

One... Two... Three aaand One... Two... Three

Tonight's rehearsal was full of fun. We had a visitor from an area newspaper who may also be of help in the costuming area. She was there to discuss the show individually when we were not needed in a scene. "John Truitt" and I happened to be available at the same time (it was not the scene in which we are part of). As I introduced myself to the interviewer, "John" said "I know who you are. You look just like your brother." Apparently, the young man is a self-acclaimed nuisance to my oldest brother at school by dropping in on him quite frequently with computer problems. Knowing my brother quite well, I doubt if he sees the teenager as a nuisance.

Part of the fun was watching people attempt to waltz as well as trying to dance myself. Then, the real challenge came: waltzing and talking at the same time. At least I only have one line to remember while I dance. Hopefully, waltzing will come back to me on Sunday when the choreographer joins us.

I also found a lot of other humorous possibilities as well as some very quick costume changes... how fun THOSE will be.

Choices

A few weeks ago, I saw a post on a website for a theatre that I have been looking at announcing their summer season. This week, I looked back to see if any additional information had been posted (audition information, performance dates, etc). Oddly enough, the [Wagon Wheel](#) is staging *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* as is a local [theatre group](#). My

experience with the show goes back at least 16 years when I saw it on Broadway. I was on spring break tour with the BGSU Men's Chorus which made its way to the Big Apple. In 1999, I auditioned for a local production; however, I was not offered a role. The next summer, a neighboring community group staged the musical. This time, I was cast in multiple walk-on roles. I actually was responsible for selling Jacob the coat of many colors. Later, I was one of Potiphar's attendees and carried a large fan adoringly waving it on him. Later still, I was one of Pharoah's guards and hauled Joseph to the King's feet. Being my first role with this theatre, I must have made quite an impression as the following year I was cast as Motel in *Fiddler*.

The Wagon Wheel is a theatre about an hour and a half away. The stage is quite interesting as it is in "a round." The stage is smack in the middle with the audience surrounding it. This would be a very unique experience for me as I have never before acted on a round stage. I have never auditioned for what can only be considered a summer stock situation. There are a total of 6 different shows over the summer (Joseph, [Brigadoon](#), [Nunsense](#), [High School Musical](#), [Brighton Beach Memoirs](#), and [A Chorus Line](#)). If what I feel is correct, each person who makes the cut will be involved somehow in each of the shows whether it be on or off stage. This would mean a neccessity for quick memorization, characterization, dedication, hard work, and more commitment than ever. Sounds like a complete drag to me... AAARRRRRRRRGH! That is funny. It sounds like a totally rewarding as well as professional experience. An open call was announced for SUNDAY(?) March 22 at Western Michigan University.

I know that I have a lot to do between now and then. I need to find 16 measures of an up-tempo song and a ballad. I have half of that. Not to mention *Meet Me in St. Louis*. However, I KNOW that that will not be a problem. I think I can prepare and be involved in one show at the same time. Especially if I

will need to learn to balance six at once. But if all else fails, I can always come back and audition for another production of Joseph.

My Lobotomy

I just finished reading an engrossing memoir entitled *My Lobotomy*. It took me a really long time to read it because I had to put it on hold since another book I had requested from the library came in. I was number 223 on the waiting list for the other book, so when it came in, I had no choice but to put down *My Lobotomy* for about a month. I was reluctant to put it down though, because Howard Dully's life story is fascinating. The book details a kid's life growing up in the 1950's and 1960's under the thumb of his 'evil' stepmother. As cliché as it sounds, there really is no better way to describe Howard's stepmom, but 'evil' is my adjective for her, not his. I find it very surprising and admirable of Howard that his memoir never takes a direction of self-pity, blame, nor hatred toward any of the people who were responsible for the trauma he endured as a child and young man. Rather, the narrative is written very matter-of-factly, and it follows Howard on his fascinating, though tortuous journey through the United States mental health system in the 1960's.

Howard Dully was forced to undergo a lobotomy at the tender age of 12. Basically, his stepmother resented him because he was a reminder to her of his real mother, his father's widow. So stepmother Lou was determined to get rid of Howard any way she could. When the lobotomy didn't turn him into a vegetable, she shipped him off to loony bins, insane asylums, or mental institutions, whichever term would best describe these places in the 1960's. This is a picture of an

anesthetized 12-year-old Howard getting an ice pick lobotomy:



Lou convinced Howard's father and a doctor named Freeman that Howard was mentally ill. Well actually, Dr. Freeman did not need much convincing. He was the 'father of the lobotomy' and was eagerly looking for patients upon whom he could practice his 'procedure'. The procedure consisted of sticking an ice pick into one's eye sockets and swirling it around – seriously. And poor Howard was forced to endure this 'operation' as a kid at the age of 12. His memoir details every aspect of his life; it's riveting, heartbreaking, and finally triumphant because Howard is now a full grown man who seems like a genuinely nice guy, especially given everything he's been through and had to come to grips with in his life.

The book starts at his birth and chronicles his early life with his doting biological mother; taking the reader through all his trials and tribulations with stepmother Lou, the lobotomy, his struggles with addiction as a young adult, and finally on his search through his medical records and the touching interviews he conducted with his own father about his role in the events that shaped Howard's life. The book also includes the many notes taken by Dr. Freeman after his meetings with Howard and his family, which offer a very interesting and unique perspective..

After I finished this book, I was curious about many of the things I had read about, so I conducted a little research of my own, and I found [recordings Howard made about his story for the National Public Radio](#), as well as some [more information about Dr. Freeman and his ice-pick lobotomies](#).. Fascinating stuff, and I encourage you to check out Howard's story – the

book is *My Lobotomy* by Howard Dully. Like I said, it's truly amazing to me that after all he's been through, Howard just seems to want to know **why** it happened, rather than **who** to blame for it... an extremely commendable type of attitude which is growing increasingly rare in this day and age and was very refreshing to read about. Thanks, Howard, for such a compelling read!

to DTV or not to DTV

Another political post in two days? Wow! What is up with that? Just this, for at least the few months local television stations have been pushing the switch to DTV in Feb 2009. I purchased my digital converter before any local stations were using any sort of signal strength on the digital side. On Feb 18 2009, the signals on all the digital channels should have been boosted to a higher level when the old analog signals were shut off. Our congress, in the infinite wisdom (sarcasm!!!), decided it would be a good idea to delay the switch. **ARRGH!!!!!!** The president will probably sign this bill. **ARRRRGH!!!!!!!!!!**

So instead of getting better signal strength on the 18th of February, I'll be stuck with what I currently get. I live out in the middle of nowhere (I like that, so I'm not moving) and I can't get cable. I live in the middle of the woods so satellite TV is out, unless I want to cut down some very large and living trees (I don't). So I'm stuck with the signal I can get over the air.

I did my part. I got my new antenna (the old one would have never gotten a good digital signal). I got my converter box. I'm just waiting to get all the local channels. 1 station

still hasn't upped their signal to something I can get. 3 others are hit and miss right now. I can only get 1 station most of the time. I was hoping to get all of them in the middle of February. Can I say ARRRGHH!!! again?

I'm really not sure why anyone who watches TV enough to miss it, could miss the fact that digital TV is coming. It has been forced down our throats over and over again, commercial after commercial (I was hoping they would stop soon). Now those will probably continue until some time in June. All because of a supposed 6.5 million people who aren't ready for the switch. My question is: "Where the heck were they for the past 6 months". Get your government coupon early we were told. Get ready for the switch was said. DTV is coming on Feb 18. Now we will get those same messages for the next 5 months... GRRRR...

The Federal Government forced this switch on us years ago. Saying we had to keep up with the technology. That started over 10 years ago. I'm sure that the way technology goes, there could be something better for transmission by now if somebody wanted to develop it. 10 years is a long time for tech stuff. Don't ge me wrong, I'm all for the digital TV, but this switch really should have been done a long time ago. I'm just worried that this will go the way of the metric system. We've all seen how far that went. So in 50 years will we still have analog TV and Digital TV side by side? I wouldn't bet against it.

Next-to-Indiana Teacher and

the Rosetta Stone



In a tale of adventure about an ~~archaeologist~~ a substitute teacher from ~~Indiana~~ Illinois (yes I know he was named for a dog, not a state 8)) a secret organization steals the famous Rosetta Stone and holds it hostage until a billion dollar ransom is paid... Okay, not really. In fact this post really doesn't have anything to do with **the [Rosetta Stone](#)** at all. The Rosetta Stone, for those who are not in the know or just plain forgot, is an artifact discovered over 200 years ago which aided in translating ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. From Wikipedia:

The Rosetta Stone is an Ancient Egyptian artifact which was instrumental in advancing modern understanding of hieroglyphic writing. The stone is a Ptolemaic era stele with carved text made up of three translations of a single passage: two in Egyptian language scripts (hieroglyphic and Demotic) and one in classical Greek. It was created in 196 BC, discovered by the French in 1799 at Rosetta and contributed greatly to the deciphering of the principles of hieroglyph writing in 1822 by the British scientist Thomas Young and the French scholar Jean-François Champollion. Comparative translation of the stone assisted in understanding many previously undecipherable examples of hieroglyphic writing. The text on the stone is a decree from Ptolemy V, describing the repealing of various taxes and instructions to erect statues in temples.

The [Rosetta Stone](#) I am referring to in the post, on the other hand, is a popular software tool to aid in learning a second (or third, or fourth...) language. Just as Christmas break started, one of the districts I sub in put up a huge list of days subs would be needed in bilingual and ELL classes six

weeks from then. I took three of the days. Starting last week, those days came up and last Thursday, Monday, and Tuesday I found myself with students who knew varying English from little to some. This district actually paid the big bucks to get this software (over \$250 per module, or \$550 for three- truly the Adobe of foreign language software, in that Adobe is infamous for [charging ridiculous prices](#) for its software) for their ELL program.

Thursday I didn't pay too much attention to the 5th and 6th graders as they used the program as I was working with one student while another was on the computer. This week, however, the 7th and 8th grade ELL students all spent an entire period each day (twice a week- I got both days) on this program and I worked with no one as they used Rosetta Stone so, bored, I watched them use it. Some of them were learning numbers, some were on phrases. The way the program works is it will say some words or phrases, four at a time, in English (or whatever language module you may have purchased), and show pictures representing the words or phrases. Then, it will display four pictures and give you one word/phrase. The user has to then find the proper picture representing the word/phrase and click on it. It's not as easy as it sounds as the pictures may look similar. For example, there was a set where people were starting to go up stairs, going up stairs, and just finishing going up the stairs. In addition, there were different people, say a man and a boy, navigating the stairs. The phrases then, of course, were very similar as well. I am sure there is more to the software, but this is what I saw primarily. The numbers were pretty straight forward, but there were some pretty off the wall phrases included. Sure, most of them were straightforward like the stairs example, but then there were some like, "The boy is under the airplane," "The children are standing on the table," and "The woman is sitting on the man." □ . I guess wacky phrases must help people remember. And by the way, yes, the latter example was quite clean.

Some day I will have to try out this software myself. Maybe the library has it? Surely I could never afford it.

Birthday Miracle

A few months ago, I learned I had a second cousin in Florida who was killed in a horrific car crash. She was on her way to a fun outing with her daughter when out of nowhere, a drunk driver (mid-afternoon on a weekday – not that there's ever **any** appropriate time to drink and drive, but still) who was going the wrong way on the expressway hit her car head-on, killing her and gravely injuring her young daughter. The little girl persevered, came out of her coma and re-learned to walk and talk. She was recently in the news again because she just turned 5 years old and sadly, she still thinks her mother is coming back. Her courage and strength is inspiring, so I'd like to share this clip of her on the Florida news. Please keep Summer in your thoughts and prayers. [Click here to see the news story about Summer's 5th birthday](#). And please, **please**, if you're going to drink, **always** have another mode of transportation set up ahead of time!

Keeping things random

I've written about many things. Family, friends, food, pets, acting, theater, movies, books, blogs, computers and other things I can't remember. Today I think I will write about something else, Politics.

Most of the time, I will avoid the topics of religion and politics on this blog and in real life. I've seen more friends almost come to blows when discussing these topics, so I generally keep them out of my daily conversation. Recent events just beg for some discussion.

I'm very concerned about the number of Obama nominees have trouble paying taxes. Not to just pick on them, this started me wondering how many Federal politicians have the same problem. The nominees didn't pay their back taxes and penalties (if any) until after they were nominated. If they knew about the tax problem, they should have paid as soon as they knew, or at least filed paperwork to get this taken care of. From everything I've read, this has not been the case. And the politicians doing the approving didn't think this wasn't enough to keep them from serving in their appointments. Heck, one has already been approved.

It seems to me, if these amounts had been owed by a 'normal' citizen, that citizen would have been on trial at least, and maybe even thrown in jail. And the politicians in Washington don't think this is anything big. Could it be that they also have something to hide? What would we find out if their taxes and backgrounds were scrutinized? This is a very troubling condition in Washington. They are the ones that pass all the tax laws, shouldn't they be the most careful in filing their taxes.

I guess this is one more reason to try to get a flat tax or even a national sales tax to replace the income tax. Make it real easy to pay your taxes, and even easier to find out if you didn't pay the taxes you owe. That is probably the reason we don't have an easy tax system, it would make it harder for all those politicians to hide there missing payments.

Grrrr... Can you tell I'm filling out my tax forms... ☐

Super (fun) Bowl

I am much more of a baseball fan than a football fan (see my countdown timer to the first game of Cubs spring training to the right). But I will admit that I love watching football; mainly because my husband loves it, and I love to see him enjoy things that make him happy. Oh, that and the fact that whenever he watches football, it's become sort of a tradition with us that he gives me excellent backrubs! So while I couldn't care less who won yesterday's Superbowl, (although I chose the Cardinals to root for because it's always fun to pick a team and scream and shout and get into the game) I did have a great time watching it.

We had decided to have a get-together; a fun evening filled with friends and food (too much food! We had to have pizza for dinner again Monday and will have it twice more this week just to get rid of all the extras!). Because I have 4 kids, I didn't get to see all of my favorite part of the Superbowl – the commercials. But that's ok, I'm sure I can catch them online somewhere if I'm so inclined. The ones I did see were pretty good – I especially liked the Potato Head one (think it was for tires). It just cracks me up when Mrs. Potato Head changes into her 'angry' eyes, hehehe! I also really liked the careerbuilder.com commercial with the moose head on the wall – I won't spoil the rest of it because I recommend you go out and find it yourself if you haven't seen it. I missed the newest E-Trade.com commercials with the talking baby, so those I will have to find because I always enjoy those. Oh, and I'll have to see the latest chapter in the saga of the Budweiser Clydesdales...

As for halftime, I'm not a fan of "The Boss", so I wasn't paying attention to Bruce Springsteen's performance. I am

glad to note, however, that he didn't incur a wardrobe malfunction ala Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson circa Superbowl XXXVII in 2004. Also during halftime, there was a special 3D event. We had picked up enough pairs of 3D glasses for the party at a store ahead of time (we actually got enough to last us until Superbowl L!), but in my opinion, they should have given a few minutes warning for people to get their glasses ready. We had ours ready because they did mention it in the 2nd quarter, but I didn't get a chance to get my regular eyeglasses to wear underneath, which guaranteed an absence of 3D for me. But other people seemed pretty impressed... I have seen the preview for Monsters Vs. Aliens in the movie theater and it looks really funny – I'm looking forward to that movie coming out.

Well, anyway, much fun was had by all. We had originally intended to make this a game night / Superbowl party, but by the time the big game ended, there wasn't any time for board games. Next time! And oh yeah, I should report that the Pittsburgh Steelers won the Superbowl, in case you're using my site for a news report ☐

Fun In A Different Costume Room

Tonight's rehearsal was extremely interesting and cut short because of our limited space. The stage was being used for final dress rehearsals for the production of [Steel Magnolias](#) going up this weekend. The community room in the building (which has been used as our practice area prior to the stage opening up) was being used by another civic organization. Our final option was to use the costume room. On Sunday afternoon

when I found out that this was where we would be practicing, I had to laugh. The WCCT costume facility is wall to wall, floor to ceiling, full of rods, shelves, totes, and boxes full of clothes with very little space to move around. Tonight, I walked into a room that was much larger and less packed with clothes. Maybe this was because it seemed that there was a fraction of the costumes present. There was still a limited amount of space.

Before we began, I met the young man who will be playing John Truitt, the “boy next door.” We have something in common: both of us are featured in a youtube video. And of course, this lead to the introduction by everyone’s favorite Liswathistani. This drew quite a reaction (a good reaction) from everyone there. I made sure to invite everyone to look up the video. “John” and “Grandpa” share one brief moment on stage together. One of the highlights of the evening was seeing “John” learn how take an on-stage punch from a girl. I had an experience taking an on-screen punch during a melodrama, In one performance, the hero’s fist actually collided with me... OOPS ☐ OOPS again, I took an on-STAGE punch.

By the time we had finished (early), we had blocked the largest scene in the musical and one smaller scene. Some good Grandpa moments in those scenes including a very lovely, tender moment with Esther... right before we do that thing that will be taught this weekend... looking forward to that ☐ .

Pets we’ve had in our house

I’ve said many times how many pets we’ve had in this house, but I haven’t really posted any pictures of them. Here is a

small sampling of the many different pets that have lived here. I am missing pictures of the guinea pigs, hamsters, bird, turtles, frogs and hedgehog. If I find any I will post them.

First up, Colin. He was my wife's "Hearing Ear Dog". Not formally trained, but he did a very good job at alerting her to sounds in the house.



Next the rabbits, the black one was Samantha, the grey was Clover, and the brown flop ear rabbit was Freddy.





And of course some of the many chinchillas we've had through the years.







Sorry, image is currently unavailable.



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