

Blank Slate

I've wondered about this expression for some time. I've always thought that it referred to wiping your slate (chalkboard) clean before starting something. I just finished a google search and found that it can have a deeper meaning or much lighter.

One thing I found deals with the whole "Nature or Nurture" question. The blank slate referring to a child being born with no thoughts or instincts and everything is learned from the environment. Too deep for my taste this evening.

I also found a rather poorly written (in my opinion) Harry Potter based story. Dealing with one persons magically induced amnesia. Yawn.

There were a few sites that used "the Blank Slate" as part of their name. Nothing that really caught my eye.

One or two political references to the Blank State were also found, and that is all I will say on that.

Even one reference to a Blank State Theater. More to my liking, but not exactly what I was looking for.

Funny, I didn't easily find anything close to what I actually had in mind when I formed those words in my mind.

So, since I didn't find what I was looking for, I'm going to have to think more on exactly what starting with a blank slate means. Look for further updates or add your own..

Thoughts in the dark

I tend to be up late at night writing these blogs. Recently I've been using my little computer light instead of the room light. This gives me just enough light to find the special keys on the keyboard that I don't have a feel for in touch typing. Working with computers for the past 20+ years has given me some comfort with the keyboard, but I still have to look for keys on occasion.

Anyway what I'm really trying to say is that I write a lot in the dark. With the darkness surrounding me, my thoughts tend to follow a different path. Outside of the little circle of light near the computer the rest of the room is dark. I listen to the sounds of the evening. The dog shifting in his sleep, the frog gently croaking in his tank, his crickets with their serenade until supper time. □ Even a daughter shifting in her sleep makes noise from the next room over. Trains can be heard in the distance. I'm sure if I would open a window, the owls would be audible in their late fall hunts.

For the most part I find the dark peaceful. My mind can wander where it wants. Thought of friends, family, ghosts from the past can and do fill my brain. I can think of many wonderful events in the world of science, theater or movies. Books may take up my time, and lesson my words here. This, I think is a way for me to rest. My dream state while being awake. I've often wondered how I can get by on so little sleep. I do tend to make up for it on the weekends, but I'm usually around 9:00 or so (believe me that is well past my 6:00am wake up during the week). Even when 2:00 rolls around, I find my self full of thoughts and a busy mind.

Tonight I still have thoughts running in my brain. Thoughts of strange beasts, and burning estates (it was a game people!!!) Thoughts of having fun with friends. Odd little thoughts that I need to work out. All thoughts in the dark.

Thoughts in the dark to lead me in life
Thoughts to clear my head and mind.
Thoughts of the here and now
Thoughts of the past and then
Thoughts that may take me to the light.

pass this way

Life is a journey, be it driving down the highway, or sailing the seas. Not always a smooth journey, or the most pleasant, but it is the the path we must take.

For me the journey is made easier by those who share my path. Our paths converge and diverge with others all through our lives. We call these people family, friends, coworkers, associates, enemies. Do the paths just cross, or do they stay together for a long time.

Pass my way, or I can go yours. We can laugh. We can cry. Most of all we can share.

Life is a journey, make the most of it, for we can't ever go back to the beginning.

Look back to see who you are, look forward to see who you will become. Life is a journey, pass this way with me.

Not much going on

Don't I wish!! At work I have a Major project again or is that still. I need a break!!! I've scheduled time off between Christmas and New Years, but that is still over 1 month away. Oh what fun.

Time... If I could save time in a bottle, and words could make wishes come true... (Jim Croce "Time in a Bottle") Again, something I would wish for. Just a little more time.

Longer... Longer than there've been stars up in the heavens... (Dan Fogelberg "Longer") Yep, longer than that and still.

Day... One more day, one more time, one more sunset, maybe I'd be satisfied (Diamond Rio "One More Day") But then again...

Life... I know I'll often stop and think about them, In my life I love you more (Lennon/McCartney "In my life) Like now maybe?

Sanity... I'm not crazy, I'm just a little unwell. I know right now you can't tell (Matchbox 20 "Unwell")
Sometimes life just goes that way.

Reminiscing ... The memories come along Older times we're missing Spending the hours reminiscing (Little River Band "Reminiscing") Yep, been doing a lot of that.

Why all the songs. Many with special meanings to me, some I just like the words, but today they all project just a little bit of what I am thinking. Much easier sometimes to use the words of others, when they match your thoughts.

Looking at the past

There are times I spend contemplating the past. I've done this most of my life. Quiet reflection on the things I've done, the things I've seen others do, what I could change, what I can't. Pondering the what ifs in life.

Then things happen, and I stopped doing this for a time. Contemplating the past was, to say the least, painful. Too many things happened in too short of time. The what ifs in life were overwhelming.

It took a long time to get to the point when I could look backwards without dwelling on those what ifs. But recently the what ifs have crept their way back in. As I've mentioned before, I think it has something to do with the turning of the calendar, but also with the weather this year. There were days in 2003, late October, early November when I was taking Sarah to this Doctor or that specialist that were unseasonably warm. Nobody knew what was wrong. The weather later turned cold, as Novembers will, and the bottom dropped out. A week before Thanksgiving we knew it was cancer. That date, that day is in a few short weeks. Sobering thought that. As with the early months of 2004, I now wonder what if.

Writing this help to clear my mind, as I so aptly put on my page header. The what ifs aren't so pressing. A futile wandering of a tired mind, that sorely misses its best part and partner.

Finding directions and making paths

Following a trail through the woods, you come to a place where you need to choose a direction. Which way do you go. If you are lucky you are following a marked path and there are arrows to point you in the proper direction. They give information on what lies ahead. If you are on an unmarked path, maybe you can get your bearings from the sun or a compass. But what if you don't have any of these things to guide you? What do you do? How do you find your way?

In a way, this is exactly what goes on in life. You follow a path. Sometimes you have directions, or a guide. Sometimes you have knowledge of the trail. Sometimes the ability to work things out. Sometimes you are lost. Sometimes the decision is too difficult to make and you are stuck, stranded and not capable of making the choice. There are times when you go back the way you came, because the path was blocked.

Without getting too deep into the religious and philosophical ramifications, there are many guides in life. Religion/God is one aspect. Friends and Family can also guide you. Your parents were your guides during the beginning of your journey. School and life's hard knocks give you knowledge and ability on your travels. But there are times when you feel lost, alone and stranded. How do you make the choice of direction.

Where is this going? What direction? None really. Just pausing to reflect on choices made, paths followed, backtracks taken, and the long journey itself.

The Giant Gila Monster

Your typical late 1950's giant monster movie. Huge lizard terrorizing a small western town. Strange accidents occur, people go missing, and we see a lizard and a very large foot. Complete with dark settings and 'spooky' music.

As with most of these 1950's 'horror' movies, they do try to write some sort of plot. Bunch of 'kids' in this are driving around in 'hot rods' and having all sorts of relationship problems. Money, family, girls you name it, they seem to have those problems. These problems have nothing to do with the giant gila monster.

First report of this monster is from a drunk (of course), and he wasn't in any condition to be believed.

Yes, a typical 'B' movie. I had a few laughs watching it. Available on IMDb.

Halloween and this time of the year

This is one of the strange seasons of the year. I've always enjoyed Halloween with all the ghouls, goblins and ghosts associated with it. But this time of year also brings to mind some very sad memories.

In 2000, just prior to Halloween, my mother passed away. In 2001, just after Halloween, my father passed away. In 2003 around Halloween, my wife was struggling with all sorts of problems that a cause could not be determined. She died before

the start of the New Year. Sad thoughts sometimes fill my mind at this time of year, and will haunt my thought through the end of the year.

Will these thoughts be with me 100% of the time? Not anymore. Time does, after a fashion, heal all wounds. What they never tell you is that you may not like the way you heal. Break a bone and you may have re-occurring pain whenever the weather changes. Lose a loved one and you may feel that grief sneak back in when you least expect it.

When the fall leaves start changing and falling on the ground, I tend to think a lot about my father. This was the time of year we spent cutting down trees and moving wood. We did this together because it made the job a bit easier. It is still hard work, but we were able to laugh and joke during it. Laughter makes light work.

Sunday afternoons, I sometimes find myself thinking of my mother. Sunday dinners with the family were always a welcome addition to the day.

There are many times, places and events that bring back memories of my wife. Watching our daughters is one of those events. While others see my features in my daughters, I tend to see their mother's features. That is sometimes uncanny.

The smell of baking apples, or hot cider remind me of my wife. Hot tea at night remind me of her also. I could spend days writing about all the things that remind me of her.

All of these memories, plus memories of other loved ones who are no longer with us, are generally good memories. They are, however, memories tinged with a bit of sadness. Things that won't happen again. Places in the past that just live in the corners of my mind. Sadness that new things won't happen. There are no new stories to tell about them.

This weekend, my youngest will be involved in her school's

show choir. They are giving a show for some group. I'm not even sure yet if I can see it. This is something her grandparents, and mother would be waiting to see. The stories of the show would be family conversation for a good long time. There are many voices that have been silenced. I miss their viewpoints.

There may be more "memory" posts to come, who knows where or when this mood will hit...

An Idea???

There are times when I tend to have brilliant ideas during my sleep state. I then wake up only to find that I can't find paper and pencil fast enough to get the idea down in a concrete form. So now I have a computer ready for me at a moments notice in my room. Sometimes this works, and other times not so much. I've made notes, sent myself emails to my work address, just to keep these ideas alive.

Now I will admit that I have a writer stuck somewhere deep in me. I keep thinking of plots and stories for murder mysteries. Not to contain myself in just 1 genre, I've had ideas for the old west, 30's, current, and some in the future. Some of my ideas for stories even contain aliens and flying saucers. My problem with all of these stories, is that the background about the time period, the crime, the actual solution (if there is one) are very strong and in depth. The characters never pan out. Let's face it they are just plain boring. After reading 1 chapter of a story, my late wife told me she didn't care who died or even if they all did. She was right about that. I've written over 20 chapter 1's. In each case, when I visit these stories again after a time, I find the characters

weak and uninteresting.

I may be a bit hard on myself, but when I read books, I usually hooked by the end of chapter 1. If I don't find enough there to catch my interest, the book is usually put aside. There are few authors, that I know through previous works that I will go past chapter 1 if my interest isn't peaked.

What does this have to do with late night ideas? Well most of my previous ideas were for stories, problem solving at work, or how to finish some project I am working on. So now I have this idea, it doesn't involve a story or a problem at work or home. It could be beneficial to me. A bit early to be certain, but that is how it is. No characters to develop, no computer problems to solve at work, just a plain simple idea. Hmmm, now to make sure I remember where I put it... My documents/mylatenightidea....

Game night...

Well it has been quite some time since I played Dungeons and Dragons. Even longer since I played a Paladin. And I found out that sometime between the time I last played one to the current time, the Paladin (Holy Knight) went from being a scourge to all that is evil, to a joke commonly referred to as Lawful-Stupid.

If you are familiar with the game, it is one that takes place in the minds of the players. One person sets up the location/world/adventure, the others take their generated characters through this world. There are many different types of "Role Playing" games. Some take place in modern times, others in the realm of comic book heroes. I've played both of these types and many more. My favorite by far has been the

realm of fantasy fiction dealing with Swords and Magic. That is the realm of Dungeons and Dragons.

I played at the time when many religious groups thought this was nothing better than evil incarnate. I had many conversations with them in my college days. What they never knew was that good generally triumphed over evil. Good characters of the "worlds" were generally more powerful than the evil. Good characters would band together and stay together more easily by the very rules of the game. Playing evil characters could be fun, but you generally ended up playing alone, or you hid your evilness from the others of the group. After watching many games, movies and reading a whole lot of books, my general rule for life is "Never work for the Bad Guy". That only gets you a really short life. In the realm of Dungeons and Dragons, evil rarely prospered. This did change occasionally from group to group, but for the most part the rules stayed consistent in this.

Now back to the Paladin character. They were the protectors of all that was lawful and good. And if played well, they could become the most powerful characters in the game. They would have the backing of their order, followers and religion to help conquer evil. As I was saying, somewhere from the time I last played this type of character and today, they became a joke in some circles. From what I can gather, and have seen this was true in a lot of cases. The people playing this character did not know what it was to be Lawful and Good. The character from this ended up somewhere between "Dudley Do-Right" and the "Super Friends", without the dumb luck of Dudley, or the massive power of the Super Friends. The name "Lawful-Stupid" was a good fit. Hopefully I can play this character with a bit more flair...

This of course got me wondering why would someone have a hard time playing a character that was "lawful-good". By definition this is someone who obeys orders, follows the rules, deeply devotional, regimented in all they do, looks out for the poor,

helps the needy and cares for the weak. All in all sounds like a good type to be around. But this was not somebody who 'blindly' followed the rules, or obeyed corrupt orders. They should help the poor, needy and weak, but not just by charity. Teaching them to fend for themselves, lifting them out of their need and weakness would be the best choice. Too much devotion to the spiritual can make you blind to the world around you. If you have this spiritual calling, it is best to share it with those around you, at least by example. Regimented life can also go too far. Being too picky about the order of the day, can make you miss out on opportunities to help others. Sometimes this can be very difficult, especially with peer pressure. Do you then scale back your beliefs, or follow them to an extreme. In either case you have warped them from what they once were. You are no longer a person of conviction, but one of wishy-washy behavior. In other words somewhat of a joke.

Now in the preceding paragraph was I talking about the game, or real life? I don't think that matters a lot. People have a hard time playing a Good character, and some have trouble being Good in real life. It is all in how we view the world. I am trying to play a "good" character in a game I get to play with my oldest daughter and her (dare I say my?) friends. I try to be a "good" person in my daily life. I'll let you know which one is easier....