

# Graduation part 2½ as promised

Okay, now that I'm back I will finish up the rest of yesterday. I mentioned that they had gone through one time practicing picking up diplomas (at least eight Patels by the way ☐ ). Once finished, they all had to stand up one last time ("and now presenting the class of 2008") and then practice filing out and back in again. By now, we were getting hungry so he finally dismissed us, but not without having a little fun with it. They had to practice standing and turning in unison as their rows were called at random. Those that did it well got to go. Those who didn't had to sit back down and wait to try again. About half made it out the first time. The first row took about four tries to get it right. As staff, we of course had to wait until the end, but I didn't mind. We got a free lunch out of it too, all students and staff. Not a very nutritious one mind you (pizza or hot dog, chips, ice cream) but still- free is free. We then had about 45 minutes to eat. Everyone ate outside, though I did go to the lounge for a short time to supplement my free lunch with something I had brought.

The afternoon started with- drum roll please- awards. Yep, third time now. Fortunately it was just 8th grade this time, and fewer categories than the last 7th/8th grade one. Then a few students performed songs. I wonder if they did that at the actual ceremony? Finally, we returned to practicing-filing out and in one last time then going through one by one with the diploma practice. They were actually handed something this time- a folder that turned out to have some instructions for the night in it. It went faster this time, but there were still a few name mispronunciations. They of course promised it would be slower during the actual ceremony, which I am glad I did not have to attend. Can you imagine the

sub note? "Must return at 7:30 to the graduation ceremony- half-day pay provided."

Well, that was pretty much it. They were able to go home then for the final time- the 8th grade was done in that building. Coming up in a few hours (hopefully)- a post about today. Not too exciting, so I may just skip it. We'll see.

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## Two Turtles Mating

Last Saturday while I was at the library, some of my other family members decided to take the little ones to the Ft. Wayne Children's Zoo. When they returned, the highlight seemed to be seeing two rather enormous turtles "going at it." Apparently, the spectacle drew quite a crowd. My four-year-old niece commented that she watched them wrestle. Following the spectacle, one of the animals could be heard letting out a great sigh (of relief?).

This story made me recall one of the most hilarious yet apropos movie reviews I have ever read or heard. The 1980 movie [The Blue Lagoon](#) tells the coming-of-age tale of an eight-year old boy and girl who were shipwrecked on a desert island following a shipwreck. As they age, the two (Christopher Atkins and Brooke Shields) make all kinds of "discoveries."

In 1991, [Return to the Blue Lagoon](#) was released which brings me to the review. Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert must have thought very highly of both films. Mr. Ebert recalled that the best thing about the original was "two turtles mating." The scene must have been a wonder to behold! Unfortunately, the *Return* featured no such memorable scenes. Funny how the glowing reports have still kept me away from seeing either

film. And where, oh where have the two stars gone oh where oh where can they be?

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## The Strangers

Such a busy week this week, we had to move date night to Monday since we have meetings every other day this week. So we traveled down the road to see the movie called [the Strangers](#), a suspense horror film. And I don't really have much to say about it. It was exactly what I was expecting, not a thing more. Lots of suspense, so the movie was good for that edge-of-your-seat anticipation, but there was no background about why the terror was taking place, which I would have liked – just a movie about a couple who are victimized in a remote vacation home by scary people with extremely creepy looking masks. And, this isn't really a spoiler because right there in the film's introduction they tell you that the main characters are not going to make it. So watching these people struggle the whole movie knowing they won't triumph over evil was kind of... well, I guess I'd say almost pointless. There is also another event that takes place in the movie involving someone's demise that you can see coming a mile away. So, while the film was incredibly predictable, it was good for suspense; it's not like I'd say it was a bad movie or boring or anything like that... Just nothing to write home about. [Liv Tyler](#) is not a bad actress either, but I'd have to say this wasn't one of my favorite horror / suspense movies. I appreciated the fact that it was done without the gore that seems to be plaguing many a horror film these days, but I really would have liked more story than just people getting terrorized by other people for no reason. If you like

suspense, check it out; it is 90 minutes of nail-biting tension, but don't go expecting too much. I like many horror movies better, including the [Texas Chainsaw Massacre](#) remake from 2003 to name an example.

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## Graduation part 2

Well, I was up a little early to find a job for the day, and I find myself with a little time so I will try to write this before I leave. So why a part two? Simply put, I subbed for 8th grade yesterday. Actually, the teacher does both 7th and 8th, but she was part of the 8th grade graduation. Why, oh why could she not be part of the 7th grade field day instead? □ 7th grade was either doing field day or a field trip. But 8th grade had graduation practice. All day. Oh the things I get paid for- did I really need to be there, especially since another teacher seemed to be filling in anyway? Well, it's their money. □

The morning was simple. Announcements followed by the students being called to their respective places. Once in the gym, the principal announced how the day would go, then we went into the rehearsal. They started with something simple- standing on cue. "Row one stand up. Row one sit down. Row two stand up..." Then random rows called after all fifteen rows practiced. Next they added the turn to face the outside to the standing. "Stand..1..2..Turn." Again, practice for all the rows. Next up was filing in and out. Or rather, out and in since they were already in their seats. They had to master the art of the square turn. Okay, so they were *told* how to do the square turn, and practiced it leaving, but there wouldn't be enough time to actually master it. Once we were out, the need for the teachers became significantly more

apparent. Ever deal with 350 restless eighth graders? Fortunately there were enough of us to handle things. Finally, once we entered again they were ready to actually line up and practice taking their diplomas. One by one, name by name just like Sunday's real performance. Only they had to stop for name corrections. At this time, they also had to practice sitting down on cue as well as listening for their cue to stand up, which was when a particular student's name was read.

Well, I am out of time for now so I will just post this first part of the day for now. Part 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  this afternoon when I return.

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## Ugly Or Sweet

Tonight's rehearsal was primarily focused on vocals and what blocking we have learned for the songs in Act I of which there are 10. It was almost as if I had stepped back into a vocal lesson reflecting on what I had learned years ago about sound placement, breath support, projection, etc. and alot of it was nearly second nature. After my song was finished I decided to wait and see how the rest of the cast was coming along on their songs. Amazingly, there were only about lets see (Jo, Amy, Beth, Marmee, Prof. Bhaer, Laurie, Mr. Brooke, and Mr. Lawrence, and myself) 9 of us there. I have yet to see Rodrigo at a rehearsal, but I guess people are busy and have other commitments.

I must say that the young man playing Laurie has his work cut out for him. This role calls for a range of approximately 2 octaves soaring to a high A on the Treble cleft, but I think he is doing a fine job... just needs to open up and get that

breath support flowing.

Some of the March sisters songs are fun and choreographed well once they learn them well enough to sing without music in hand and move around the stage at the same time.

Actually, a hard rehearsal but at least it seems that the cast is well on its way with just over three weeks to go before performances begin. The trip home was quite exciting with a lightning storm flashing all around, but little rain... so no ditchings ☐

[Little Women \(1933\)](#) 

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## Graduation part 1

Okay, thanks to today this will be a two-part post. See my next post for the reason. ☐ Yesterday I had the privilege of attending my nephew's high school graduation. He actually attended two of the same schools as I did growing up. One of those schools I have subbed at several times. The other one was the high school.

We arrived at my brother's house shortly before 11AM. We then waited for the other invited guests to arrive, Alex's grandparents (mother's side) and half-brother. It's a sad thing to mention that Alex's mother died when he was just six. His mother's other son was rejected by his father (not my brother) and so was raised by his grandfather instead. There were other issues at the time, but it would be inappropriate for me to mention them here as they are private family issues that have since been resolved. So, there were seven of us in total not including Alex. These days, at most graduations it is unusual to get more than four tickets. I suppose since they used an auditorium in addition to the gym

there was more room for guests.

So, at about 11:20 or so we were off, with a short stop at my home to put some ribs in the oven because my brother's oven took just this time to stop working. Ours is electric and so was pretty safe to use unoccupied for a couple of hours. When we arrived the entire front parking lot was filled of course, as by now it was 11:45, just 15 minutes until commencement began. There were people parking across the street and down one of the connecting streets. Fortunately for us not everyone knew about the lot *behind* the school, where the faculty parks (the front lot is student parking and, if they still use it, a practice "field" for the marching band in the fall). We found a few spots still open and we were set. We got out of the car and headed in. Nine minutes to go. We headed right into the gym, the three women (my mother, Alex's grandmother, and his Aunt) heading for the auditorium instead. Actually, my mother had been dropped off and headed immediately in. The other two unfortunately had to wait since the graduates were now lined up in the hall. We just made it. They were about to close the gym doors. We went in, then waited by the entrance for the procession. At noon they started coming in- some teachers in black gowns first, followed by a few students in yellow gowns I later found out were not part of the graduating class, just there to take charge of getting the rows of students standing up and lining up in turn. They were probably juniors. Behind them were the graduates in purple gowns. They headed up the aisle, passing between the teachers who had positioned themselves every few rows on either side. They took their places starting in the front and working their way back, 24 chairs at a time, 21 rows. Well over 400 students (many seats were taken by the teachers or yellow-gowns). Behind all of them were several rows of chairs for older guests. To the sides- bleachers. Once my nephew passed, we started to work our way to the bleachers, where we found some seats about 10 rows up. It was pretty tight. Unfortunately, throughout the time I kneed the

one in front of me a few times...

Once the graduates were seated, the speeches started. One teacher tried to entertain us with his speech, starting with, "This entire speech is plagiarized...". The principal had a speech about how he started with the current class four years ago, and then some standard words of inspiration for the young adults. The valedictorian's speech was a pretty normal well-prepared speech, and then another student, a cancer survivor (one of two in the graduating class □ ) performed a song he wrote on the piano/singing. He received a standing ovation. Finally, it was time for the long, drawn out process of the students coming forward to receive their diplomas. As their names were called off one by one, they showed a picture (of most) on the overhead screen. There were a couple of slipups, and I think there was a slide accidentally left in of a student who was not there for whatever reason. At first, people applauded after hearing their young one's (or sibling's) name, but that turned into just a single clap. I think the graduates got us started on that, I'm not sure. Several shouted out or whistled. One (only one thankfully) had an air horn. My nephew had his turn, as did a former neighbor I remember- I had forgotten their youngest was Alex's age. As they got to "P" I noticed there were seven Patels, a very common last name for Indian families. They were probably all unrelated too. I'm sure it means something, but I'm too lazy to look it up.

A final congratulation when they were all finished, and then we were done. We were supposed to wait until all the now-former students recessed before getting up, but that didn't quite work out. Once half had left, the bleachers started emptying. We met up with Alex and the three women outside, a few (more) pictures were taken, and then we left. Alex's brother hopped into the car with him, and the rest of us got in our vehicles in back. When we got to the front of the building, we were just in time to see Alex peeling out in

front of the school by a police officer. Nice. The car had no plates either... Should have meant problems for him, but the police were too busy with the traffic. Lucky him.

Well, we finally got back, my brother fed us ribs (which we had picked up, now done cooking), pheasant, venison, corn, and some sides. We talked a little, the relatives left, then I left. Day over. I should have gotten to this blog yesterday but somehow never got around to it. Now, you will have to wait until tomorrow for part two which should have come today..

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## **Doing the Locomotion...**

My youngest just heard that she was selected to be in our local High Schools Singing/Dance Troop. Since the mascot of the school is a Locomotive, they call the troop Locomotion. Over the years this has been an award winning group of young singer/dancers. The competition for spots is almost fierce. I always thought she had the voice to be in it, but I wasn't sure of the dance moves. She gets none of that talent from me, I know very little about singing or dancing (and I couldn't care less). I am proud of this wonderful young lady who tried out year after year, finally making it in for her Senior year.

This will give me one more thing to write about, as she travels to dance competitions, and does local performances. I know I'm in for an interesting year, and so is she.

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# Persuasive Speaking – How NOT to Make an Argument!

Anyone who knows me well knows that sometimes I can lack confidence. I suppose years of adolescent torment can do that to someone. But one thing I was confident in was my ability to make a good persuasive argument.

NOT ANYMORE.

After recent events as a member of our local theatre's "Play Reading Committee" I am wondering if when I talk I simply make no sense... If what is a compelling argument (point) to me is just plain stupid to everyone else.

You see, our theatre has a play reading committee where people involved with the theatre meet to discuss what plays and musicals to do for the following season. This year, to start, we were given the assignment of bringing a complete season (OR TWO – with dates & location) to the meeting and your reason for selecting the shows you named.

As far as I could tell, I was one of the only ones who completed the assignment in it's entirety. Some had just a few shows they would recommend while others had 5-shows for a full season and no particular order.

I brought in two complete seasons... Shows, dates, and REASONS as to why I picked those shows and those dates. I made sure to keep in mind the needs of our struggling theatre and the mandates which had been given to us from the Trustees of the theatre. These mandates were to do a show that involved children, pick one show where everyone who auditioned could be cast, and to pick shows which the audience would have an awareness of already.

The shows I named specifically were:

Bryan in Feb – *A Few Good Men* (or) *Diary of Anne Frank*  
May in Montpelier – *Phantom* or *Clue the Musical*  
August in Montpelier – *The Goodbye Girl* or *Lost in Yonkers*  
October in Bryan – *Little Shop of Horrors* (Cast ALL)  
Nov/Dec in Montpelier – *Miracle on 34th Street* (Cast ALL  
\*\*KIDS\*\*)

My logic was to create a season around a theme of “The Movies”. As many of the general, non-theatre lover, public might not know some core plays – almost everyone has heard of these movies.

I also placed a Christmas show (with kids in the cast) in our December slot, a show with a “Halloween” theme in our October slot (which could be one where we cast everybody), and a serious acting play (drama) at the beginning of the season.

I argued that as a theatre we need to do more to entice the public. Giving them something they already know is a key factor. This is why so many community theatres in large markets focus on primarily musicals. While a theatre lover may have heard of *Scapin* – almost everybody has heard of *West Side Story*.

Anyway, since we don't want to do 3 – 5 musicals a year I thought “movies” would be a good way to go...

GUESS NOT.

The latest meeting of the play reading committee has left me with no doubt. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT I AM TALKING ABOUT.

I have been with the theatre several years now and, not to pat my own back, but the productions I have been heavily involved in have been extremely successful from both a financial and cast-retention standpoint. However, it seems I make such a poor argument and such little sense that... Well, as the season begins to form I can see that NONE of my suggestions will be there.

It's not that I love those shows or anything. Anyone who knows me knows I would rather do *Assassins* and *Shear Madness*... Or even *Noises Off*. But the point is, what I saw as a persuasive argument (to get known shows in the season) seems to have been more of a pointless and non-compelling one.

It seems that my (obviously misguided) banter has become so apparently flawed that I am just getting ignored now. For example...

This last meeting we were trying to get any show that already had a director and solidify it into the season. I reminded the group that I was willing to direct *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Another member of the committee (a dear friend of mine!) suggested another musical, *Honk*. She suggested that she might be able to find a director for that one.

Well, the leader of our committee (who I absolutely adore – no sarcasm – love the guy!) says “I move we commit to *Honk* and put it in the season since we have a musical that someone will probably want to direct”.

I reminded the committee that we have two other musicals who people have COMMITTED to direct. *Little Shop* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. I asked that maybe we commit to one of those.

“No, I think it's too early to commit to one of those. Let's see what happens with some other things first.”

WHAT!?! The same person who JUST WANTED to put HONK (a musical of which he had never seen / heard) into the season because it MIGHT have a director said NO to putting either of the shows I talked about in the season for the reason of??

That is when I realized – I have completely devalidated (is that a word) myself. Apparently I have made so many bad mistakes and so many poor arguments that now when I speak it is just considered nonsense.

Oh well. At least I know now not to think too highly of my persuasive speaking skills.

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## Newhart Nightmare

These pregnancy nightmares I'm having are out of hand. Not only is my sleep interrupted, but the dreams are getting just plain weird! Before this pregnancy, I would rarely have dreams that I would even remember when I woke up, let alone have dreams so vivid that I'm unable to sleep after waking from them. It's funny how a nightmare can make one wake with such an unsettled feeling... I've had a few now where I wake up scared – too scared to even get up to go to the bathroom. And I can't explain why. Some of the nightmares are just plain scary, like the ones involving guns and violence. But some of the crazy ones that have me waking scared actually make me laugh later in the light of day. Last night's was a real whopper – seems [Bob Newhart](#) wanted to steal my husband's organs. He had a surgical setup all ready to go with dishes out for the organs and everything. We packed up our family and fled our house just in time, thank goodness, but the vision of Bob Newhart peering out the front door and trying to not let us leave was a creepy image that I couldn't shake for about 15 minutes until I did finally get back to sleep. I have no idea what caused this craziness to rush through my head at 4 in the morning. It's not like I've seen Bob Newhart anywhere lately; and I especially haven't come across a scary Bob Newhart – until last night in my dream, anyway. The good news is, scared as I was at 4am this morning, I'm now laughing about this, and I hold nothing against Bob Newhart!