

To guide thoughts

Today I started something on this computer that would allow me to channel my thoughts in a more productive way. You see, with everything going on in my life I needed something to prevent me from going down a dark path. In any event, I decided to try using speech recognition on my computer. Instead of typing this post, I decided to dictate it.

This actually takes a great deal more concentration my usual typing. When I am typing, I am able to correct words as I type. With speech recognition, corrections are made after the sentence is finished.

The tutorial suggests that the speech recognition will learn my voice the more I speak to it. As far as I can tell, the best part about this is that spelling is usually perfect. (unless I mispronounce the word ☐)

So thank you for letting me get a little negative energy out.

Unfortunately, I had to use wordpad to dictate my post.

An Old Friend, A New Perspective...

A few weeks ago, we learned a friend from way back was going to be in the area on his way from Illinois to Florida with his family, so he came by and brought the fam. That in itself was very unusual – after 10 years of friendship and various business associations and partnerships, we had somehow never gotten around to meeting his family in person.

But on this day earlier this summer, they all stopped in, and his wife and two kids (the oldest was off on some kind of school function) were really very nice, fun, and interesting people – we had a great day together. Their kids, although quite a bit older than my kids, were nonetheless kept entertained by my kids, especially their pet rats. Overall, it was a great visit with a nice family – we really should have gotten together sooner!

And I have some advice for our friend: appreciate what you have, buddy.

I don't know why he does some of the things he does, but he sometimes acts, um, I'll call it restless, and now that I know how awesome his wife and kids are, it's going to be that much more difficult for me if I continue to hear about any more dumb choices on his part. He seems to be going through some sort of mid-life crisis, so I can only hope that he finds what it is he's looking for without hurting those wonderful people who love him!

Kid Currency

Sometimes Dr. Phil *does* give good advice. Among my favorite Dr. Phil advice lines is: “every kid has his (or her) currency”. Unfortunately, our second-oldest daughter's (age 5) currency (referring to something that can “buy” a kid; in other words, cheer up a sour mood) happens to be one of the girly things her parents despise most: makeup. She is starting to encounter the all-too-familiar plight of being a younger sibling: big sister leaves home bound for all kinds of fun adventures that little sister is not old enough to do; swimming at the pool, sleepovers, girl scout outings, the list

seems endless when you're 'not old enough'... It's hard to be the little sister and to get left behind – I know because I was there!

So anyway, the other day, our oldest daughter left for the pool, and Sammie was really upset she couldn't go with – but I knew just the cure: makeup! I had bought a few makeup kits on clearance just after the Christmas season, and since I don't wear makeup, what better use for it than to cheer up a sad little girl? We don't want the kids wearing makeup out in public or to school, and we especially don't want it leading to an "addiction" – a teenage girl who won't leave the house without her makeup on, yuck! But for a special play-treat once in awhile to cheer up a left-behind little sis or two, makeup is just what the doctor ordered and works like a charm!

The Only Fella At Auditions

Does this mean I got a part? If not, I will turn in my license to act tomorrow. Truthfully, I was the only male at tryouts. That is not to say that there were not other audition dates. In fact, this was the last one and the best time for me to go.

The play is entitled *You Have the Right to Remain Dead*. It is billed as an audience-participatory murder mystery comedy. The director describes the play in the play as Tennessee Williams on steroids. At least two character names made me think that (Fat Daddy and Blanche or Big Daddy from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and Blanche from *Streetcar*...has anyone seen the Simpsons' episode in which Marge plays Blanche and Ned Flanders plays a bare-chested Stanley in a musical version).

The audition was almost too relaxed... but NOT complaining. We sat around a table in the community room adjacent to the

stage. Being 90+ degrees outside did not help to cool off the room a whole lot. However, it sure beat the alternative of walking upstairs. I was up there last winter and noticed the warmth then. So, we just sat around the table chatting a bit, going over the plot and characters for those of us who were in the dark, and read some scenes from the script. I said too relaxed because there were times that I forgot that I was actually auditioning and almost cracked myself up just reading the lines.

In attendance were the directors, another female auditioner who I knew as the costume designer from *Meet Me in St. Louis*, [Mare](#) (who was there to give moral support and serve as an additional line reader since she is in WCCT's *Little Shop of Horrors* whenever that is going to get started), and myself. We waited for two hours for others to come, but... We were having so much fun that we just kept reading lines, changing characters, and allowing me to become acquainted with the show in general. After, we sat around the table becoming acquainted with each other.

And I should be finding out tomorrow which if any part I get and the read-through is August 24th. Perfect, I hate long waits.

What next?

This may be a difficult post to read. It was certainly hard to write.

No happy or witty sayings in this post. This is a story of life, death, mourning and maybe life again.

At the beginning of this year many wonderful things were in

the making. My 3rd daughter had her wedding scheduled for June. My fourth daughter was to graduate High School. Those two events happened as planned.

Also occurring early in the year, my two oldest daughters told me they were expecting new arrivals. The oldest was due in September, my second daughter due in November. Expanding of family going full force this year. I was really looking forward to visiting my new grandchildren.

The first bad news came when my 2nd daughter had a miscarriage. I was unable to fly down to Florida and be with her. I am very glad she has a wonderful network of support with her. At that time, I had a countdown to the impending birth on my blog. I quietly removed that and all other mention of that news from my blog. This was news I didn't feel like sharing with the rest of the world. Stick with the good news. Too much bad news news in the world.

Last Thursday brought news that my oldest daughter lost her baby too. Much farther along, she had only a month before the due date. I quietly removed the countdown that that impending birth, and wrote a quick cryptic post. The mind was not working well enough to post anything else. I could write about the cause, but I will let [this site](#) handle that. I just needed to get these words out.

I spent the past few days with my oldest, at the hospital and her house. There were many tears flowing. Hugs given and received. While the words were not initially spoken, we were worried about my oldest daughter's life too. She had a serious medical condition that could have take her as well. In this we were fortunate. Physically she is recovering well. The emotional and spiritual recovery will take more time for all of us.

I did say something about life again didn't I. There is a little bright spot in all of this. I've written a few posts

about my daughter's friends. These are people I consider to be my friends also. Our ages and backgrounds vary widely, but they are true friends. People who will be there for my daughter and son-in-law. My children came home to a clean house, because someone thought this would be a good thing to do. They didn't ask, they acted. The bedroom for the newborn was in the final stages of finishing, but the door was off the hinges. It was put back in place and closed. Friends and family will supply food, companionship, or solitude when needed or wanted. Can we ever ask for more?

Through all of this, I've had many old wounds opened again. I keep wondering if each new death will bring back the memories of others. Faces I've not seen in years, faces I never saw, came into my thoughts and dreams. The past and future molds into one. The laugh of a child not heard may be one of the saddest moments in life.

Absolute Power Corrupting Absolutely

There have been various interpretations on the old theme of superhuman powers being transferred to another person. Last night, I revisited one of those in a season 1 episode of *Smallville*. During a freak accident during a lightning storm, Clark Kent's powers are passed to one of his high school classmates. Clark gets to discover what it is like to be a "normal" teenager while "Eric" comes to discover that being the world's most powerful adolescent is not all it is cracked up to be. Looking at the show, I realized that it is a spin on the old classic adage of Nature vs. Nurture.

Clark's initial reaction to his loss is one of confusion and fear. Being able to lift the family truck out of the mud, driving a stake into the ground with his bare hands, and other tasks that would be impossible for mortal men were a snap for the Boy of Steel. However, the sight of his own blood sends him into near shock. Over time, he learns to embrace his "normalcy" and not be afraid to engage in a game of two-on-two without fear of accidentally using his powers to injure one of his friends... even if one of them is Lana Lang's quarterback boyfriend. One of my favorite moments from the episode is Lana's observation that Clark doesn't seem to "have the weight of the world on his shoulders."

On the other hand, Eric takes a totally different approach to his new-found gifts. He flaunts them in front of people on the street. He flirts with a girl right in front of her boyfriend and flings him across the school parking lot smashing him on top of a parked car. When a powerless Clark attempts to intervene (his nature or is his nurturing), he receives a few bruised ribs and a cut to the head. Eric's parents are terrified of the "freak" he has become and determine to send him away to be studied and to find out what happened to him. Overnight, the teenager has acquired strength and abilities he could only dream of before but is totally unprepared to handle them.

Nurture: Jonathan and Martha Kent discovered a toddler inside a rocket ship in the middle of a field and raised that child with morals and responsibilities. Clark was not meant to score touchdowns with his power but for something more. As his powers advanced over time, the Kent's were determined to hide these gifts and use them when necessary and secretly in order to protect their adopted son.

On the flip side, Eric was an awkward kid and constantly degraded by his parents; particularly his father. It may seem cliché to paint Clark in the best possible light and to show his counterpart in shadow. But I think the point here was to

show how two different people from different backgrounds deal with extraordinary circumstances. A very good episode from the beginning of the series.

OK... nerdy sidebar: Shawn Ashmore who played Eric also was in the X-Men films as Bobby Drake/Iceman. His twin brother, Aaron played a certain cub reporter for the Daily Planet in the past two seasons of *Smallville*. Such a nerd!

and the bottom drops out

Semi cryptic post here, I'm not ready to write about it, if ever. Just to say some changes are very, very bad. I may not be posting for some time. Take care folks.

Things change

Well moving days are coming up. Yes, I did say moving days. There will be at least two of them.

The first will be next week at work. We are moving to a new building, and we are scheduled to move as soon as it passes inspection. That should occur this week. A little farther to drive, but it should be a nicer work environment. We will see how that goes. Good news, no students in the halls. Bad news, the way the cubicles are set up, my back will face the entrance. I never did like having my back to the door.

Then at the end of the month, my youngest heads off to college. That may take a trip or two depending on how much she

needs to move into her college room. When I went to school, I was able to fit everything I needed into the back of a Chevy Chevette, I have a truck now, and I still wonder how many trips I will need to take.

At this point in time, I guess I should be feeling a bit of the 'empty nest' syndrome. I'm not sure I will in the same way other parents do. The whole point in my parenting was to get my children ready for the world. It is time for this one to spread her wings and see how she flies. A bit of anxiety, sure, but I'm ready to let her try more on her own.

There is another part of the empty nest that I really never expected when I first thought of this some 10 years ago when the first daughter spread her wings. I have the nest to myself. The question I really need to ask is "How will I spread my wings?" For more than a quarter of a century (over 1/2 my life) I've been a parent. For most of that time I've been a husband and then a widower. Before that I was in my childhood. What am I going to do with the time I will have for myself? What will I be when I grow up? ☐

Life is all about the change...

Getting close now...

Well, school is almost upon us once again. Depending on where you live, it can be a week or three, or maybe your kids attend an all-year school that started up again in July after a much shorter break. In the two districts I'm signed up with, it starts in 1½ and 2½ weeks. What's that you say? *Two* districts? That's right. I am only in hometown and supersized districts this year due to my continued job of shooting pictures of cars. I have chosen to work three days a

week on the cars for now leaving two days to teach. Of course it will likely be another month before I am needed as a sub, but that's the plan. As you probably figured out already, these two districts are where I have gotten most of my work in the past and so I stuck with them, losing the less productive ones, even though near-urban paid me the most.

So how is the new job going? Well, I got my first store finally- unfortunately it's 45-minutes away! The one who had this store didn't do a very good job so he was replaced. Not the best way to start, but I'll take whatever I can get. Today, in fact, Kim (one of the owners of the company I work for) and I spent much time fixing the stickers on the cars that were tilted, stuck over unremoved adhesive from previous buyer's guide (warranty info which by law has to be in the window even if just handwritten) or otherwise placed with a lack of care. I think we did no less than two dozen. The rest of my time was spent in doing four cars that were ready for me. Not a lot, but the idea is to have three dealers (four if they are small like this one) in one day to shoot a reasonable amount. The most I had in one day training with Rene was 42. At \$7 a car that was nearly \$300 for the day for her. Of course that was three large dealers, and even then that number is rare. My goal is eventually 20-30 cars per day. Another trainee may be leaving as his school just gave him a reality check- no, it is not possible to graduate in a reasonable time if you only have classes two days a week. If he leaves then I am hoping to get one of the stores promised to him, but not the other one. There is a dealer that is way over toward Chicago (strike one for the bad traffic). They require the cars to be shot in their warehouse a mile away, meaning the cars have to be driven from their lot to there, adding a tremendous amount of time (strike two). Also, the warehouse has bad lighting with three of the five lights burnt out the last two times I was there making it difficult to take pictures inside the cars (strike three). I am scheduled to do new cars every other week, but the one who has been doing the

used cars while Pat was training to take it over can keep that part as a punishment for his bad performance at the dealer he lost (yes, same guy)!

In the meantime, all this work has meant that I haven't gotten the DVD done yet for my kids from camp- I'd better start on it soon, or just do what I did the first year- give them a CD with all the pictures, but that's no fun and can't be viewed without a computer.

Bowling For Columbine

While I'm on the topic of date night (see my previous post)...

This week we did not feel like mini-golfing again on date night, so we went bowling instead. I did so well, we got a printout of the scores, much to my husband's dismay – I've already mentioned how he has bad luck at physics-dependent sports like bowling and mini-golf. And I got tons of practice at bowling as a kid – I was in a weekly bowling league for I don't know how many years. Later in high school, I took bowling in gym class and joined intramural bowling after school where I was crowned, "Female Bowler of the Year" for the two years I was in it – not a difficult feat, seeing as how there were under 10 girls involved, but still, if we had had a competitive bowling team in high school, perhaps I would have been a high school athlete, hehe!

I've spent about 23% of my adult years pregnant (!) and most of the rest of those years raising small children who would wreak havoc with a bowling ball, so needless to say, I have not had a chance to hone the skill I developed as a youngster. I do enjoy the occasional bowling game, though, and rarely do I top my previous bowling average from back-in-

the-day: 132. Well, the other date night, not only did I top my old average for the two games we played but I somehow tied my all-time high score! Well, anyway, here are the scores, and this reminds me to make joining a weekly league a priority when the kids get a little bit older!

The image shows two bowling score sheets. The top sheet is for 'Bowler 1' and the bottom sheet is for 'Bowler 2'. Both sheets show scores for two games, with the final total score at the end of each game.

Game #1	Game #2
9 1 0 31 34 52 60 78 94 113 131	30 59 79 90 99 118 136 147 165 185

Game #1	Game #2
0 1 4 0 0 7 7 0 7 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
11 12 18 26 33 40 57 64 80 86	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

And about the title I chose for my post... I just finished reading the book *Columbine* by Dave Cullen, and it was a fascinatingly detailed account of the 1999 Colorado high school massacre dissected from just about every angle. If you like to read true crime or just want to know every detail about the massacre (it holds a special fascination for me since it was unfolding just as Hubby and I arrived at our honeymoon destination after a 24-hour road trip back in '99), you should read this book. It's both sad and informative, and the author does mention that the Michael Moore movie, *Bowling for Columbine*, has little to do with the circumstances involving the high school massacre. But, *Bowling for Columbine* is a catchy title nonetheless, which is why I borrowed it, not because I'm a Michael Moore fan. Actually, we saw a parody of his movies the other day, and I will be sure to include the movie review in an upcoming post called "It Was A Redbox Summer". Stay Tuned!