

Fun And Games On Boxing Day

This year, the extended family gathering fell on the day after the big day when everyone could fit it into their schedule with their other festivities. Get us all together and it is bound to be a fun-filled event. The hilarity began when my brother dropped his plate of food on the floor on the way to the table. He insists that he had both hands on the plate. I told him he should have had both eyes on the plate as well. Alicia thought that he was sitting on the floor in the hall eating instead of joining us at the table.

Lots of goodies are always set up on Aunt Sandy's table throughout the day, cheeseballs, cookies, candy (featuring everyone's favorite buckeyes) plus the home cooked spread featuring pies and a delicious meal and you do not leave the place hungry.

Chad had to song lead at mass at six so a bunch of us went and came back out. He did fine except that I think he should have practiced those later verses of "The First Noel" a bit more. I admit that some of those do get tricky especially if you are not used to them. The melody is familiar enough but when you are unaccustomed to the lyrics of all five verses then you tend to get overwhelmed.

After mass, many returned to the house and engaged in what I hope becomes a tradition: the euchre battle. Going head to head with my oldest brother is daunting anyway (PARTICULARLY, KNOWING WHAT A SHARK HE IS!). I am amazed and pleased to say that Christi?! and I beat Jeff and his rotating partners Dan and Carla 2- 1.

I also received a camera under the tree (let's see how long it takes before I lose THIS ONE ☹)

☹ Sydney in front of the horrible Eddie Murphy version of *The*

Nutty Professor.

☒ Carla, Dan, Sydney, and a surprise appearance by someone's handsome leg.

☒ Shelby (half covered by a mysterious appendage, Joshua, Jeff, and Elizabeth.

☒ Sorry Shelby... must have had the blur reduction off.

☒ Noah opening the Magna Doodle to which he lost the magnet inside the pen before the night ended.

☒ Autumn, Jason, Carla, Lauren, Dan, Alyssa, and Alex with his second set of Army accessories of the season.

So... lots of fun, love, and FOOD over the Christmas holiday.

Christmas Celebrations

I LOVE CHRISTMAS. I still look at the holiday with the wonder of a child. For the entire month of December, I still do believe in the magic of Jolly Ol' St. Nick but still marvel at the wonder of the true meaning of the holiday. I even have my sister wrap my presents and I do still snoop (ok, I admit it). After getting off work at 2 on Christmas Eve, the immediate family and their kids opened presents and had the first of three feasts throughout the weekend. What a haul! The highlight of my haul were two Scene-It games. I had asked for the rather awesome looking *Star Trek* edition the moment I heard about it and submitted a question to the makers of the game when it was being developed. I also received a pleasant surprise. I had picked up the Simpson's edition for my nephew

just after Thanksgiving. I unwrapped the one of my own for Christmas. I have played it with some friends and ADORE IT!

Midnight Mass (well, 11PM mass) was beautiful as usual. The past few years singing "Silent Night" at Communion have been really difficult. I am immediately taken back to the four Christmas concerts in high school singing the carol by candlelight. I can still see Emily behind the piano. I then went home and caught my sneak-in viewing of *A Christmas Story*.

Christmas Day was feast number two and a day typically set aside for watching movies people had received. We were treated to *Santa Buddies* courtesy of Alex. I was exhausted and slept through half of it.

More fun and merriment to come with the Swary family Christmas.

A New Miracle

Since none of the channels I get are bothering to show the glorious original 1947 version this year, I decided to spend my nine dollars on the *Miracle of 34th Street* DVD. There is a treasure trove of added features including a very rare 1955 broadcast on the ["20th Century Fox Hour of Stars"](#) of yet another adaptation. I found it very well done for the limited 45 minute run time. There were of course deletions from the original but there was one scene that was in this adaptation that I saw for the first time on the stage: Mr. Sawyer giving his speech on the evils of myth at Susan's Progressive School.

There were also a few behind the scene stories that were very informative:

- The filming of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade was the real McCoy filmed on Thanksgiving Day, 1946. This was the second parade given following its hiatus during WWII.
- Edmund Gwenn (who played Kris Kringle and won the Best Supporting Actor Oscar in the original) was Santa at the end of the parade.
- Many of the interior scenes for Macy's Department Store were actually filmed at the flagship store during the holiday season. WOW! Imagine the chaos that must have caused! An identical duplicate was recreated on a Hollywood sound stage in the event that some scenes needed to be redone.
- Both R.H. Macy and the Gimbel Brothers loved the film much to the delight of the filmmakers.
- The film was released in June, 1947. Fox did not want audiences thinking they were going to a film about the Christmas season in the summer so in its publicity campaign, scenes were carefully selected that would not draw attention to the fact. The risk paid off and "Miracle" became a hit that ran in theatres for an unheard of 6 month stand.

A holiday treasure that teaches everyone that "faith is believing in something when common sense tells us not to." Isn't that what Christmas is all about?

That Which You Take With You

Is only what you put into it. I don't know if it is the play, the cast, the character, the direction, but it is probably the whole lot combined into one that makes a production completely worthwhile. *It's A Wonderful Life* is so brilliant because it tells the tale of an everyman who is shown that one person can indeed make a difference to those people around him. I humbly submit that everyone involved in this production set out to and accomplished this in extraordinary fashion, Through all the hard work, goofiness, talent, and everything, each member of the cast, crew, direction team put their hearts into it and hopefully it came through in the splendid audiences we had each performance. If I made even one audience member hate my take on the "Evil" Henry F. Potter then I did exactly what I set out to do. As Mother Bailey so frequently intoned "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch!"

I don't care what show it is, how many lines I have, or how long I am on stage, I ALWAYS find it so Darn hard to break away. Two weeks were definitely not long enough for this show. I loved all the carts, pictures (Jeff's portrait *Chance of a Lifetime* truly captured the image of Stewart and Reed). Even the card addressed to "The Evil One" from my Traitorous Secretary was beautiful.

Now... a few tidbits from the history of the movie, itself:

- Lionel Barrymore (Mr. Potter) convinced Jimmy Stewart to accept the role of George Bailey, despite Stewart's feeling that he was not up to it so soon after WWII)
- Mary was Donna Reed's first starring role.
- Lionel Barrymore also played Rasputin (hmm... something to shhot for?)

- Instead of “Auld Lang Syne” the original ending was supposed to be “Ode to Joy”
- The film was voted “Most Inspirational Film of All Time” and “Most Powerful Film of All Time” by the American Film Institute.

So there we have it... the end of a Wonderful Show with a Wonderful Cast, Wonderful Crew, Wonderful Direction and Producing, and most importantly... **WONDERFUL AUDIENCE! THANK YOU ALL FOR MAKING THIS TRIP TO POTTERSVILLE SO MEMORABLE!**

I almost forgot about the donuts in the wheelchair. If you missed them they were something which “George” will take with him.

The End Of A Wonderful Show

Well.. “Once again we have saved humanity as we know it. And the good news is they are not going to prosecute.” (Anyone care to take a stab at that?)

Today wrapped up one of my favorite stage roles and experiences. Although I have become almost used to a one weekend run this year, it is going to be really hard to close the two week run of this show. The cast, crew, direction, producing for this Wonderful production was top notch. I got to work with two awesome friends I have made this year and a few others who were there at the beginning back in January. So thanks especially to Travis, Mary, Greg, and Dawn. Lots of laughs along with the hard work!

This afternoons crowd was superb! Potter kept drawing laughter from the crowd thanks to a few WCCT regulars. Such great accolades... seriously did I really deserve them?

“George” even mentioned that he had a rough time during our first scene together. But one of the crowd mentioned that I was spot on in every aspect. Vocalization, presence, command, total characterization.

After peeling some tape off the stage floor and helping load some flats onto the truck, I went upstairs to the costume room to help organize a bit. A picture was taken that I will let the photographer share and that is as far as I’ll go with that. Then, we had leftovers from our Friday night feast.

Closing thoughts in my next post.

A New Week... A New Goon

Well... Friday night began our final weekend of performances and this was another dandy. My goon had to take over the lights and sound, so I had to hire a new man. Good help is sooo hard to find. I am happy to say that my new employee did an admirable job... except for one moment when I had to crack the whip and prod him a bit faster by ad libbing a line. All of my friends and family who came tonight loved the show and again I was booed. As long as I know that it is for a good reason, then I think the jeers are almost as good as getting cheers.

After the curtain fell on our fourth performance, Mare led another small group on the nickel tour of the Huber. Including a few people who just moved to the area from Ft. Wayne where one of them worked at the glorious Embassy Theatre (I have not been there for years).

Finally, it was time to feast at the cast party. And what a cast party... catered Italian spread: lasagna, fettucini

alfredo, bread, salad, and (as is typical) more than enough desserts. Leftovers for tomorrow. We presented Trav with his director's gift of a nice copy of *Tom Sawyer* among other trinkets.

There was one minor technical glitch. Somehow, during the off time, the sign that magically changes from "You Are Now In Bedford Falls" to "Pottersville" became damaged and did not work for tonight's show.

Once again, thanks to everyone: cast, crew, director, producer, and most of all.. Wonderful audience members for another tremendous show!

Now Why Couldn't We Have Taped This?

tonight, the cast had a brush up rehearsal. Necessary when you have a two weekend run to keep it fresh in our minds so it doesn't become stale. Well... it may not have become stale, but it was far from sane! It was just a fun, goofy time something that could have definitely made the gag reel of the DVD. No sets, no curtains, bare stage, and a cast full of clowns. Mr. Potter somehow became acquainted with some tinsel while getting himself from place to place *sans* Goon. George couldn't keep a straight face while being raked over the coals. Clarence and Potter continuing their quest for world domination in the sequel... who said the angel gets his wings? What a Wonderful time! **Bring on the final weekend!** But don't let it end too soon.

I Could Not Hear Much Of What She Heard


Quite a switch actually sitting and watching others perform on the gem that is the Huber Opera House. Joshua had his Jr/Sr High music program tonight. Sitting in the audience, I still am in awe what a treasure we have in our neck of the woods and not too long ago it was an eyesore. Both the band and choir directors made mention of the gorgeous venue and the delight it is to perform on it (I could not agree more!).

I must commend the decision for both the Jr. and Sr. High bands to perform together! That takes some bravery. I asked Joshua how often they all practice together. They only had two rehearsals together and for that they did not sound awful. I did enjoy "Sleigh Ride" with the whip crack and the horse whinney! "Coventry Carol" was good, too.

From what I could hear of the choir sounded pretty good, too. Unfortunately, only half of the soloist's portion of "Do You Hear What I Hear" could actually be heard. Then, suddenly, the microphone was turned on. The final two pieces, the choir's favorites, were the best. "Sleigh Ride" again and a jazzy *acapella* version of "Holly Jolly Christmas."

Following the combined High School band/chorus finale, I stood up and slipped all around the floor because a certain 6 year old accidentally spilled her popcorn.

Check out the classy shot:

 Tux which the music department provides. Not sure how I would feel about that but now I think it looks sharp. It sure beats having no dress code and having the few who show up in

raggedy jeans and t-shirt (of course, SOMETimes that is no fault of the children).

Muppets Here, Too

I have always loved this holiday special although it has not been aired for years. I just found the entire special listed on [youtube](#). Here is my favorite piece. Happy Holidays!

A Short Intermission

WOW! This show is definitely number two on my list! The audience reaction each show gets better and better! We had 124 in the audience for a Sunday matinee which is tremendous! The boos get better and better each time! "We love to hate your Potter!"

After the curtain, we had our cast photo taken then we had to make room for another school concert tomorrow night by moving the sets and props backstage. We also had to take the steps leading from the stage into the house. Poor "Clearance" missed the low ceiling sign and whacked himself on the lip of the stage. **OUCH!**

I also learned of next season's attraction. It starts in March with *Curious Savage*. I told Dawn (who is directing and has been involved with each of the three shows I have been in this year) that I would love to try out but it conflicts with my nephew's Confirmation... sorry, Dawn.

Just in time for Halloween, the Village Players are presenting the immortal *Hound of the Baskervilles*. Perhaps we can encourage another Holmes fan to audition for that... hint, hint. I know I am anxiously awaiting that one!

Finally, the TENTATIVE Holiday production will be *Babes in Toyland*. That would be a LOT of fun.

So... lots coming up. But first... the second week of *It's A Wonderful Life*. Still not too late to check out the final three shows. Thanks again to the fantastic cast, crew, and director and the fabulous audiences!