

# Back in the day...

There was a time, when I was in college that I wanted to be a teacher. Specifically, I wanted to teach High School Math. While in college, I did specialize in computers, I took the exact same classes for a teaching position. For the first 2.5 years of college, I was sure I would either program video games, or teach High School Math. I don't do either of those. I'm not sure why I never tried the video game programming, but I do know why I didn't go into teaching.

It started with an introduction to student teaching. Not the full fledged student teaching, just 1 week in a 9th grade general math course. These were not troubled kids, just your normal everyday kids in small town Ohio. The problem is that they didn't know basic math. Things I remember learning very early in grade school. Other things I learned in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. Not any really advanced stuff. Things like  $33 + \_\_ = 72$ . They were struggling. By the end of the first class, I was frazzled. The second day in I was in charge of a lesson. The teacher prepared it for me, and I just had to study in the previous evening. I stood in front of a class of dazed faces. The day before, I was helping individual students during their study period, today I saw the same faces on every one of the students. They didn't want to be there. They had no interest in math. My lesson went as well as could be expected and the teacher was impressed by the way I handled myself. I was to observe the next two days, and design my own lesson for Friday. We would talk about it after the Thursday class.

The next two days were just really getting to me. I found that my patience grew less as the week went on. Everyday I needed a few hours just to unwind from 1 class period. I wasn't sure what was causing this reaction. In talking with the teacher, he thought I just had nerves from a public speaking encounter. I thought that could have been the problem. My lesson on Friday when Ok, I developed a 'fun' review of the weeks

lessons. The teacher gave me the thumbs up to go ahead, he seemed to think his students would like it. If they did, I couldn't tell. Stuff they were giving earlier in the week was forgotten on Friday. Stuff drilled over and over again the day before was missing from their memory. If it had been a quiz, they would have had some very poor grades. My nerves were worse that Friday afternoon. Yes, maybe it was speaking in front of so many people, I did have that problem with theater just a year earlier.

Then I got a job as a college tutor. Getting other college students ready for tests, quizzes and just helping with their assignments. 1 on 1 stuff, some of these kids were friends of mine. Trying to give them a heads up on some basic math. Same thing with my patience. It was all I could do to not throw the math books at a head or two. Why didn't they know this stuff? It is all so basic. Why didn't they learn this earlier? What happened to math instruction in the High Schools? What happened to basic logic? Hmm. No easy answers. But that was one of my longest semesters at school. I needed the job to help pay for school, but I really hated the job I had. I'd rather wash the uniforms of the various sport teams (did that as a freshman).

To relax I started spending a lot of time in the computer center. Computers didn't argue that they were right. They did exactly what they were instructed to do. The computer never questioned the rules. At the end of that semester, teaching was out and computers were in. I didn't apply for my senior year of student teaching and I knew that I never would.

And what was the straw that broke this camel's back? One of the kids I tutored had a section on some of the basic Algebra rules. The very stuff that makes Algebra work. It was the "Commutative Property of Addition". That old  $A + B = B + A$ . I tried telling this person that it was a rule. It was one of the things that made Algebra work. I remember explaining that there were just a very few rules that made math work. We spent

a good two hours going over this again and again. At the end of the time, I was asked how I knew all this worked. My reply was simple. It works because it was designed that way. The answer back was, "Oh, Ok". I thought that was the end of it. The next session, the student brought back sheets upon sheets of paper with many, many math equations written on it..

$1 + 2 = 3$ ,  $2 + 1 = 3$ ,  $3 = 3$ ,  $1 + 2 = 2 + 1$  ...  $999,999 + 1 = 1,000,000$  ..  $1 + 999,999 = 1,000,000$  ..  $1,000,000 = 1,000,000$  ..  $1 + 999,999 = 999,999 + 1$  ... and so on. I don't know how long this was worked on, but was a lot of paper and pencil lead wasted. All to say "I guess it works, I couldn't find anything that didn't. I didn't have the nerve to say, that this could go on to infinity and never give you an incorrect answer unless you added wrong. All I said was, "Yep its a rule, and you can't break it." I just shook my head. I guess I could have had fun and changed a rule or two. Can you say Abstract Algebra or Non-Euclidean Geometry?

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## **And now for something completely different...**

Ah yes, Monty Python. From a BBC comedy series, to full length movies. Then the comedy troupe went their separate ways, sort of. A few of them combined talents again in Time Bandit, A Fish called Wanda and Time Bandits.

There is a reason I bring this up, and it isn't that I saw any of the shows or movies. I haven't read any news on any of the members of Monty Python. I was skimming through the channels and saw a commercial for a nature show, in it was a python. Yep, that's all it took for me to jump to the comedy of Monty

Python. And if you think about their comedy, it fits. Off the wall and sometimes completely unexpected.

I remember when they were first on PBS, my parents did not want me watching that filthy British show. I'm thinking they only saw the beginning credits, and didn't know what the show was. I would try to watch it whenever they were out during the air time. I didn't get to see too many, but I saw enough to shape what I considered to be funny.

And now for your enjoyment [try here](#).

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## Winter is just getting started!!

Yesterday (Monday 12-Jan) at this time we had winter storm warning forecast for this afternoon into the morning and a Blizzard watch for Wednesday afternoon into the evening. The winter storm warning has been canceled, but we still may have blizzard conditions tomorrow. This is on top of the 8 to 12 inches of snow that fell over the weekend. It is only January. Tomorrow or this evening it is supposed to get very cold. The forecast is calling for single digit highs (F). Reminds me of some past winter in NW Ohio. Back during my Freshman year of College we had some winter weather that really closed down most of NW Ohio for days. People around here still talk of the Blizzard of '78. A local radio station has an annual on air auction event to remember that storm. It is the 30th year of that auction (started 1 year after the storm). A local PBS station produce and re-runs annually a documentary on that storm. I remember being snowed in at College and we were wondering if we would be able to get food

at the cafeteria. I also remember going out in an old Volkswagen Beetle equipped with dune buggy wheels. Classes were canceled for the only time in the 4 years I was at the school.

Then back in 1984, I got married. The day after our wedding (the night/morning of) set a record for low temperature that, as far as I know is still a record. For the next few years, the days surrounding our anniversary were always very, very cold (Highs were below zero F). We always looked forward to those cold days in January.

Then there was the January of 1993, I had just started at my current place of employment the September before. We started having work canceled (I work at a school) because of extremely cold temperatures. I felt bad taking off work and getting paid for it. I never worked at a place that canceled because of cold. My employer no longer does this, since we are not in charge of getting the buses running (Gelling diesel fuel was the cause of all the closures). After few years, I wasn't so rough on myself for those weather related closures, now that we don't have it, I kind of miss it.

So this year, we've had ice, snow and are forecast for more snow, blowing snow and cold temperatures. While I really don't want much more snow (Sorry daughter #3), I don't mind the cold temperatures in January. Those temperatures bring back many fond memories for me. January and cold weather always went hand in hand. What will we get in the next few weeks, who knows. Stay safe, stay warm is my winter motto.

For further enjoyment, the winter of 1982 was interesting too. There were blizzard conditions in April. 8 inches of snow fell overnight. My new boss, (I started in February), was on vacation in Florida. He was wondering where everyone was. I arrived at work around noon (start time was 8:00) and was the only person in my department. I had to travel farther than anyone else too. For some reason my boss didn't seem to

believe the April snow storm happened, at least not until he checked out the news. Massive Ohio snow storm did make the national news in 1982. Fun winter stuff.

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## Winter Weather Ahead

I'm all cozy at home waiting for a winter storm. We already have about 3.5 to 4 inches of snow on the ground with up to another 12 inches still coming. I realize that for some parts of this country, that is just flurries, but for my part of Ohio, that is a major storm. We just aren't equiped to handle that much snow. My guess is that if we get that much, there will be some level of snow emergency here. Oh well, I have plenty of food and firewood.

The house is very comfortable, I finished a wonderful bowl of stew, some fruit and a cup of tea. The creature comforts are here. I wish I could say everything was going well, but I'm missing an evening with friends tonight and my youngest is a bit under the weather. That, of course, is the way of life.

As I've said this part of Ohio is not used to this much snow. There are many High School basketball games being canceled. Dance classes canceled. Bingo Canceled. And the biggest thing that indicates bad weather, the outlet mall nearby will be opening later in the day than normal... Shock of all shocks!!!

Planned events for the weekend – canceled or postponed, but I'm home safe and fairly sound. That my friends makes a good evening for me. Now off to study my lines....

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## More on Blogging...

Today I was inundated with spam comments today. When I got home there were many waiting for me to throw in the spam trash bucket.

I noticed a plugin that is supposed to head the spam off before it gets to me, but I'm wondering how well it will work.

I didn't see a way to check to see what was being blocked, so I hope it doesn't end up blocking friends from posting, so I will keep an eye or two peeled for that.

I guess this means that my blog is getting attention from some quarters now. I'm not sure I like that kind of attention, but it does come with the territory. I can't really say I'm surprised by the spam or the contents of it, but it does surprise me that it has become more frequent. For the first few months of blogging, I got a small handful of spam replies.

I think I tripled that amount in the last 2 days. It all looks like the same site or type of site generating the spam too. Same type of message, same layout, same content.

Ok for you other bloggers, have you been recently plagued by more spam?

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## Polls, like comments

Have you noticed, our polls are just like our comments. So very few people access the polls, and very few comment on the posts. I know I have some lurkers (they told me), and others

that just visit.

Now I would like to get more readers, but our little corner of the internet does get a lot of action. I realize our esteemed admin would like to get more bloggers, so we have more internet traffic, but that seemed to get more spam like blogs. What to do? What to do? Me, I beg ☹ So this is another one of those posts begging for more response from the lurkers, but in this case all you need to do is fill out a poll. How easy is that? Or you can post comments on anything here that interests you.

I am lucky that I just post here for my own enjoyment.

[poll id = 5]

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## **Funny thing happened on the way to a blog...**

Recently I've been trying to respond to one person's blog, and I've gotten errors. Then I try on another browser and can make 1 reply. Then on to a third to make another reply. Then I have to log completely off my computer to make another reply. Just weird. Of course while testing all this out it looks like I'm making very weird comments. Of course, sometimes I do make weird comments, so nobody really notices the difference. ☹

But, I wonder is anyone having trouble commenting on my blog. Am I losing the opinions, views, and comments of others? I can't be sure, unless they contact me in some other manner.



The other thing I notice this past week, I'm getting more spam type replies. Since I do some moderation of all the replies, most don't get through, but I see them. I don't like them, they add no value to my blog. That is important to me. I would like this blog to be a place for me to share, inform, rant and maybe entertain. Both my initial post and the responses to them help with this. Spam replies do none of this.

Then I noticed that some blog themes like certain browsers better than others. This is to be expected, since some browsers handle the coding differently. It is my hope that my current blog works well with all browsers. It certainly works with the ones I use, on the screen setting I use. Input on what you see would help out.

Finally I started using a few polls. There is one poll on this site that I'm guessing our wonderful Admin put on when he was testing the poll plugin install. Here it is for your pleasure, and my education.

[poll id = 1]

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## **It's good to be the king**

But a prince ain't bad either. First rehearsal after the read through. It is interesting how everyone is getting into their characters. We have a good cast, and we already developing some very interesting personalities. Should be a lot of fun.

I have some verly good lines and good interaction with the other actors. As with all my acting experiences, I hope to learn something in this stage experience. With the actors on

stage and the directors out in front, I'm sure it will happen again.

Now just a bit of trivia, while the line "It's good to be the king" is not said exactly in this play, the sentiment is there. This line was said often in a couple of Mel Brooks' movies and one of his stage plays. Extra point for any who can name all three and another movie that used the line.

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## Browser wars...

I've always tried out new (free) browsers as they are released since the inception of a browser as a program. I remember the first Mosaic browser. Quite a change from text based newsgroups and bulliten boards. Text and pictures all at once.

Currently I'm using Windows XP and have Internet Explorer, Firefox and Chrome loaded to run. Most of the time I use Chrome, because it is just a bit faster to load. Firefox follows closely as to what I use most. I have Explorer just in case something doesn't work on the other two browsers.

So of course this lends itself to another poll...

[poll id=4]

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# Late night thoughts

I usually spend Saturday evenings at my oldest daughter's house. This is 1 hour away from where I live, so it is a bit of a drive to get home. We go late into the evening playing all sort of games, the normal game is some sort of 'role playing' game. The games are always fun for me, but that is not the focus of this post.

Nope, the focus is my thoughts on the drive home, and the 45 minutes to an hour I need to spend to 'unfocus' from my drive home. Driving late at night, I push my body awake. Kind of like a coffee kick without the coffee. I can just force myself to be alert, unless I'm really very tired. This comes in very handy on long drives, or other activities that need my full attention. It is a 'gift' I've always had. As with all gifts, there is a downside. It does take some time to unwind.

Anyway after all this, I was thinking on the drive home about where I am in life. I am an only parent, but my daughters are growing up. Two are married and out of the house, one is engaged to be married soon, the youngest is now a senior in High School, just months from turning 18. They don't need their dad as much as they did 5 short years ago. I've been a widower for 5 years, so in most peoples eyes I would be considered single. I won't go into the ins and outs of all the differences with this label, but for me, I prefer the widower label to the single label. I never made the choice to be alone, it was kind of forced on me. That in and of itself is enough for me.

I now know of some people trying to 'set me up'. Dating, while it has crossed my mind, isn't my main concern. I'm not out there looking. If someone falls in my lap, so to speak, I guess I wouldn't mind. But looking for someone to be with is not my primary goal right now. I have good friends, wonderful daughters, somewhat strange, but likable family, and hobbies

that keep my mind occupied. I've been busy trying to find out who I am. For so many years I was part of a well oiled team. That team got split up, and now I'm a solo act. I'm just starting to find out what is important to me. There really hasn't been any time to spend dating. I'm not even sure I want to go through the hassle of getting to know someone again. Never enjoyed that when younger, I'm fairly certain I won't now. My wife and I kind of just clicked together. Not from the first meeting, but within a few dates, it was like we knew each other forever. Spent 20 years both knowing her and getting to know her better, not a bad way to spend 20 years. Now, I'm not even sure what I would be looking for, but then again, I wasn't sure 25+ years ago either.

I was also thinking about my weekly gaming sessions at my daughter's house. Does this infringe on the time I should be spending with the two younger daughter still (at least somewhat) in the 'nest'? Do they need more of my time, or is this a good use of my time. I tend to enjoy the gaming, and it does relax me. Good point in dealing with the day to day troubles/situations my two at home can give me. I'm thinking I should just talk to the other 2 involved. Yep, that is the answer there.

Also thinking about how much time I should spend with the theater. Yes, I'm currently preparing for a show, I'm on the production board, I tend to volunteer for other projects. Am I spending too much time there?

Do I spend too much time blogging? Yes, sometimes I do. (like now) Could I use time better? Sure. Are other interests suffering from this? You betcha. But this is the place I clear my head, so I have more room to fit all the other stuff going on. Doesn't need to be a daily habit, but the clearing is beneficial.

Yes, all this and more went through my brain on an hour drive. Now I've relaxed and I'm able to get much needed

rest. Read through at the playhouse later this afternoon.