Testing

I am back from camp and have in fact enjoyed a nice afternoon with C & L, who are in the area for tomorrow's Chicago vs. Chicago game. There was a new indoor mini-golf place over at Stratford Square mall which we were told just opened last week. I'll take their word for it since it has been over ten years since I have been there. Following 18 holes of golf (out of 54) we decided our eyes were getting tired of the blacklighting (the whole place was lit that way with the neon paints) and proceeded to have some dinner. Deciding against the one real restaurant which L said seemed like an Applebee's after looking at the menu, we opted for the food court. I had Chinese, they had Sbarro's and some pretzel dogs. All of us had blue raspberry lemonades from the pretzel stand which was quite good. Instead of going back to play more golf, which we could have as the fee C paid for us covered the entire day, we talked for a bit and walked around the mall which surprisingly was still quite active with seemingly less than 5% vacancy. I guess maybe I am used to other local malls, not counting Woodfield in Schaumburg, that have closed in the last several years. We stopped at a pet store and C & L found that they could happily own a glorified mutt with a fancy name for the bargain price of \$1600. No, I didn't accidentally add an extra digit. Not \$160 or \$600, but over a grand and a half! Ouch. Well, that was pretty much it. They had to go shortly after and so we went our separate ways.

What? You wanted to hear about my week at camp? Well, that is coming soon. As for the title, C talked me into updating Live Messenger with the newer Live Essentials version and I noticed I could install a Writer program to write my blog posts. Right now I am seeing this post exactly as it should appear on my blog page once published- grey background, full justification, and lowercase title included, unlike the WordPress editor on which I would have to click a preview button to see how it

would look. It seems pretty nice and barring any difficulties I will probably give this a longer test run with added pictures and whatnot. There seem to be things that I don't think the WordPress editor even has. I'll see how it goes. Well, until later...

Edit: Well, that didn't go well- I needed to edit the post straight away. It added a bunch of #160s and forgot to encase the paragraph tags in <> symbols so the post had extra p, em, /em and /p characters included in the text. I guess there are bugs to be worked out- oh well.

More Than Met The Eye

Tonight, as promised, a friend and I took in *Transformers:* Revenge of the Fallen. I was NOT disappointed (although we both felt the need to visit the facitlities as soon as the final credits began to roll). Nearly non-stop action, breathtaking effects, comic relief (at times) all created a perfect summer blockbuster. The battle of the Autobots and Decepticons returned to the big screen. I WAS a big fan of the toys and cartoon of the 80s and weel remember the battles of Optimus Prime and Megatron. The live-action sequel again brings the alien robots together with humans led by Sam (Shia Labeouf), Mikaela (Megan Fox), and Major Lennox (Josh Duhamel).

Sam is on his way to live the ordinary life of a college student when the action kicks off. The young man learns the truth about the origins of the Transformers and the Decepticons return to Earth to capture him and draw out Optimus Prime for a confrontation.

At times, I was not sure who the movie was aimed at. There

were a few scenes in which I thought it was playing to the more adult viewer (it is PG-13 rated for a reason) who is old enough to remember the beginnings of the franchise. A scene in a dorm room involving Sam and a young lady who is more than she appears created a chuckle from a young child in the row behind us. Then there was the playful bits geared to the kid in all of us which were really fun.

Again, the main robots all had distinct personalities of their own. The leader, Optimus Prime, the emotional Camero transforming Bumble Bee, and the hilarious twin duo of Skids and Mudflaps.

Like all summer popcorn flicks, this is in no way geared to the intellectual demanding audience. As with any Michael Bay production, there are huge explosions, limited conceivable plot lines, and a great deal of fun. And, IMHO, any film starring Shia Labeouf is not going to be confused with Shakespeare.

An Angel And A King Forever

Thursday June 25, 2009. Two iconic figures of pop culture; two tragic deaths. One that will surely (and has already) overshadow the other. Growing up, I did not really know Farrah Fawcett as her most famous role. I remember her hyphenated moniker Fawcett-Majors. I remember seeing reruns of the Six Million Dollar Man in which she co-starred with her then husband, Lee Majors. I even believed that she was the actress who played the Bionic Woman. I guess Charlie's Angels was on after my bedtime. Her bravery through suffering has been well documented and must have been heavy upon those who loved her. She is definitely in a better place.

On the other hand, the weeks ahead will undoubtedly focus on the self-proclaimed King of Pop. No matter what the last decade or so of Michael Jackson's life may have brought the fact remains: the man had an extreme amount of talent musically, and performance wise. I will not dwell on the tabloid details of his life but will say that I do remember his heyday in the early to mid 80s and was enthralled with his extreme talent. I was with my family in Texas the summer of 1984 during the Jackson's Victory tour and remember thinking how cool it would be to be able to get impossible tickets. I also remember the videos (when videos were actually shown on MTV) that were mini-movies. Thriller is still a masterpiece aurally and visually. Ironically, I just watched it via youtube earlier this week. Nearly 15 minutes. 28 million copies of the album sold worldwide. Experts are already speculating that the world will never again see the like. His life may have been troublesome and strange. I think being tossed into the spotlight at the age of 4 and continue for 4 decades would be difficult to say the least.

To say nothing of the passing of Johnny Carson's second banana, Ed McMahon. Not a good week for pop culture. Peace and healing to all the families of these three icons.

Life in the Comic Section

Sometime back the comic strip <u>Funky Winkerbean</u> had run a series on the death of one of the main characters. It hit me hard at the time, because the character was a wife and mother who died of cancer. The comic strip jumped 10 years into the future and we now see the lives of the characters after this death and the death of another character (presumably in the

war). I've seen bits and pieces of things I feel written in the comics.

Currently they are dealing with the widower of the first character who died. He is trying to raise his teenage daughter (been there, doing that) and even started on the road to dating (not yet, not quite or maybe, I'm confused). I find it interesting to read the comic and it almost feels like the author has done his research in one way or another. Usually it is very close to some of the things I feel and think.

It is hard to explain what I feel to a person who hasn't dealt with the same situation. In most cases, I don't even know where to begin. This comic explains and shows things in a way I never could. But then, I found someone else who reads that comic and they didn't see the same things. Maybe I just see it because I have been in the same boat. I guess I need to think and ponder that. My life in a comic, who would have guessed.

Car Problems and lots of fun

I was going to take my car in today to see exactly what was wrong with it. It started up fine after charging the battery, but this morning the battery was dead again. Hmmm, didn't seem to want to hold a charge. I tried the jumper box and it was no go. I hooked up the charger again, but the battery would not charge up. I took the cover off of the battery and found out the problem. The four year old batter was leaking acid and the sides were bulging. After 4 years, I guess the battery gave up.

Now it was off to town to get a battery. First to Wally World, no battery for my truck. First Car Part store, no go. They could order it for tomorrow... How do I get around? I'll try the

dealer. Dealer was a no go too, they could get it tomorrow too. So I stopped at the next Car Part store. Yes, they had one (maybe). The guy knew there was one there this morning, but he thought it may have been sold. They went to check and it was still there. Yeah.

I got home and installed the battery and the truck started right up. So for now I will keep an eye on the truck to make sure the battery isn't getting drained by something. But with the looks of the old one, and a strange smell that was no missing, I'm sure it was just the battery. So for now, the truck is up and running.

Special thanks in this to my newlywed daughter and her husband for driving this old man around town looking for a battery. Also thanks to the Admin for the use of his battery jumper. It only worked once, but that wasn't the fault of the device.

I do have a question. Why do new cars and truck enclose the battery in a box? You can no longer see the battery and lose visual clues as to its condition. I think I would have looked for a battery sooner if I had seen a side bulging.

Another Midnight Screening

This time, the actual viewing did not involve me. Monday night, before I left for a theatre meeting and later to watch a movie, I was conned into sitting with my nephews and niece while my brother went to see <u>Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen</u>. I had a feeling this was happening... why else would you need a sitter at midnight (well...)? How nice of him to ask if I wanted to go along... which I would have. We could have easily taken the 13, 9, and 4 year-old, especially when the youngest wanted to see it. We even made a suggestion that the

kids go to their mother's for the night

So, I went out about 10.30 after watching the Yankees lose AGAIN... come on... jees and watched *My Bloody Valentine* (no 3-D but an enjoyable movie and no kids... definitely not one for the young). After the movie, I watched a few episodes of Michael Scott and Co. on the DVR then fell asleep. At 3, I was awakened by the screaming of an excited 18 year old who proclaimed his pleasure with the action-packed thrill fest... excusable since the couch was really uncomfortable and knowing the 18 year old as well as I, the awakening could have been worse. I will have to go Friday when I have another day off... two movies in one week? Don't know if I can handle that.... but I will try.

SAVE OHIO LIBRARIES!

In this horrible economy, people are using It's a catch-22. the free resources provided by their local libraries more than However, in this horrible economy, governments are having trouble funding the free resources provided by local libraries. Here in Ohio, Governor Strickland is contemplating a new state budget cut that would reduce our libraries' funding by an additional 52%, and that's on top of the 20% cut they've already seen in 2009. With this kind of reduction in funding, obviously the libraries would not be able to function on the same level on which they are currently functioning, nor with the same hours. If you live in Ohio, you can help the governor and congressmen know how harmful library funding cuts would be to each and every community in the state. some contact info to help you do your part in saving the libraries:

Click here to Contact the Governor's Office

Contact the Governor's Office by phone @ (614)466-3555 Fax the Governor @ (614)466-9354

State Senator Steve Buehrer

Phone: (614) 466-8150

Fax: (614) 466-4250 ATTENTION STEVE BUEHRER

Email: SD01@senate.state.oh.us For more information, click here:

www.saveohiolibraries.com

Thank you for your help! Closing library branches is harmful to communities in many ways and would affect everyone, even those who don't use the libraries themselves.

And back to the start...

Last week Tuesday, my youngest and I dropped off our little corgi with the newlyweds. They agreed to watch him while I took her sister back to Florida. Good exchange. Watch a dog, so your sister could be in the wedding. More on that when I get the full story.

We then drove to Toledo to spend the evening with the rest of my family, and to get an early start the next day. The truck was full of stuff to get to Florida, so packing our clothing was an adventure. I should put an ad in for the Space Saver
Bags. They gave us a more room for more stuff.

Travel is always and adventure, even more so with two (or more) young children. I didn't know how they would react to a long car trip, so I was prepared for anything. Plenty of kid friendly snacks (somewhat healthy too), and dr. inks. Our early start was later than I would have liked, but we did have

time for a good and filling breakfast. (Not me, the pizza we had for dinner the previous night did not agree with me, some way to start a trip.) Loaded up and on the road at around 9:00.

My youngest had a sore neck from some sleeping arrangements or playing with her niece and nephew (not sure which). That made an interesting note to the trip too. We stopped for a break and to pick up a pillow for my youngest about 2.5 hours into the trip. Good timing. So far the grandkids are behaving very well. They would sit and watch out the windows or color (Color Wonders are a marvelous invention). There were a few are we there yet questions, but they were great.

We stopped for lunch at one of my favorite places in OHIO. A little side jaunt took us to <u>Cedar Falls State park in the Hocking Hills area</u>. A quick walk down the path showed us that the falls were indeed falling. This time of year, the falls are usually reduced to a trickle. Back on the road for more driving.

We took an easterly route to Florida this time, picking up Interstate 77 in West Virginia. The trip through the mountains was breathtaking. I really like that area. Beautiful country. Easy sailing well past dinner time and then we ran into fog in the mountains (or were those clouds?) This would add a good hour or two to our drive time. We pulled into the Hotel around 10:00 PM. My grandson was worn out and ready for bed (sort of) and my granddaughter wanted to explore (she fell asleep first). Me, I was happy being with my family. It was a good day (even with the fog). Our stop was just north of Charlotte NC. More fun on the second day of driving....

Andy Outside The Office

Here there be spoilers!!!

A friend and I went to see *The Hangover* last night. Going in, I was not expecting much: undoubtedly an unremarkable plot hopefully with a few laughs. Not expecting a big award winner, I did have a good time. Three of the actors I was familiar with: Bradley Cooper (from his days on *Alias*... I didn't know he was in it going in), Ed Helms (from <u>The Office</u>), and Heather Graham.

The movie centers around Doug (who is two days away from being married) and his trio of buddies traveling from LA to Las Vegas for the bachelor party. Doug is entrusted with his future father in law's Mercedes (hmm...). The morning after arriving, three of the four wake up and discover that they remember almost nothing that happened the night before and learn that one of the companions is nowhere to be found. Hilarity and some groans ensue as the three go on a whirwind search for their friend and their lost evening through the streets of Sin City.

At times, some of the situations reminded me of a combination of *Three Men and a Baby* and *License to Drive*. As with most buddy comedies of today, there are a number of gross out moments (one involving a tiger... one of those groan inducing segments). Another memorable bit takes place at an LVPD precinct in which the three are subjected to some police brutality at the hands of a group of youngsters on a school field trip.... don't remember seeing a teacher.

The best part was the three leads themselves. Each of them had a distinct personality that was rarely dull. Cooper plays Phil (rhyming with Will... his Alias character.. coincidence?) the leader of the band of partiers and must have been quite the ladies man back in the day before getting tied down. Zach

<u>Galifianakis</u> plays Alan, the loner of the group who is along because he is the brother of the bride.

Helms is the highlight of the movie. Stu is a doctor who is in a relationship with a domineering woman who thinks the little getaway is to Napa Valley wine country. I really enjoy seeing some of the actors from my favorite comedy on television on the big screen. John Krasinski is in a limited release this summer called <u>Away We Go</u>. Wonder why the distribution was not wider.

Overall, I thought *The Hangover* was fun. It had lots of laughs even if there were moments of mindless ridiculousness. Any movie featuring more than a cameo by Mike Tyson (even playing himself) is not going to be the greatest movie ever made.

Don't wait. Guarantee your seat before you go and avoid a sold out show. Skip the box office lines and buy movie tickets at Fandango.com.

500th Post

WOW!

I've made 500 blog posts here on My Food Chain Gang! That is A LOT of rambling and a ton of tangents! Thank you for reading; especially those of you who have read all 500 posts, if there is anyone who could stand me for that long!

I think after that many posts, I'm entitled to a generic one, noting nothing other than my 500th blog post, don't you?