

Blast From The Past

Being a child of the '80's, I definitely remember the California Raisins – they were 3D-ish Claymation figures of singing and dancing raisins, mostly famous for their rendition of “I Heard It Through The Grapevine”. Thinking about this as an adult has me wondering if this was a successful ad campaign. I guess successful is not quite the word I'm looking for... I mean, of course it was ultra-successful in a sense; everyone in the '80's knew about the California Raisins, but did they really make kids want to eat more raisins? Later they began to do commercials for Post's Raisin Bran (Post only chooses the plumpest, juiciest raisins!), so maybe they helped to sell more boxes of cereal.

In the '80's, the California Raisins were celebrities and they had their own line of products that ran the marketing gamut: lunch boxes, stuffed toys, tv specials, t-shirts, Happy Meal toys, you name it. This is precisely the reason why I came across a California Raisin figure the other day at the thrift store. I had stopped in to get myself a few more little Halloween figurines for my front hall shelves (had an empty shelf after finally packing away the figurines of the bears playing baseball after the Chicago Cubs were eliminated from MLB's post-season – that is ALL I'm going to say about THAT!), and at this particular thrift store, you get a free Happy Meal-type toy with every \$2 spent. My husband and I did just spend 5 hours gutting out the girls' room and donating most of their toys last week, but I couldn't resist picking out a toy for my favorite little shopping companion – my 3-year-old daughter Disney. So anyway, we were pressed for time, and I found the California Raisin, so I grabbed him and gave him to Disney, promising her we would watch a movie of her raisin dancing and singing on the computer when we got home. True to my word, I loaded up youtube and found some great clips of California Raisins, which went over really well with Disney.

She giggled and covered her mouth, and then she put her raisin on the computer to “watch” the other dancing raisins. He’s been a presence in our household since last week, and of course her little brother likes him too. He is small enough so that I can put him in our “emergency” car box (full of toys, snacks, band-aids, etc) when the kids tire of him in the house (the raisin, not the little brother!). He even makes a great bathtub toy! So anyway, while resurrecting the California Raisins last week, I came across this cute little commercial that I hadn’t thought about in the 20 years since it was made. Enjoy this blast from the past!

Boys Are Gross!

It's becoming clear to me why little girls think little boys are gross. They have a point – little boys ARE gross. Case in point: my almost 15-month-old **boy** was playing on the stairs today. When I went to retrieve him, he had taken half of his diaper off, and... well, I really don't want to get too technical or disgustingly detailed, so let's just say that he had gone #2 in his diaper and that it was a precarious situation and made for a difficult maneuver to get him off the stairs and cleaned up without spreading the mess. Leave it to the boy...

Not going to comment on my now 5-year-old daughter's 'painting with poop phase' she had when she was a toddler – that was far worse, but just a phase. Our boy seems to live to get into things he's not supposed to, whether it be splashing in the dog's water bowl, dumping the dog's food (he does each of these activities 2-3 times a day!), wanting to play with wires, throwing food, smearing food, squeezing food in his fist, dumping drinks, playing in the toilet, the list goes on... BOYS!

Jon And Kate, What About The 8?

You may have heard all the brouhaha about the TLC reality show *Jon and Kate Plus Eight* that's been in the news lately. If not, a quick re-cap: Jon and Kate Gosselin were a young

couple who had a set of twins and a set of sextuplets, giving them a grand total of 8 kids before either one of them had even hit the age of 30. They filmed a show for TLC chronicling their lives with all the little ones, and the special was such a success that they soon found themselves celebrities with their own reality show. Apparently the sudden mega-stardom caused too much strain on the family, and the marriage did not survive. Amidst accusations of infidelity and other ugly, yet very public issues, the couple filed for divorce earlier this year. Scarcely a move has been made by either party since without full coverage from the media.

I watched a few episodes of the show back when the Gosselin's were one big happy family, mostly because it was interesting to watch such a large family function as well as they did, err, as well as they seemed to function anyway. But ever since the big family fall-out, things have been getting increasingly worse for the clan. TLC announced yesterday that Jon would no longer be a major part of the show, and they were re-naming it Kate Plus Eight. Ouch. There are millions of people who follow the plight of the Gosselins; there are Kate fans and there are Jon fans, and then there are people who are mainly concerned for the welfare of the 8 kids. The media has certainly vilified Jon, though it's difficult to determine how much of it he has done to himself. No matter how much the accusations about Kate's controlling and domineering nature tend to be proven true by her behavior, she is always able to appear to be the better person through her public statements. Maybe she really is the better person of the two, or perhaps she is more intelligent or has a better spokesperson advising her than Jon has. But whatever the case, one thing is clear—those 8 kids they created together should not have to be caught in the middle of all of this, it's disgusting.

The reason I decided to join in on the media storm and write about this is because of the latest chapter that broke

yesterday – when TLC kicked Jon off the show. His response? He legally banned all production crews from the house he still co-owns with Kate, where the children live and the parents take turns visiting. He has threatened to slap TLC with criminal charges if they come onto his property. He hasn't said whether this includes a ban on filming the children, but one can guess, based upon his actions, that it's no longer ok with Jon that his kids star in a reality show. It's completely understandable – many people, including child psychology experts, etc, were constantly saying how unhealthy it was for the 8 kids to be filmed on a daily basis. But Jon (along with Kate, back when they actually agreed on something) was always a staunch defender of the show and the fact that he and Kate had the kids' best interests at heart. But now that Jon got himself kicked off the show, it looks like he's decided that reality tv is no longer a healthy lifestyle for his children. And that's fine and even makes sense, but one does have to question his intentions when his legal action to stop the show comes the very day that news is released that he is no longer a part of the show himself. As a well-written gossip column stated, "Jon is acting like the kid who didn't get picked to be on a team for the neighborhood baseball game, so he's taking his ball and going home." Whatever his intentions, I am among the many former fans who just want what is best for the 8 kids while the rest of it goes away. But before that happens, I am very interested to hear the spin Jon puts on his reasons for his actions – all of them. He is giving a live interview on Larry King Live tonight on CNN, and I'm almost ashamed to admit that I will be watching (the midnight replay of course – there is no way this would ever take precedent over a new episode of The Office). Then again, why bother watching the interview when I know the "highlights" will be shoved down our throats for the next few days – or at least until Jon's careless behavior provides enough fodder to make yet another story...

Bee Vs. Me

Yesterday I became unwittingly involved in a duel, but at least I was the winner!

I was standing outside throwing out our old bread for the birds with my 3-year-old when I bent over to pick up some doggy-doo. I noticed a few bees hovering about, but there have been a lot of them lately, and I'm never too worried about bees since they don't usually sting away from their hive unless provoked... unless you happen across a bee who is a little off his rocker or something. So anyway, I went inside to wash my hands, and that's when I got stung on the back of my neck. Out of instinct, I slapped the little pest, and then I ran outside to get my daughter to safety away from the other bees. When we got inside, the bee was on the floor and still alive, so I triumphantly took it hostage. I looked up how to treat a bee sting (it **hurt!!!**), as well as what they eat – I had not captured the thing to torture it, but I certainly didn't want to let it go... I wasn't sure what I was going to do with it, but I didn't want it starving in the meantime. After finding out that it was indeed a honeybee, and that he would probably like some nectar before he passed away as a result of his stinger being torn from his behind (and implanted into my neck). I guess I just kind of wanted to see if what I thought was an old myth was true – do honeybees die after stinging? From everything I read as well as my real-life example (he passed away last night), it seems to be truth rather than fiction. So goodbye to the bee that stung me yesterday, and farewell – I'm sorry it had to end this way. The good news is, other than a marble-sized lump on the back of my neck, I don't have many ill effects from the sting; the pain is gone and the itching is tolerable. I traded my

story with everyone I ran into yesterday because who over the age of 30 still gets stung by bees? Surprisingly, it's more common than I thought, and not just something that happens to reckless kids whose curiosity and carelessness often pave the way to childhood wounds and ailments. After trading bee stories yesterday, I learned that a friend and her husband were stung by what they said were sweat bees while riding their motorcycle, but after further research and thanks to the Schmidt Sting Pain Index I found on Wikipedia, I've concluded that neither their nor my bee stings could be the work of sweat bees. Honey bees are more likely the culprit, as the pain from their sting ranks much higher on the scale. Since my husband found the pain index so interesting (and began looking up bullet ant stings on youtube, yeow!), I've posted it for your reference as well. Yet another thing I love about living where I live – we don't have all the varieties of nasty stinging insects as are found in tropical climates, and the ones we do have at least give us a break over the winters. I'm glad for that because after the pain I went through yesterday, it's going to be difficult to let my little ones play outside until the bees are gone – thank goodness this happened to me and not them! Oh, and if you don't cringe or at least wriggle your toes when reading the following descriptions of types of pain, there is something wrong with you!

RIP, Bee!

Schmidt Sting Pain Index

- * 1.0 Sweat bee: Light, ephemeral, almost fruity. A tiny spark has singed a single hair on your arm.
- * 1.2 Fire ant: Sharp, sudden, mildly alarming. Like walking across a shag carpet & reaching for the light switch.
- * 1.8 Bullhorn acacia ant: A rare, piercing, elevated sort of pain. Someone has fired a staple into your cheek.
- * 2.0 Bald-faced hornet: Rich, hearty, slightly crunchy. Similar to getting your hand mashed in a revolving door.

- * 2.0 Yellowjacket: Hot and smoky, almost irreverent. Imagine W. C. Fields extinguishing a cigar on your tongue.
 - * 2.x Honey bee and European hornet: Like a matchhead that flips off and burns on your skin.
 - * 3.0 Red harvester ant: Bold and unrelenting. Somebody is using a drill to etaylhisvate your ingrown toenail.
 - * 3.0 Paper wasp: Caustic & burning. Distinctly bitter aftertaste. Like spilling a beaker of hydrochloric acid on a paper cut.
 - * 4.0 Pepsis wasp: Blinding, fierce, shockingly electric. A running hair drier has been dropped into your bubble bath.
 - * 4.0+ Bullet ant: Pure, intense, brilliant pain. Like fire-walking over flaming charcoal with a 3-inch rusty nail in your heel.
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Mental Floss

CNN.com links to a blog called Mental Floss. Usually involving tidbits about pop culture in a top-10 format, these articles can be quite entertaining. For example, I came across a few the other day about fast food: [Who Approved That? 7 Food Promotions Gone Horrible Wrong](#) and [10 Secret Menu Items at Fast Food Restaurants](#) and enjoyed both of those. Note the NY Yankees reference in the failed Pepsi promotion in the first article (sorry Jamiahsh!).

Mental Floss has featured other lists in their articles that have interested me; of note is *10 Homeschooled Celebrities* (Agatha Christie, Mozart, Alexander Graham Bell, to name a few), *10 Things That Have Deflated the Macy's Parade*, and *5 Weather Events Worth Chatting About*. It's a well-written, entertaining blog (like this one, haha) – Just thought I'd share it!

Time To Blog...

I think I could use a Tivo. That way, I could Tivo Dr. Phil and watch it when I fold laundry – that would certainly be better on my ears and more entertaining than the screaming parrot. Well, actually, I don't know how Tivo works – I could probably only watch what I ~~tape~~ record (I grew up in the 80's – we "taped" our movies and our music) on the tv that has the Tivo, right? But anyway, I could pause it when someone needed a diaper change or help with something or a snack or a drink to be able to watch more tv instead of just never getting to commit to watching shows (except really good ones like The Office) because of my lack of time and my lack of Tivo. I wonder how much they cost; I have no idea. It occurred to me that I don't watch much tv anymore; a hobby I really liked as a kid. It's not a bad thing, really, I'm busy doing other more worthwhile things. But I do miss getting to watch Dr. Phil – my tv has been hijacked by the likes of Dora, Diego, and Max and Ruby in the morning when it's on, and I don't like not being able to watch the Office until it's available online. We try to watch The Office when it airs on Thursday night and without fail, all hell always breaks loose with the kids even though it's on at 9 and they should be in bed.

I got the movie Mr. Mom from the library for the kids to watch. I figured since my husband and I liked the movie as kids, we should show it to our kids – after all, they *loved* Annie (the 1982 version, the update is awful). But apparently Mr. Mom came out before the MPAA came up with the PG-13 rating – there were a few scenes (funny how neither one of us remembered they were in the movie) I would rather not be in the type of movies my children enjoy. At least we were able to skip over the strip club scene without them even noticing,

yikes. I surely don't remember **that** from watching that movie as a kid. Maybe there was an edited-for-television version... Anyway, all this got me to thinking that they should have a function for dvd players where you can edit the movie to play while skipping certain parts of your choosing. Maybe this already exists, but I don't know a lot about the latest gadgets and such.

Well, anyway... sorry for the randomness, just had a little time to blog for a change, so I just wrote what was on my mind at the moment! Maybe I'll check into that Tivo...

Outlaws And Hideouts Revisited

All of this talk of hideouts and outlaws (see my previous post about Robber's Cave) makes me think about a really fun card game we've recently discovered – it's easy to become a Bandits junkie!



[Bandits is a card game by Buffalo Games](#), and it's fun for the entire family. It accommodates 2-6 players and is recommended for ages 10+, but we've found that our 9-year-old daughter and her friends can learn it and play quite easily.

Basically, a player begins with a hand of six cards, and he

has 3 options on his turn: start a gunfight, draw a card, or stash loot in his Hideaway. Many shoot-outs and much thievery ensues until the deck runs out of cards, and players count their stash in their Hideaways to determine the winner. Those are the basics – there are many other fun cards that offer various twists on the game play (double-crossing lawmen and outlaws, booby traps, backfires, to name a few), and I'm just skimming the surface of the game; you really should play to appreciate it. I don't know that I've ever played such a fun card game (I like [Pit](#) a lot, but it's another type of game altogether), and each game of Bandits is unique dependent upon the number of players – a 2-player game plays out much more differently than does a 4-player game. I'd like to try it with 6 players, but we can never haul it out at game night since we always have more than 6 players. However many players there are, Bandits is definitely worth playing and highly recommended by this game collector!

Lincoln Legends Part II – Robber's Cave

Living in Lincoln Nebraska was really cool; it was interesting to be in the western part of the midwest and away from the Great Lakes region – there are differences both in culture and in topography. The story of Robber's Cave in Lincoln interested me for a few reasons, but especially for the wild-west themes; sandstone bluffs, outlaw hideouts – ok, so I've eaten dinner at one of Al Capone's old hideouts in the Chicago area which is now a steakhouse, but I was talking Jesse James-type outlaws... Hmm, interesting, old Lincoln had outlaws, and old Chicago had gangsters, there's one comparison...

Back from the minor tangent and onto Robber's Cave – the entrance is a now a sandstone bluff located behind a Subway restaurant. We did get a chance to visit it and found it quite easily, but by 2002 when we were there, it had been sealed. In the 1970's, there was a little old lady who would open up Robber's Cave for explorers who paid the admission fee. You would then follow her down a small rickety staircase and be on your own to explore the cave. I've read various reports on the internet about people who grew up on Lincoln and used to go down into the cave all the time – one person even talks of having kids' birthday parties down there! There are tunnels, rooms, a well, and even a natural fireplace with a chimney! There are also legends of western outlaws (like Jesse James, supposedly, though his presence at the cave hasn't been proven) that used to use Robber's Cave as a hideout to count their loot and evade law enforcement after robbing trains, stage coaches, etc. Before the outlaws took over, it's said that Native Americans used the cave for spiritual ceremonies. Robber's Cave also carries legends of being a stop on the Underground Railroad, an underground brewery, and a tunnel that connected the state penitentiary with the State Hospital for the Insane. Hmm, that almost sounds TOO haunted to be true – supposedly patients and convicts would use the tunnels to escape. Then again, when we were there, I did note the State Penitentiary within view of the entrance to Robber's Cave. And speaking of Nebraska's death row, I'll note that NE is the only state in the country to still have the electric chair as the exclusive means of carrying out the death penalty.

But anyway, Robber's Cave is a neat place, steeped in many decades of history. And the reason I'm bringing this up now? [Robber's Cave is for sale!](#) Well, at least the lot that includes the sealed entrance is for sale – I'm not sure if that then entitles the owner to free roam of all the caves or not if they continue onto other parcels underground. If you'd like more details about the legends of Robber's Cave, [this is](#)

[an interesting read.](#)

What's That Called?

A while back, a tangenteer (tangents.org blogger) wrote about a type of obstacle course based upon cause and effect relationships between different objects. You know, like the board game Mousetrap – a ball rolls and falls into a bucket, which triggers another ball that goes down a ramp, etc. I forgot what this is called (and who blogged it! Was it me or derek?), but I think it's a Japanese word. Anyway, I came across [this website for a Dutch department store called Hema](#), and they have an animated one of those obstacle course thingys using their products on their website. Just follow the link above and watch to see what happens! It's pretty creative, and I thought people might like it!

The Informant!

I haven't reviewed a movie on my blog in awhile – mostly because movie-watching was a favorite summer activity this year, so I saw too many to mention. I don't think I'm going to start reviewing them now, but today's experience at the movie theater (saw The Informant! with Matt Damon) is worthy of mentioning. Not for the movie itself – it seemed to be an interesting enough plot line, but I couldn't follow the entire trail of corporate deception and greed, so I dozed a little. And I wasn't the only one. The guy two rows behind us began snoring very loudly in the middle of the movie! It was

distracting, and he began by breathing heavily, so first we were worried about him (seeing a man drop dead at a Chinese buffet will make you a little paranoid). But then he started the snoring, so we knew he was ok; but then it became obnoxious. So we tolerated that for the rest of the movie, and then he woke up during the last scene with a loud "BURP!". Well.

We go to the movies almost every week and I've never heard someone so full of rude noises, including teenagers! I feel badly for the guy, but mostly, I just want to know why he paid \$6.50 to take a nap – the movie theater seats aren't *that* comfy! As for **my** dozing, it wasn't really a nap, and I was (mostly) entertained during two hours of *The Informant*. I don't know that I would recommend it – if you like to unravel these kinds of movies, then go for it. But I sometimes find myself zoning out, and by the time I'm back to the movie, something has happened or there are too many characters who look alike for me to be able to follow the plot, as both were the cases here. I did find Damon's character, Mark Whitacre, quite entertaining, as was the narrative style of the movie. It kind of reminded me of a Coen brothers movie – you know, greed gets the best of people, a plot to gain money unravels, and people get killed, except *The Informant* was decidedly less violent – rated R only for language, in fact. An entertaining two hours for some, but apparently not for all!