the nazis are in the bathroom… just below the stairs…

GardenStater says:
March 7, 2010 at 10:11 pm
@MadCanada: “I hope Cameron wins Best Pic, only because I want to see him make a great big flaming fool of himself … again.”
What I'd like to know is how Cameron managed to get an appointment with Peggy Lee's hairdresser….

Lesley Hoisington says:
March 8, 2010 at 1:17 pm
How often do you write your blogs? I enjoy them a lot 4 6 6

Borderman says:
March 8, 2010 at 2:22 pm
@shesnailie:
Nobody told me there'd be days like these. Strange days indeed.

shesnailie says:
March 8, 2010 at 7:31 pm
_@_v – most peculiar mama!