

Quick Run Through...

We had a quick run through of our show before starting the live performances again. Just something to work off any cobwebs that may have formed during the two days off. And by quick I do mean quick. A complete show has been running a bit over two hours without intermission. We finished the entire show in under 1.5 hours. Shaving over 1/2 hour from our show was a bit of a feat. Yes, there was fast talking, flying scene changes (only moving what was necessary) and quick moving. But it was needed.

First and foremost we had fun on stage tonight. So many times in a performance, we the actors, forget to have fun. We are concerned with getting all of our lines. Hitting all of our cues. Making all of our entrances. Giving a good show to the audience. All of that yes, but we forget from time to time to have fun. Tonight we had fun. We had fun with the characters. Fun with our lines. Fun with the other actors. That is what community theater is really about. We do this, not only for love of theater, but for fun. It is a non-paying hobby. A passion for some, but it is a way to relax and have fun. From all the plays I've seen in the past 10 or so years, the ones where the actors are having fun are the most enjoyable. If the fun of this evening carries over to tomorrow and the weekend, our best performances are yet to be seen.

The second part of this rehearsal was to get back into gear. Shake off some of the dust that had settled during those last few rehearsals, and the first weekend of the play. Go back and re-visit some of the lines. Make sure we are saying them as close as possible. Always trying to give the audience the play as it was written. Since we are human and this is live theater, we come close, but never quite perfect. We strive, but fall short. Gaffs are made, but we can't let that show to the audience. We take this rehearsal to again get comfortable with our characters.

Fun stuff tonight. This looks like a good omen for this weekend's shows.

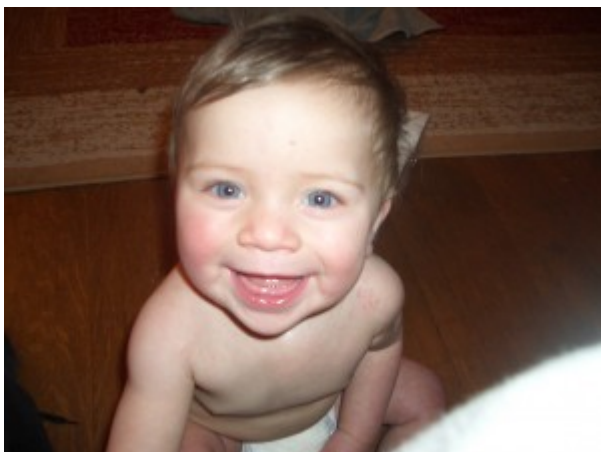
Again.. Come see a show, it is well worth it.

Snagglepuss

Today my son is 8 months old – how time flies! Gone are the days when I could cradle him like a newborn baby and sing him to sleep. There is no better way to relax than that, and I really miss it. Yesterday when I was in Walmart, I literally almost cried when I saw the itty bitty baby outfits. Why do they grow so fast?

So anyway, today is Christopher's 8 month birthday, and he's been growing by leaps and bounds lately. He popped his first tooth a few weeks ago, and I swear, every day that tooth gets a little bit taller. He just has the one tooth so far, like a snaggletooth, so we've been calling him "snagglepuss". I don't think that nickname will stick though, it's not quite as cute as his nickname of "Beeber", which is how our 2-year-old used to say Christopher.

Here is "Snagglepuss" – note the little tooth on the bottom:



And he is finally sitting up! A little late, but it seems as if now he's doing everything at once! He can scoot on his tummy, roll from his back to his tummy and his tummy to his back, and he can also sit up by himself when he's laying down. Now that he's sitting, he can be busier because it's easier for him to play. Here he is sitting up:



And of course, after all of this activity, he gets tired, and sometimes, he doesn't quite make it up to bed:



HAPPY 8 MONTH BIRTHDAY CHRISTOPHER!!!

What The Truck?

I recently received an email forward containing pictures of trucks from Europe. These trucks are cleverly painted so that they can effectively advertise their contents. Check them out:





Preview

(imagine a picture here that I'm too tired to make right now)

A little drama in accepting assignments- is the job his, or isn't it...?

Can eighth grade LD/BD kids really be quiet?

What happens when a hand is put in front of the face of an autistic child who doesn't want to work?

Tune in tomorrow, or whenever I am not so overtired, to find out the answers... ☐

A New Sunday Tradition...

Basically all my life I have had a Sunday tradition... September through January anyway... ***NFL FOOTBALL!!!***

And that my friends, has not changed. I love watching football, I really enjoy almost every aspect of the sport. Every Sunday in the fall my heart is pounding strong!

More recently our family has started the tradition of going to breakfast together. We have done this (almost) every Sunday for the past 2 years and it has been a great way to connect as a family and enjoy even more of the bonding time with the "fam" that I love. Breakfast with the family on Sunday is even sweeter than football...

Getting to sit down to a relaxed meal together and share our week is just a delight. We get much more family time than most other families to begin with, but more is always welcome! And, the Sunday breakfast time is extra special because it is a fixed time – it is our time. Much like Tuesday nights have become a Lisa-&-I tradition of "date night". Yes, Tuesdays are equally cherished.

Anyway, back to Sunday...

Our new tradition is one that has been in the works for some

time now... What is it? *To go to church!*

For a while my wife and I have been contemplating regularly attending Sunday service and getting involved with a church. But this is a decision we did not take lightly. We wanted a church that felt right for us. One that was inviting and open – not judgmental and condescending.

I had a **terrible** experience with the (Catholic) church growing up – one that left deep wounds and filled me with much doubt. Not doubt about God but doubt about religion. And, not about the message of religion but of it's messengers. There are good people and not-so-good people in this world and unfortunately the same is true everywhere – even in the church. I met many good people I am sure in my childhood with the church. But it was the bad one(s) that filled my mind with an incurable pain.

However, for the past several months I had been carrying a terrible burden. Someone *I am not at all close with* had (unintentionally?) confided something to me – **something absolutely HORRIBLE** – and I did not know what to do with the knowledge I had been “forced” to receive. I was losing sleep and filled with an awful feeling of uncertainty as to what was the ‘right’ thing to do.

This was not the kind of thing you gossip and it was not the kind of story I wanted to pass-on or burden any of my friends with... Only [Lisa](#) knew what was on my mind. However, one other name kept coming to mind – very oddly it was the name of someone who I did not have a close relationship with...

Mark Pittman was one of the cast members in School House Rock Live! A show which I directed with my lovely wife. All casts bond, but I had no particular closeness to Mark; in fact he and I didn't really seem to gel. Not that he wasn't nice and not that he-and-I didn't get along... I was just much closer to other cast members.

Anyhow, Mark's name kept coming into my mind whenever I would think about this 'event'. I do not know why... So, finally after discussing it with Lisa, we decided to just go with it. I called Mark who is a pastor at [New Hope Community Church](#). we arranged to meet at his office the following day.

Mark admitted to me that he was as surprised to get a call from me as I was to have been calling on him. Nonetheless, here we were.

I had a lengthy discussion with Mark about the burden I was carrying and the solutions (in terms of faith). I had an almost immediate feeling of comfort come over me – even with the emotional/intense nature of the issue at hand. Mark gave me advice from the perspective of the bible; which in fact was exactly what I was seeking. I had confidence in what I had to do and a peace about the situation I had not been able to find on my own.

Mark also talked very briefly about church in general. I made a comment on my past experience and the fact that I just wasn't sure about my comfort level with the church concept – because of what had happened in the past.

Although he made the assumption (incorrectly) that my wounds were related to the teachings or the interpretations of the Catholic faith – I still felt healing occur as we engaged in a discussion about the church.

Afterwards my wife and I talked about the experience and both agreed that we should attend a service at New Hope.

The service itself was amazing. Full of energy, music, emotion, and message. The highlight of the service was a group of individuals coming on stage each with a cardboard that on one side they had written their personal struggle and on the other side their newly found saving... For example, one read "Addicted to Drugs" and then was turned over to reveal "Addicted to God's Love". This was all done to music and was

very dramatic and moving. *Both Lisa and I had tears flowing from our eyes.*

So, yep. I think we've found a new Sunday tradition. *Or maybe I should say a new Sunday tradition found us...?* But I am happy to say that along with football (GO BEARS!!!), and breakfast, we will make attending Sunday service a part of our day.

THE IMPORTANT NOTE:

The kids also had a blast. Both learning about God's message and playing with other kids their age. Each child was in a separate room with other kids in their age group. I felt this was a much more productive way for the kids to be introduced to church (through fun interaction) – versus when I was young and basically sat BORED and listened to sermon after sermon that I did not understand nor did I care about... ***I WAS A KID; SITTING THERE WAS BORING!!***

OH, BILLY!

Since I have developed a slight writer's block, I will expand on the subject I like most. Therapeutic in the days following the close of a show that came and went so quickly. It seems like only yesterday (in reality back in January) that I received a phone call asking if I would like to audition for a musical that was not being done by the WCCT. I was not apprehensive in the slightest. A few weeks prior, I had auditioned for Lion in Winter and then thought... why not? **IT IS A FULL-SCALE MUSICAL.** Plus, I had been involved with two other groups prior to joining my home away from home. This would give me a chance to reach other audiences and spread my name around and meet more people with the same passion.

Little did I know that I would be helping to bring fresh faces "home" to play in my backyard.

When reading the finished playbill, I noticed that "Lon" had previously played Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors* and considers it his favorite role. Coincidentally, we are doing the show in October just in time for Halloween. Since this production is all cast (everyone who auditions is cast), I decided to approach Travis about it and he was really excited. As soon as he rearranged his directing duties, he informed me that he was indeed available. He even said that he was open to any part: there are no bad parts in the show. RIGHT YOU ARE!

"Katie" was also excited about the opportunity to audition for a role on Skid Row. She was cast in Hicksville's production but unfortunately circumstances arose that caused her to drop out. Mary has been a stage veteran for many years and has a fabulous presence. Both of them will make a great addition.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the young man who played "John Truitt." He really grew from the first time I heard him at the piano trying to sing. However, his enthusiasm and ENERGY led to the creation of a fine performance that generated a number of chuckles from the audience even if he did get beat up by a girl. Being a junior in high school who had never before stepped foot on stage, I think he did a tremendous job. In fact, he felt that he had fallen under the tag of "high school jock" who wanted to try something else. He even told me that he was apprehensive about what his friends would think and that they might come to a performance to disrupt it. Totally needless fear. I know more than a few school athletes who also excelled musically and theatrically... triple threats? I was really proud how far he had come in his stage debut. Good luck to you, Nate!

Hopefully, I can find a new tangent to go on soon. I am sure that some of my readers are growing tired reading on the same

topic although I could spend hours singing the praises of this one.

Interview disaster

I had a job interview at First Federal today, though most of you didn't know it. I have been looking for a different job since January. I have to pay for my wedding and since Goodwill is still closed, I really need a job! Unfortunately, I don't think I did very well at the interview. Tony kept telling me that I was going to get this job. Even though it's part time, I would get benefits, which both Tony and I need once we get married. I would have health insurance, paid vacation, not have to work on Sundays (always a plus since I have church in the morning, choir practice at 5:30 and then church again at 7:00). I think it would have been all right until I had to answer why I would be better than others for this job, what would I bring to the company. I know you're supposed to make yourself look good and everything, but I just couldn't. I had no answer. I am not any more special than the next person, and so I answered truthfully. I didn't know. Yeah, some good answer. I guess it's back to the newspaper for job searching.

One Of The Worst True Crime Stories Ever...

Those of you who know me are aware that I'm a true crime buff. For all of you many (I hope!) new readers – I am a true

crime buff! I like to read about true crime, so I guess you could say that I have a hidden agenda when I ask my brother-in-law (the cop) how his job is going. A few years ago, there was an incredibly shocking crime in my brother-in-law's jurisdiction of which he was forced to be a part, and it was terrifying for the entire community.

In July of 2004, Anson Paape decided to have an 18th birthday party for one of his kids' friends named Michael Murray. The party was at Paape's home in what is normally a quiet suburb of Chicago, Illinois. For some reason, he decided to supply the teenage party-goers with alcohol. Even worse than that, he decided to round up some of the teenagers and take them down to his basement for a poker game. The reason I say that the poker game was worse than furnishing the teens with alcohol is because this was a poker game with a deadly twist – Russian Roulette. Paape distributed bullets to each of the teens, and the person with the winning hand was supposed to load his bullet, put the gun to the head of the player to their right, and pull the trigger. As if playing this so-called game (and with teenagers!) wasn't crazy enough, Paape decided to mix it up, and he kept changing the rules. When Michael Murray won the hand of poker, Anson Paape picked up the weapon, held it to Murray's forehead and pulled the trigger before Murray could even react enough to push it away. Michael Murray was killed instantly on his 18th birthday. The other teenagers fled the house, and tracked down some police officers who were on patrol. When they arrived at the crime scene, Anson Paape was no where to be found. He was gone for two days before finally being apprehended, and he was tried, convicted, and will spend probably the rest of his life in prison.

It's an insane story – it defies all reason. I can't imagine what this man was thinking. And what a tragic outcome. Not only did a young man lose his life, but Anson Paape's 5 children are now without a father. They were also witnesses

to the horrifying event, along with other teenagers at the party that night. It's just so sad.

The reason I'm writing about this is because I remember when this happened. My brother-in-law had to work overtime to help man the SWAT trailer they had to set up while Paape was on the lam. I think everyone in Chicagoland was relieved when they caught him.

I Enjoyed His Second Childhood Immensely

They say a hat makes the man. Grandpa probably would say that a hat (as well as a suit) is like a man and likes to step out once in a while (pretty girl or no pretty girl). One of my favorite parts of Meet Me in St. Louis was the enormous array of wonderful hats I got to wear as Grandpa Prophater. I pick out most of them from the costume room at the Huber and one was brought by the producer. Grandpa went from a genuine Shriner's fez with tassel and all kinds of bells and whistles to a Holmesian deerstalker cap on Halloween to a huge Admiral's hat and one more that I will expound upon in a moment. There were a few plain, ordinary hats that were just not wild enough. There were only two scenes in which Grandpa was not seen wearing one: a dinner scene with the family and the Christmas Ball (although I thought the old Civil War vet would have looked smashing in a top hat with his old tuxedo he had gotten out of mothballs).

The Admiral's hat presented a few problems as I began to learn how to wear it. I thought it should be worn "sideways" with the ends at the sides. Then, I had it on backwards with the

tailfeather hanging over my face. Finally, I got it right amidst thunderous applause. The first time I rehearsed with it, the entire cast had to stop the scene from laughing. I was told that I looked like Cap'n Crunch which was where I got the inspiration to wear the cap sideways. I also had to be careful entering during the very serious scene as the audience roared as I snuck in through the kitchen door after performing Grandpa's favorite pastime: eavesdropping.

The deerstalker was my idea. It added a nice touch to the Halloween excitement of egging on "Agnes" and "Tootie" in their quest to throw flour into the faces of evil cat poisoners and other monsters. It also helped in discovering the truth behind the mysterious injury to Tootie's lip.

I had discovered a fez in my combing of the costume department. However, a much better one was found complete with medallion to wear around my neck and handy pouch to store them in. I felt like I should be in the Shriner's Convention scene in *Bye, Bye Birdie* or the Grand Poobah of the Loyal Order of Waterbuffalo.

My next to final costume was by far the most challenging, but one of the most entertaining. The family is awakened EARLY by Mr. Smith on Christmas morning. I KNEW Grandpa had to have a memorable outfit for sleeping. I knew exactly what I wanted. The turquoise robe was already there. The costume mistress took my measurements for a long nightshirt and the *piece de resistance*: a wonderful multi-colored, tassled nightcap. I loved it. After the scene, not so much. I had to make the fastest change I have ever made into my summer outfit for the World's Fair. The hardest part of the role. At one of the dress rehearsals, I came out clutching the night shirt and made everyone think I was Linus from the Peanuts comic strip. Thankfully, I was able to devise a scheme to change quicker.

I think this will be my final post for *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Each production I have ever been in has been different than

the last. Each performance of every production I have been in has been different than the last (for better or worse) but that is the beauty of live theatre. Everyone involved has to be on their toes and at their best. That is one of the many things I will always cherish about it.

To those who made a trip to St. Louis, I hope you had a great ride. To those who could not, my apologies. I hope that one was surely watching from above saw me continue to grow. There are better shows out there but I think big, happy, family-friendly shows need to be done if not only as an escape from today's troubling reality.

Potty Humor

I had to share this funny little story because something our almost 5-year-old daughter Sammie said the other day had my husband and I in stitches. She calls out from the bathroom – “Dad! I have to go poop but I can't... Oh, nevermind!”

Hmmm, now that I'm reading it, it's not quite as funny. I guess you had to hear her little 4-year-old voice call it out. Kids are so adorable with their bluntness. And I'm just glad that Sammie was able to solve her own problem!