

My life as a play

After watching "Little Women" from the light booth for a about a week now, I was wondering what kind of play my life would make. I know right now, if the author of the play knew me at all, it would not be a musical. Then again, some twisted mind would do that, just to get a reaction from me, or think of me rolling in my grave.

Anyway, would my life make an worthwhile play... That may take some thought. First off a good play needs many different features. A good plot is almost essential (there are a few exceptions to this). Engaging characters are required (my life has that). Some humor, maybe a bit of tragedy helps round everything out.

In my life, you can usually skip everything that happens at my place of employment. Yes, the characters there would be wonderful, but the plot, or day to day happenings are not going to engage an audience. Who in there right mind would want to watch people sit a computers all day. While I've worked in a number of offices, they are not like the sit-coms. To watch would be boring.

Now, on to the rest of my life. For most of it I am a father of 4 daughters. I'm thinking the play could be written around the marriages of each. While only two are married, I think if the weddings progress in any way, there may be a story to tell.

So for this I've developed a cast of characters...

Father

Daughter 1

Daughter 2

Daughter 3

Daughter 4

Son-in-Law 1

Son-in-Law 2

Son-in-Law 3

Son-in-Law 4

GrandMother

GrandFather

Various other family members needed to round out the story (I'll let the writer worry about this, and any directors worry about the huge cast size ☐).

Act 1 – Wedding 1

Widowed father joins rest of males of the wedding party in wearing a Kilt. Is the groom late? Will the bride ever calm down? Will the music play? Will the wind blow and we find exactly what is worn under Kilts? It was an interesting day.

Act 2 – Wedding 2

Widowed father drives across many states to get to second daughter's Florida Wedding, in AUGUST!!! It is hot, and muggy, and the wedding is outside. Will the alligator in the pond climb up on the dock! There is no electricity by the dock for the wedding. The batteries in the boombox are dead. Play the music from a Car? Who will pass out? Who will get a sunburn? Who gets bitten by the gator?

Act 3 – Wedding 3

Not sure on this it hasn't happened yet. Star Wars theme and the Wookie Best man trips on his own fur? Lord of Rings theme and the Orcs attack during service. Take your pick, or it may be something else.

Act 4 – Wedding 4

Let's leave this one in the future. Dream like. It hasn't happened either, but as the father, I can't think of my baby girl getting married just yet...

And then again maybe the play of my life would not be these weddings/future weddings.

Maybe a play about my married life? The fun and warmth of the early years. Kids growing up, the bond between two people growing stronger. Tragic death, grief, and finally growth continuation of life.

May be too much of a downer for some...

And lastly, my life as a member of a community theater. The follies of live performance. Things not working in the light booth, problems of set building. This may not have a wide audience, but any person who ever acted in, directed, helped put on a community theater play may get a kick out of it.

Well, it was fun thinking of this anyway. There may not be a play ever written about my life, but I know that everyone's life is a stage. We perform live everyday. We are the actors, and the audience.

Give it your best, people are watching...

Coffee nerdiness

Yes, I'm a coffee nerd. I like good strong full bodied coffee. I of course have my favorite roasts, beans, blends, and coffee shops. But I really want to talk about the coffee shop experience. Today, a lot of people consider Starbucks to be the coffee shop of all coffee shops. They are almost everywhere. I will admit that their marketing is wonderful. They've taken the country by storm. Their coffee is good, but by no means is it the peak of coffee perfection. Their shops are nice and clean, but they are missing a little bit of charm.

Now to go back a few years, about 11 or so, to when I knew nothing about coffee. If you called it coffee and it was hot, I would drink it. At that time, my youngest daughter was in Kindergarten, the oldest was 15. My wife and I needed someplace to go to start re-connecting with each other. The children were all growing up, and didn't need quite as much attention. We also had a built in babysitter. So we started to look around for something we could do together, but wouldn't break the bank. We found a little coffee shop. It was a charming little place where we could get a light lunch, or a desert, or just a cup of coffee or tea. We started going week after week, sometimes more than once a week. From that time on, we would even look for coffee shops on our vacations.

The local coffee shop (before Starbucks was a nationwide brand) was a place to find good coffee and good friends. It was a gathering place. In some places you would find little reading corners. Some shops would have music, some poetry readings. Some places to play chess or backgammon. But in everyone there was a place to meet people and talk. They was always a quite corner you could go to even when the place was busy at the early morning rush. They were places designed to slow down, smell the baked goods, and of course the coffee.

Then we get the fast food of coffee shops, the national brands. A hurry-up kind of place where people seem to be full of caffeine before they have their first cup of coffee. The coffee may be good, but the atmosphere suffers.

One of my daughter worked in 'our' little coffee shop, and it closed shortly after she graduated from college. Just two short years after my wife died. I still miss that atmosphere. There are other places to get coffee in the area. For a time there was even a shop that had a bit of atmosphere. But in today's world those places seem to be few and far between. You can find them if you look, but you do have to look. It may not be a coffee shop, it may be a little restaurant, or donut shop, maybe even a candy shop, or an old soda fountain. There

are places to find, where you can slow down to smell the coffee, or the roses, but always smell and experience the sweet breath of life itself.

Another dream sticks all day

Two dreams stuck with me all day in a very short time. This could be an indication that I'm sleeping better, or just my mind needing to work things out. Not sure if anyone got much out of the last dream but since I started blogging to clear my mind, here it is.

Started out as a very mundane dream, I'm driving my daughters (all four of them for some reason) to some University. The name of the University was never brought up, but we were going there to install the youngest in her first dorm room.

While driving I suddenly knew I was going to California. This was because we drove across the old "Iron" bridge around home. The one that "C" would never drive across. For some reason the story of "C" never driving across that bridge made us all laugh. (Side note – This bridge no longer exists in real life, in fact it was torn down well before "C" moved to the area, he never saw it.)

So in California we start setting up the youngest in her dorm room. All the girls are having great fun trying to decorate the room to make it seem a little like home. I tell the girls that since we are there and have a bit of time to spend together we should do a little site seeing. We come across an arts and crafts fair in the city the college is located. Now for some reason, the three oldest girls are no longer in the dream. I'm with my youngest still getting ready for school and her mother and we are touring the arts/crafts fair. Now to

steal a line from Dickens, Her Mother “was dead to begin with... this you must remember”... This of course did not seem at all weird in the dream, it was only when I woke up that I remembered that.

Well the three of us our touring the crafts and my dear wife takes us to her table. She always wanted to do a craft table in such a fair, but we never did get around to it. All of her various needle work/sewing, knitting, crocheting were on the table. There were things I remembered, and new things I never saw before.

We are really enjoying ourselves when my wife says it is time to get “B” ready for college.

Here I wake up suddenly. It is almost time to leave to get my daughter to her ACT test. No alarm has rung, and my daughter is still asleep. I wake her up and we get to the test in plenty of time... And still the dream is with me...

Kermit, Fozzy and the rest of the gang

For the last 3 years, Muppet Show has been releasing full seasons of there show. Last Tuesday they released Season 3. I have yet to watch it, but I will. While the show was on during the late 70s and early 80’s, I used to watch these show in reruns with my wife. They were a favorite show of ours. Sometime in the 90’s the Best of the Muppets were released on DVD’s. We were able to enjoy them again. Not all the shows were released. I have seen some of my favorites in season 1 and 2. I hope there will be more favorites in season 3.

Watching the Muppets now bring me a good feeling. This was not always the case. I'm glad that the first season came out when it did. Any earlier, I would never have been able to watch the first season, I would have skipped over that DVD in the store, and then probably wouldn't have picked up seasons 2 and 3. Sometimes things happen at just the right time. They came out the time I needed them. After I watch a few, I'll get into all the things we liked about them Muppets. Right now it is a time of quite reflection for me.

Now on to other thoughts...

My youngest is growing up, she is now a Junior in High School, and in her Second to last High School play. She only had a small role, but to me she was the loveliest lady in waiting on stage. I tried to follow her every time she appeared on stage, and every time I felt a pain in my heart. This is another one of those times when I hate being a widower. Her mother should have been there to watch this.

This is not the first show my dear wife hasn't been to, and knowing my daughters it will not be the last. It startles me every time I watch them perform. Every time I feel that same sadness in my heart. Knowing it will come doesn't seem to help much. While I don't break down into tears much anymore, the emptiness is still very real. I can't be both parents, I can only be the Dad. I try my best, but that isn't always good enough, at least not for me. Not a lot more to say on this right now as I wonder what the next time will bring.

Fires in Florida

One of my daughters lives in Florida with her husband and kids. This weekend, on Mother's Day, some wildfires started in their part of the state. By Monday, their town was hit with fires. Sections of I-95 were closed due to heavy smoke. Monday night I was on-line looking for maps of the exact locations of said fires, and seeing if any area near them was being evacuated.

There are many things a parent worries about when it comes to his/her children. When they are younger it is how much they get to eat, how much they sleep, why they are crying, what hurts, why does it hurt, are they sick, ect. When they get older there are different things to worry about. School, sports, friends, drugs, ect. When they move out, most of the time you can put worry behind you. Until of course something big happens where they live.

Accidents in the area they live in, with cars that look similar to what they drive are seen on the news. Fires in their apartment complex. And then any other acts of nature, in this case droughts and wildfires.

For the better part of the day, I was more than a bit concerned about my 'little girl' and her family. I finally got another phone call saying that all the fires are contained. A relief was felt.

The other part of this, is that I am an ONLY parent. I emphasized the 'only' for a reason. On this earth, there is no other parent than me. This is a huge responsibility. I don't have an Ex who can share some of the burden (I burden I gladly took by the way). No one to share ideas with. No one to complain about the kids too. I tend to internalize all of this, for better or worse. I know my girls can see it most of the time, but I'm not sure about the rest of the world. Even

as the children grow older, and need a parent less and less, the worries still come. There are times when I wish I wasn't on my own in this. Fires scant miles from where one of your children is, is exactly one of those times

Talking about the sunset

I don't know if anyone noticed the sunset I have on my blog page. This is a picture I took years ago on a late winter or early spring day (notice lack of leaves). This was taken on one of those old Sony cameras with the floppy disk to store the pictures, and also one of my early attempts at using the camera. I had 3 floppies of sunset pictures, this was one of the last and happened to be the best one. 1024×768 Jpeg file with a size of 110 Kb.

You may ask why I'm explaining all this today. I would ask that if I didn't already know the answer. So I'll tell you.

This picture was one of my wife's favorites. She put it on our computer as the wallpaper (until she took many pictures of her chinchillas). I was happy that she liked my first attempt at digital photography. Anyway I now use this picture on almost everything that needs my personal stamp. I have it on my computer wallpaper, my cell phone wallpaper, I panel on the front of my laptop has this picture and so on. It is one little memory I have of the good times I had with my wife. And it is a picture in our woods that we purchased (a long way around) from my parents. It was my mother's wish to live in the woods as long as I can remember. When I was in High School, she finally got her wish. So that picture also reminds me of my mother.

So for the two mothers in my life that I have lost, and for

all other moms reading ... Happy Mother's Day.

Reading a speech

Quite a few years ago my wife gave a speech about being hard of hearing. I found her hand written speech today. I wasn't looking for it, but I was cleaning out a drawer looking for an old "Windows" disk. For those who know me and my safe places, it is amazing that I found the disk.

Anyway, today I held in my hands something my wife wrote. That is a very strange feeling. In reading her words, I can hear her voice, I can see her smile at certain parts of the speech. I can even see parts of this speech where I'm quite certain her anger/disappointment would show through. I never saw her give this speech, but I did today.

From her speech these words I remember because they were said more than once.

[Quote from SJ0]

... Over the years I have become quite adept at conversation by reading lips and body language, anticipating what will be said, filling in blank spaces in a sentence with the correct word or phrase based on subject matter, number of syllables in the words, and placement in the sentence.

Certainly, I am wrong frequently. This causes embarrassment and confusion, but the alternative is silence – no conversing because of fearing embarrassment. I don't enjoy embarrassing myself, but I am not afraid of embarrassment – it does no permanent damage. ...

That last sentence, if my girls would have learned only one thing from their mother, this would be right at the top of the list. We don't enjoy embarrassing ourselves in any aspect of our lives, but as my dear wife said "it does no permanent damage."

To SJ0 1962-2003. A life not long enough, but lived fully.

Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match

No, I'm not going to write about "Fiddler on the Roof" or small things used to start fires. I'm talking about the past, present and future dating world.

Now a very long time ago, or in other countries even today, you had arranged marriages. At some point in time, the girl's family would get in contact with the boy's family and the marriage would be set. When the dowry price was met, or a certain age was met, or some other condition. All well and good, but not always a happy match.

In another age, you had the major courtship ritual. You get introduced, meet social in groups for a time, and finally you ask permission to "court". Usually this was done in the house of the girl under full supervision of her family. Usually slow, but it must have worked, the human species survived.

I never did any of that. I didn't date much before I got married. I had 2 or 3 'girlfriends' in College. None before that. College dating (at least for me) was lots of hanging out in each other's dorm rooms. Maybe a dinner off campus every once in a blue moon – cash was tight. After College, I spent

almost a year working. I had a few dates after college. My sisters were kind enough to set me up a few times. I would say, that after the 1st date, I had fun. I never did like that first date feeling. Then I finally got my own place. I had a small apartment warming when I finally got furniture for people to sit on. One of the people that came to that event was my future wife, – we just didn't know it at the time. About 1 month later we had our first date. I still remember what we did, even though I can't remember the name of the restaurant, if it was still there I could take you right to it. Unfortunately it is long gone. We went out to eat, to a movie (Return of the Jedi) and stopped afterwards at a Dunkin' DoNuts. In less than 1 year we were married. We liked the first date so much, we did the same thing on our wedding weekend. I went from someone who had very little dating experience to a married man in very little time, but it felt right. My feelings weren't too far off, since we spent 20 years together, and would still be together except for a beast called cancer.

On to now. Four years after my wife's death, I find I may be ready to date again. I'm not 100% convinced of this, but the feeling is that it is almost there. Now I'm quite sure that I could live the rest of my life with that almost there feeling. I hated the initial dates that much. I'm not sure I want to go through that routine again. However, it is what it is.

Now onto how dating is done today. Most of what I've heard is that you go "online" to find a date. I guess that is a possibility, but it doesn't seem right for me (more on that in a bit). I don't go to bars, so I don't think I'll ever find someone through that route. There are also people who go to church just to find a date. Hmm, on that one, something just doesn't seem right there... My big social events seem to revolve around a small little community theater I where I tend to hang out. Some of my closest friends were met there. But I know the people there, and I can't see myself dating anyone I've met so

far. Not that they aren't nice people, but I know a connection when I feel it, and that hasn't been there. My other activities are mainly things I do by myself, so meeting anyone interested in my hobbies will be difficult at best.

That is unless... There is always that... Come on you can type it. Ok, that internet dating route. There are any number of dating sites popping up on the internet. It seems like there is a new one every week. Some you have to pay for, some are free. Some are free and pay, but you can only send messages if you pay. Some do "Scientific" personality profiles to get your perfect match. Others are like on line supermarkets for dating. And there is probably everything in between and farther along on each side. I've seen add for dating a specific race, religion, occupation, location and there are plenty of other qualifiers. For some reason, none of this appeals to me. I get a little freaked out over the thought of putting anything out in a dating site. I'll blog, or visit boards for specific talking points, but a dating site? Am I just someones bit of data that goes through hundreds of personality profiles, or a slab of meat waiting to get checked out? Or worse, am I the shopper looking over those cuts of meat? It just seems like a foreign world to me, and I really don't want any part of it.

Now back to my title... I knew a matchmaker. Shortly after I was married, we lived near a lady who took it upon herself to find the perfect match for everyone. She knew people from all over the area and then some. She would make sure that certain people were introduced. And she wasn't above getting in there to push things together or pull them apart. Maybe that's what I need. A real live honest to goodness matchmaker. Do they still exist? But then again, not for me.

My best bet is to get a new place, have a house warming and see if lightning strikes twice. Or not. Maybe I'm not ready after all. I guess I won't really know that until I take that first step. For me, there are days when I still feel married

to that lovely lady I met at my first place. There are days when I think she might be walking in the door. The next person I meet will have to be willing to take on those days. I don't think they will ever go away.

Widowers in the Movies

***** Movie Spoiler Alert *****

I took my girls to see "Nim's Island" last week. Good movie overall, but I can't help to think of how they portray widowers and their families. (something personal here). This is the second recent movie that I've seen that has a widower as one of the main characters, the other was "Enchanted". By the end of both movies the widower dads were attached/married. Hmm, if only real life was that easy.

In "Nim's Island", the father hooked up with his daughter's favorite author. A dad and daughter out in the middle of the ocean, and an agoraphobic author from San Fransisco meet. Wow, that was easy. This was computer dating at its very best (worst?). The daughter seems to set them up too. (Come on girls get your acts in gear... ☐)

Now all I have to do is set up some sort of research on a south sea island (doesn't sound too bad), and I will be able to find a future Mrs. Somehow I don't think things are ever that easy.

And on to "Enchanted". I enjoyed this movie, and all the ins to other "Disney" shows. Cartoon characters come to life in New York. Of course the beautiful princess meets up with the widower, thanks to his daughter (again, girls, you aren't working things right!!!). Singing and Dancing ensue. At the

end through many trials and of course defeating the “Evil Stepmother”, the widower and princess are together. One happy little family.

Then of course there is another widower meets girl picture. Can anyone say “Sleepless in Seattle”? This time the son of the widower calls up a radio talk show to get dad a wife. Cross country trips occur, and they walk off to what is assumed another happy family, Hollywood style.

I will admit that “Sleepless in Seattle” did a admirable job of actually portraying what a widower goes through, at least if you have enough money to pull up roots, and have the luck and or skill to get another high paying job in another city. Yes, there were many a night that I didn’t sleep, even less than my normal sleepless patterns. Yes, I’ve daydreamed about talking with my late wife. Yes, I had to get up every morning and remind myself to breath. I don’t normally need to remind myself of that anymore, but it was there. There were many things I have gone through that were in that movie. This in itself gets my vote for a good movie. Most movies I’ve seen with widower or widows don’t even touch the problems with losing a spouse. It is for good reason that losing a spouse is on the top of most lists of traumatic life events.

My last question. Why are a lot of movies about hooking up widowers? Doesn’t that fly in the face of all the “Evil Stepmothers” of fairy tale fame?