

Manners, Kid-Style

When I stopped at the gas station the other day to get the kids a snack, there was a “little person” working the counter – is that the preferred term these days for someone with dwarfism? I certainly don’t want to insult anyone, so pardon my ignorance...

So anyway, I decided to give my kids a talk about why it’s not polite to stare at people; I was especially targeting my almost-5-year-old since she is very curious about people and the differences in the way people look, that sort of thing – and she’s not very discreet about her curiosity. So I was explaining to her about why we shouldn’t stare at people, and she had a sincere question: Is it ok to stare at broccoli?

I told my husband this story when we got home, and he was wondering if she was joking, but no, her tone was indeed sincere. My eldest daughter and I laughed when she asked it, but not AT her, we only thought it was cute and silly. But like I told my husband, I really don’t think she was *trying* to be silly. Like us, my husband knows by now that Samantha is a very unique individual, and she just has strange questions sometimes. She was more than a handful as a two-year-old, but the further away we get from that stage in her life, the more we can enjoy her very individualistic personality and free spirit!

SAMMIE



The Bus Driver Did WHAT?!?

I read a news item a few weeks ago about Shawn Brim, a bus driver in Washington who stopped his bus, got off and adjusted his side-view mirrors, and then proceeded to punch a nearby McGruff the Crime Dog in the face! What was he thinking? He thought it would be funny, he said. Understandably, everyone failed to see the humor in punching a children's hero in front of a crowd of horrified kids, and the bus driver was arrested.

On the other side of the coin and the world, there was another bus driver whose actions can only be described as heroic. Seems Brim has something to learn from Meher Mohammad Khalil:

LAHORE, Pakistan (CNN) – His job was to drive the bus. But Meher Mohammad Khalil is now being hailed as a lifesaver. When gunmen jumped out of bushes and began spraying bullets at the bus carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team Tuesday, Khalil quickly sized up his options and got everyone to safety.

“First I thought there were some firecrackers going off. Then, when I saw the elite force cars in front of me taking fire, I immediately lost my voice,” Khalil told CNN on Wednesday.

“At that time, the other elite car that was with us gave me cover, and then, when I saw he was giving me cover, my courage and my patience returned. I decided to take the vehicle from there, and one way or another, even if I had to drive over someone, I would take this bus and escape.”

Khalil returned to the scene of the attack in the Pakistani city of Lahore on Wednesday to honor those who were killed and to place flowers in their memory.

One of the dead was Zafar Khan, a friend and fellow bus driver who had been in a vehicle behind Khalil.

“My eyes filled with tears that these were people that I was eating with and who died in doing their duty.”

Khalil had been part of a convoy heading to Gaddafi Stadium, where the Sri Lankan cricket team was to continue a match against Pakistan.

Six police officers were killed, in addition to Khalil’s friend Khan who was driving a bus with the match umpires.

The Sri Lankan cricketers praised Khalil’s quick thinking and action, saying he saved their lives. Six team members were injured by broken glass and shrapnel.

Team captain Mahela Jayawardene wrote on his Web site of Khalil: “He probably saved our lives, showing remarkable bravery in the face of direct gunfire to keep the bus moving.”

Crowds mobbed Khalil as he paid his respects at the place where his life changed in an instant.

“He is a hero, a real hero, a real man of the people,” a man in the crowd said.

Private donors in Lahore have rewarded Khalil with 300,000 rupees (more than \$3,000) – a small fortune for a Pakistani bus driver.

Today, Khalil says all he can feel is pain of the loss of life. And he called on the attackers to recognize that their victims are humans just like them, with mothers and sisters.

“For God’s sake, please stop this terrorism and let this nation breathe a sigh of relief,” he said.

The Mayor And The Macarena – Part Deux

About a year ago, I had a blog post called “The Mayor And The Macarena”. It was about my family’s first roller skating outing (it was a birthday party for the Girl Scouts organization), and my post was so titled because our county’s only roller skating rink is owned and operated by the town mayor. Not quite being fully assimilated to small town living, I guess, I got a big kick out of watching the mayor play DJ; especially when he spun old has-been but essential tunes for us to dance to on our roller skates like “The Macarena”, “YMCA”, “The Chicken Dance”, and “The Hokey Pokey”. So it’s that time of year again – Happy Birthday Girl Scouts! – and we attended the birthday party at the roller rink again on Sunday. That reminds me, did you know that the infamous chicken dance now has lyrics?

“I don’t wanna be a chick,
I don’t wanna be a duck,
I just wanna shake my butt”
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

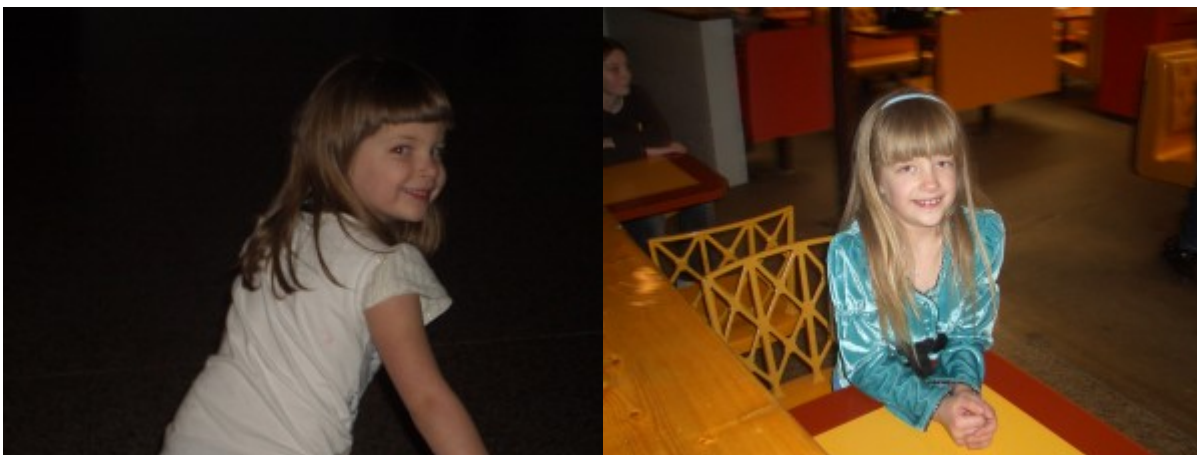
Well, that was news to me because as far as I knew, the chicken dance was just that – a dance with motions and no lyrics, but I bet you can guess which word the kids absolutely

LOVED putting the emphasis upon... ah, kids!

Coincidentally, our Girl Scout's younger sister was also invited to a birthday party at the roller rink on Sunday. Which meant 5 straight hours of roller skating! After 5 hours, the girls had showed so much improvement! We even got skates for our 2-year-old, but those skates were practically bigger than she was, and they were so heavy, she didn't have a chance:



But like I said, after a few hours on the skating floor, the older two really got the hang of it, despite a few spills and some breaks, err, rest periods, not broken bones, thank goodness!



The girls' baby brother even had a great time singing and bopping along with the music...



A great way to cap off an extremely busy weekend... we had so much fun, I think we'll make a few more trips over there even *before* the Scout's party comes around again next year!

The View From Here

As I read in the newspaper today, I was shocked but not totally surprised that one of my childhood mainstays is being retired. The [View-Master](#) is a small plastic toy in which was place a white white wheel full of 3-d pictures. The wheels initially contained scenes of actual places (The Grand Canyon, Disney Parks, I had a set from Cedar Point that probably would be worth something if only I had been a child who thought about such things). There was a [camera](#) made during the 50s with which you could create your own View-Master reels. Later, reels of movies, television shows, and other forms of popular culture were introduced. I had reels full of Mickey Mouse, Winnie the Pooh, superheroes (I had a series of Caped Crusader reels taken from the 60s television series featuring Catwoman), the Flintstones, and others.

In an effort to appeal to increasingly uninterested kids, new versions of the toy were introduced. I had the projector that enabled the images to be shown on a wall, or set up in a dark

room on a “screen” consisting of a white sheet placed over a few boxes stacked on top of each other. Friends would come into my theatre and watch as the scenes unfolded to improvised narration. I believe there was a “talking” version as well.

Over the years, sales of the View-Master have decreased exponentially. The majority of children are much more interested in video games, DVDs and the like. But for at least one 8-10 year old growing up in the late 70s-early 80s, it provided hours of imagination and fun.

The Lion In Winter

I am very glad we were able to arrange our obscenely busy schedule in such a way to be able to see the play The Lion In Winter on Saturday night. A great friend and fellow blogger, [Jamiahsh](#) was a ~~sucker~~ kind enough to babysit all four kids for us, as this was not a play for children. Not that it was “adult” per se, but our younger two especially would NOT have been able to sit still throughout the entire production.

The Lion in Winter tells the story of King Henry II and his family in 1183. Although the actual play is fictional, it is based upon real people and real events. King Henry has 3 surviving sons who share the same goal: to inherit the kingdom, although that is where their similarities end. Richard, the eldest brother, “growls out for gore”, as it is said in the play. He is the warrior of the bunch, and he has the temper to match. Geoffrey (played a little too convincingly, haha, by a great friend and fellow blogger, [justj](#) – great job!) is the scheming, conniving, if mostly forgotten middle brother. Geoffrey “hums treachery” and is the epitome of someone who suffers from middle child syndrome

– and it's that much more hilarious when his parents actually admit to not giving him the time of day! John is the youngest brother, who is favored by his father for some reason despite his lack of... well, his lack of much of *anything* upstairs (I'm tapping my head). Eleanor, Henry's estranged and imprisoned wife, is a tyrant in her own right, although she is largely limited by gender roles in the twelfth century.

This particular production was co-directed by a good friend – someone whose many talents I've long admired – she's a gem! She is a very detail-oriented, hard worker, and the finished production illustrated those attributes. Because *The Lion In Winter* is typically an historical drama, it wouldn't normally be one of my favorite shows – I'm the type to much prefer good stagings of upbeat musicals like *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *The Wizard of Oz* or slapstick comedies like *Idol Night at the Karaoke Place*, *The Nerd*, or even a good melodrama. That being said, I can honestly say (and to my surprise) that I was never once bored during *The Lion in Winter*. And even being an historical drama, it's not without its (large) share of comedy as well. The dialogue (and hilarious insults!) fly swiftly and smartly, and I honestly wish time would have allowed me another opportunity to see the play as I think there were many more things I could have caught, especially if I weren't a walking zombie these days. The play is complex; its dialogue and characters almost too intricate to effectively absorb in just one sitting. The playwright, James Goldman, found many opportunities within the script to have the characters make clever satirical remarks, often making fun of the time period in which the play takes place. Among my favorites was the following exchange between John and his mother Eleanor, the Queen:

Towards the end of the first act of *Lion in Winter*, John is astonished and horrified when his older brother Richard pulls a knife on him. "A knife," he says, "he's got a knife." To which his mother, Eleanor, responds by saying: "Of course he has a knife. He always has a knife. We all have knives. It

is eleven eighty-three and we're barbarians!" Just the memory of that line makes me smile, especially because the woman who played Eleanor was simply awesome – she gave one of the best performances I've ever seen on a community theater's stage. I would expect it to be difficult to give life to a character as complex as Eleanor; after all, in Henry's words, Eleanor "thinks heavy thoughts like molten lead and marble slabs." but she did it marvelously.

Actually, all of the acting was great in this production; King Henry came across as powerful yet emotionally weary and even a bit vulnerable, and King Philip of France seemed to be both a willing yet also an unwitting pawn in the treacherous game played by the royal family of England around 1183.

Also of note in this particular staging of the show was the remarkable set which exemplified an old European castle quite well. Although it amounted to hard physical labor for its extensive stage crew, the medieval set was easily (depends who you ask, I guess!) transformed into 6 distinct settings for the play.

Overall, a good show, and a fine job by both cast and crew. I only wish I had a chance to review it earlier so I could have done my part in recommending it to and recruiting audience members. Well, such is a busy life with 4 little kids, I suppose!

A question asked...

On one of those email 50 question things, one question struck me differently than most others. This was mostly a fun little time wasting exercise, until question 50.

Question 50: What is the farthest you traveled from home. I've traveled from coast to coast. East, West, North and South. I've traveled far from home. What hit me was my furthest journey. I traveled farthest in the days following my wife's death. Sitting in the dining room or in my room I traveled very far indeed. It is a journey I would not want anyone to take, but I know many who have. It was and is a long journey to take.

It has been over 5 years since that fateful day. I've grown and changed over the past few years. But I've grown and changed every year of my life. Not the path I set out on, but the path I must take.

Life, the longest journey we ever take.

Wow, what a show

Now that it is over, I can say that this is one of my new favorite shows. There are two others that stand out in this same fashion, but this show is one of the best.

If I were to pick shows, this would not have been one I picked, but then one of my other favorites would not have been on my list of plays to do. So my list of favorite shows stands at this

1) Harvey. Big white rabbit and all. I was honored to play the part of Elwood Dowd in that show. My first lead ever, and in my favorite show ever. It was also special to me because I had a special guest star in that show. While everyone else was talking to a white rabbit, I was talking with my dear departed wife. She was on stage with me, in spirit, every night. I had a wallet that I took out of my pocket every night to pay the

cab driver. In that wallet I carried my wife's drivers license and some business cards she made for her chinchilla raising.

2) Arsenic and Old Lace. My first show at WCCT. I also enjoyed this show and would love to do it again. We had a wonderful cast for this show and it was a great first experience with the playhouse.

3) Death of a Salesman. Every performance the audience would shed tears. This was a show for the ages until...

4) The Lion in Winter. Yes, a story of the very dysfunctional family of Henry the II of England. A very good cast and a strong play. Actors and audience had an experience with this show, and on every performance the show got better.

What made the Lion in Winter such a good show? Hard work, dedication, good script, good direction, good cast, wonderful crew. Yes this show had all of that and more. We had such fun. Teasing back stage, fun on stage. It was a fun time before, during and after the shows. I'm glad we had the audience we did, but there were so many others that missed a very fine performance. These shows do not come everyday, and I am sorry for all that missed this show.

The Last Show

It was a happy and sad time today. Our show ended and we ended the day tearing down the set. Life outside the theater can begin again. Things can be accomplished, chores done and life again resumes. There are movies to see, books to read, daughters to tend to. From daughters and their new families, marriages, graduations, starting college life goes on. My life in the theater ceases until after the fall. There will be

shows, they will do it without me.

There is talk of taking our show to the OCTA regional competition this June, unfortunately, I will not be able to make it. My daughter is planing her wedding for the same weekend. Family comes first. I don't think I would miss a wedding.

This fall, my oldest is expecting her first child. This will also take up a bit of time or more.

My youngest is finishing her final year of high school, and plans to attend college next fall. This will also take up much of my time.

Life does not stand still, life move on.

More thoughts on our show in another post. It was an event that many enjoyed but it was still too few. I'm not sure how to get the word out to more, but they missed one of the best shows I've been involved with.

I'll Have A Sample Of Birdie To Go Please

Do you remember the days gone by when jingles in television ads contained familiar samples of famous songs? Some of these included women "[Washing the Grey Right Outta Their Hair](#)" or using window cleaner to "Put On A Windex Shine." Last night while watching *Cars* while sitting four terrific kids (although two of their overnight sleeping habits...), there was a State Farm insurance add that included lines from "Sixteen Going on Seventeen" to promote their partnership with the Disney

Channel to increase teenage driving safety. My concern with that is I could not recognize the TUNE at all. I realize that decades have passed since *South Pacific*, *Bye, Bye Birdie*, and *The Sound of Music* were considered cool. And, unless radically changed to fit today's teenage tastes, the music from these shows even less cool. A few years ago, Gwen Stefani sampled "If I Were A Rich Man" in her aptly titled "Rich Girl." At least with the old ads, the tunes were familiar instead of dressed up to make them SOUND like something they are not. But I suppose companies and artists(?) have to advertise to their target demographics. Sorry I did not try harder to come up with clips of all the ads.

So Tired of Being So Tired.

It's near 4AM and I sit on my computer not so much by choice but as an effect of the trend that has been occurring in our house for what feels like the past 4 years... Kids waking me up all night.

Tonight we got home from a (amazing) production of *The Lion in Winter* and put ourselves to bed at around 1AM. Here is a time line since that point...

1AM – move Disney off the bed and onto the floor in our room, which used to be the only place (at home) she would sleep.

1:10AM – Disney wakes up and wants a special blankie, so I run downstairs and get it for her.

1:27 AM – Disney wants to sleep in her room (WOW!) so I carry her there and put her to bed.

1:49 AM – Disney wants milk so I run downstairs and get her

some.

2AM – Disney wants to sleep in our room, so back on the floor she goes.

2:29 AM – Disney wants to sleep downstairs on the couch, so I carry her down.

2:42 AM – Disney wants a light on... I try to wait it out... She persists... Light on.

3:04 AM – Disney wants back upstairs. I get her and bring her back to our floor.

3:31 AM – Disney wants in our bed. I cannot sleep when she is there so I tell her no. She cries until 3:40 and wakes Christopher. I put her in our bed.

3:49 AM – Christopher is back to bed after being awoken by Disney. Disney is now in our bed along with Lisa and Charity. No room for me to sleep.

3:55 AM – Unable to sleep from stress and kids in bed, I start this blog and think about the big day we have tomorrow...

I love the kids and I love everything about my life, but I realized today that I probably have not had a good night's sleep in 4+ years. Even on the rare occasion when a child is not waking me up, my body has been programmed not to sleep through the night – waking up at the sound of a feather hitting the ground. I really don't believe I have had more than 2 hours of uninterrupted sleep since 2004 and no more than 5 hours sleep total for a night since that time as well.

I have always prided myself on not needing much sleep – seeming to be able to function at a somewhat normal level with an amount of sleep that would leave others dragging... But I am starting to realize some negative health effects from my major sleep deprivation.

- I have gained over 50lbs in the PAST 2 YEARS, yet I eat no more than I have and exercise no less. In fact, I would guess I get more exercise as I run up-and-down stairs dozens of times per day.
- I have become clumsy at times – falling down the stairs, stubbing toes, etc... Which I never used to do.
- I have trouble concentrating at times. Where in the past I have been able to count on a laser focus – especially when there was an important task to be completed.
- I have lost some zest for my hobbies starting to see them more as chores that interfere with a possible chance for rest.

Now, I want to keep this all in perspective. I am far from a zombie, and I am **not** dragging through the days. On a daily basis my life is still the most wonderful and blessed of lives. My family is simply the best, my friends second to none, and I simply love the gifts I have been given. Each day I still feel is the best one yet in my life.

Yes, I still live with the knowledge that I am the luckiest person on earth!

I guess this is just a life lesson to me – I have been wrong all my life. Sleep is not an awful consumer of time that deprives you of the joys and the accomplishments that can only be achieved and realized by being awake. (*You cannot 2x the quality/quantity of your life by eliminating [waste-of-time] sleep as I once thought in my younger years*)

I am just so tired of being so tired. It's 4:18AM now, time to find some place to lay down and see if I can't get at least 1 hour of decent sleep tonight. **SUPER FUN DAY TOMORROW – CHURCH, FAMILY BREAKFAST, BIRTHDAY PARTY, GIRL SCOUT EVENT ☐**
!! Wahooo!

UPDATE:

4:30 AM – Return to bed, Disney awakes cries to be covered with her blankie. Wakes Christopher. Fill Christopher's bottle, change his diaper, back to bed at 4:44.

5:09 AM – Disney cries as she does not have enough room on bed. I move to sliver on my side and have trouble sleeping. My last check of the clock and it is 6:18 AM.

7:23 AM – Christopher wakes up and wants bottle. Charity barks to go outside. I ignore her, she continues. Back to bed at 8:30 or so.

9:08 AM – Disney and Sammie wake up. It is time to get up for the day. Me and kids get up, I try and let Lisa sleep a bit since she no-doubt is disturbed by all the over-night action. She probably doesn't get much more as the chaos of the day has begun.

9:27 AM – I am finishing this blog. Time to get ready for our big fun day! ☐

I am so tired...