

Busy, busy



The last day or so has been a bit busy. Part of it was me wasting time on Hamsterball, a clone of the 80's hit arcade game Marble Madness, and part was preparations for church this weekend. I have been wasting a *lot* of time on Hamsterball. Those who remember [Marble Madness](#) will remember that the game uses a trackball. The player would madly roll that trackball to guide his or her marble downhill (in one case *uphill!*) to the exit, encountering many an obstacle on the way down. Two players could even play at the same time, adding to the madness. Hamsterball plays a great tribute to this game, but it looks like the two player game is limited to either a one-on-one battle to knock the other off a platform, or playing just one board at a time instead of an entire tournament. Actually, the battle part can be up to four players- one-on-one-on-one-on-one, as it were. Instead of a marble, the wonder of current technology allowed the programmers to turn it into a hamster ball, with the hamster dutifully running in the ball as it moves. You can play in resolutions of 640×480 up to 1280×1024, in a window or fullscreen. Unfortunately, fullscreen for me means the game is stretched to fill my widescreen display making the ball look flat. When windowed, the game displays a correct aspect ratio fortunately. In lieu of a trackball, I have tried to play this game using a mouse, the track-pad on this oversized laptop, and an analog Saitek game controller. The game controller works the best for my purposes, but I still would like to get an arcade-style trackball at some point. I missed out on buying one for \$50 back when I could afford one. The game itself starts with ideas from Marble Madness and takes off from there. Besides the classic enemies like an enemy ball and disappearing floors, you will encounter fans, saws, giant hammers and mousetraps, and much more. Remember the world on Marble

Madness where your marble goes up ramps instead of down? Well, add sideways to this game in a world where the gravity changes depending on where your ball is on the screen. Here are some pictures from the game (click for larger size). You can also find a bunch of videos on [Youtube](#):



The business with church involved the 4th/5th grade ministry and children's drama. I had a script to finish memorizing for the rehearsal which started at 3:30. In addition, for the review game, Jeopardy, for 4th/5th grade I made some cards to draw for the categories and point values. Sure, we could have let the students pick for themselves, but when there are 30-50 kids in the room, with half of them (two teams) having to agree that would have caused the game to drag. One of the pastors used a die to decide in the past, but where's the fun in that when we could have the kids draw from a box cool-looking cards instead? On top of that it was rewards weekend. As such I had to call about ten kids in my small groups to remind them to bring their reward sheets with them. Most of them did, but a couple still forgot or couldn't find them.

An odd thing happened this weekend. There was a guest pastor from California, and for some reason on Saturday night he thought the service was two hours (it's really 1½ hours) and so we were wondering in kids ministry what was going on when 6:45 rolled around, then 6:50 and the parents still weren't there to pick up the kids. I learned the next day of what happened. The pastor was corrected and had to shorten his message by a half-hour otherwise chaos would have ensued between the two morning services as people for the second service arrived to a full parking lot because the first service hadn't left yet ☹️. In the end, everything worked out well. The review game was only its usual chaos, the drama went well- if not always perfect- for the three services, and the kids were too fully engaged in the room games Saturday

night to care that their parents hadn't arrived yet (I do feel for the other classrooms though that didn't have carpetball, four-square, and air hockey).

Psalm 41 According To Me

I once again served as song leader at mass today. Between the first and second readings is the responsorial psalm. The leader leads the congregation in the main verse and then chants the rest of the psalm... hopefully, correctly. This morning was not the case and one word mispoken made me wince.

The 3rd verse is supposed to be read as follows:

*The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed
and restore him from his bed of illness.*

Honestly, it would have been perfect except for one word. Instead of "sustain," I said "The Lord will KEEP him on his sickbed." One would hope that God would not intentionally keep someone on his sickbed. When I made my face after the psalm was complete, the organist asked what was wrong and I told him what had happened. Apparently, he did not notice.

I also sang "Amazing Grace." This is one of my favorite pieces. However, I did not realize how many verses there are: 6. I did a bit of sight reading since we rarely get past verse 4. I have always been fascinated by the first verse. A lot of hymnals include the words : "saved a wretch like me." I always learned that the sound "saved and set me free." There seems to be a lot of that word changing going on in our hymnals that change seasonally... generally, in songs that seem un-politically correct. Our chief organist has a fit every

time the choir practices a song and the words are not the same as in the past. But we have to sing the most up-to date words or the congregation will be lost.

Ok... off to rehearsal.

The Newlywed Game – 10 Years Later!

This April 10 (2009) will mark the 10-year anniversary of my marriage to my wonderful wife, [Lisa](#). And, last night we got to celebrate a little bit early by joining our [local theatre](#) for a night of “That’s Amore” – a cute little game where couples answer questions about each other “Newlywed Game” style.

And my wife, who HATES getting up in front of people actually got on stage and joined me in the competition – and we won!

But, this isn’t really about the game...

The fact that my wife would get up on stage (looking smokin’ hot I might add) and participate in this event meant so much to me. I know how much she hates/fears being on stage and the fact that she was willing to do this... I know it was because she, like me, will jump at any chance to show our love to each other.

For these past 10 years I have just been so blessed. Not only has Lisa given me complete marital bliss for the past 10 years, she (and God) have given me a wonderful family that has far exceeded my childhood dreams.

As I child I had a dream of getting married and having a

family with many children; but the reality has been much sweeter than the dream ever was! Each day I wake up (even when it is to crying little ones) and think to myself how blessed my life is and how lucky I am to have my wife and kids.

A few people have chided me about not blogging enough. But the truth is, my blog would get boring to readers quickly. Really, aside from the occasional gripe about the theatre, all I ever feel like writing about is Lisa – my love for her and my love for the kids... And maybe now and then about my love for my friends.

BORING STUFF

Plus, I work on the computer – so when I get some “free” time the last thing I want to do is MORE on the computer. I want to spend wime with LISA, CHRISTOPHER, DISNEY, SAMANTHA, and TAYLOR!

Saturday night in Bryan Ohio

I did have a post about [Saturday Night in Toledo Ohio](#) a while ago, but tonight I spent my time in Bryan Ohio. First at our theater’s new Weekenders productions. I would recommend these to anyone. It was a fun night. This was my first visit to something that has been going on for a little over a month. It could be comedy, singing or a little acting, but if they are all like tonight, it is a whole lot of fun.

Then a little impromptu visit to a local establishment across from the little theater. Had fun visiting with friends. I’m not one for the bar scene, but we almost had the place to ourselves. Quiet night in Bryan. If it hadn’t been for all the

snow, I think the sidewalks would have been rolled up. ☐

For those readers who aren't regulars of the WCCT, check out the link on this page. A lot of fun things are happening in either Bryan or Montpelier.

Two week count down to opening night for "The Lion in Winter". I would love to see you there (really).

More Weekenders will be scheduled. More great shows coming up.

Just When You Thought It Was Over...

BAM!!! Winter returned earlier today with another blast. Not that we were expecting anything less since it is only approaching the end of February. I had rehearsal from 1-4 (4 being rather optimistic since I had to leave at 4.45 to be at work by 5). The drive over was rather problematic: snow covered road the entire 10 mile journey, but I did make it (did you expect anything less?). I arrived around noon to complete my costuming... THANK HEAVEN THAT IS DONE! Now, we just have to wait for my final outfit to arrive from the costume shop in Toledo opening week (hopefully it fits). But Grandpa is now fully clothed. The costume mistress made a wonderful, very astute comment. She told me that she knew that I had been a theatre veteran for two reasons: (1) my talent and (2) my security in dropping my pants without hesitation to try on costumes. Well... my security in the latter is limited to the costume room. I have yet to be cast in a role in which I have been required to drop my drawers (quite frankly, at present, that would cause a moments pause).

One of the highlights of today's rehearsal was the trolley. It is really going to be something. Not quite complete, but enough that it could be moved on and off stage. I must say that I was quite impressed with the organization and pace at which it was pushed on and off for one of the signature numbers of the show.

Grandpa's songs must have impressed... well, I was told that I could be heard. Unfortunately, the part that could be heard was harmony that was supposed to be mixed with Tootie and Agnes' melody line. I have often been told that one should never work with children or animals on stage. Funny thing is, I have never had reason to believe it. Wonder why?

Happily, the road back was snow clear for the most part although the wind was horrendous. But, who knows what tomorrow will bring.

Conan's Last Stand

Tonight at 12.35 eastern time will be Conan O'Brien's final late show before he takes over the once coveted 11.35 slot from Jay Leno. I'm not sure how coveted the slot is but can well remember the battle between Leno and Letterman after the late great Johnny Carson retired. Fascinating that I do not see either host lasting nearly as long as the King of Late Night. Of course, Jay will soon be coming to Prime Time in some form. I prefer Dave when I feel so inclined.

I do have a connection to Mr. O'Brien. During my first adventure in New York City, a group went on the NBC studio tour. One of the other members of my group knew one of the writers on the show personally and we went to his office and scored tickets to that night's telecast. I do remember that

Dennis Miller was one of the guests and I sat in the middle of the third row. Tonight's guest list does not seem to make me want to sit up and watch. The guide lists The White Stripes as the performers. Unless it is a group of performing zebras, I think I will pass.[poll id="17"]

Another Wonderful Zoo Visit

We went to the Toledo Zoo again last weekend (it was our second weekend to visit the zoo in a row; we visited on Feb 7 and 15). Almost a week has passed since our last visit, but I had other blog posts lined up and ready to go, so that's why I'm first writing about it now.

Having a zoo membership is awesome because you get to visit the zoo whenever you have free time, and you don't have to worry about seeing EVERYTHING on EVERY visit since you know you'll be back soon. The last few times we've gone, we parked in the back parking lot and stay on that side of the zoo, which cuts the amount of walking considerably – a great option for winter months since this parking lot is free in the off-season and very close to the rear zoo entrance. With 4 small children, this is the way that works best for us, even though it means skipping the other side of the zoo which includes the polar bears, seals, wolves, and giraffes. No matter, we still see plenty, and now we have a whole half a zoo to see sometime if we go without the kids or are feeling extra ambitious.

Every zoo visit is different, which is one of the things I love about going. The animals are always doing different things, and my favorite exhibits vary with each visit. Here are the highlights from last Sunday's visit:

Lions – The Toledo Zoo has white lions. White lions are rare

and the result of a recessive gene similar to the gene of white tigers. The Toledo Zoo has 3 white lion brothers on loan from Siegfried and Roy, the famous Las Vegas magicians. Normally during our zoo visits, the lions are sleeping and up on a ledge far from the viewing glass, but last Sunday they were walking around, and one of them even walked right up against the viewing glass! I've seen lions up close before, but not for a long time and never the gorgeous white lion until last week.

Hippos – The hippos are in their indoor enclosure for the winter, and even though their room seems somewhat cramped, the animals don't seem unhappy, and it's very cool to see these HUGE animals up close. It's amazing to me that their small pool must get very deep very fast in order to allow the animal to be completely submerged. As we watched, the hippo was bobbing for apples, and he caught his apple and swallowed it whole. This hippo was so large that the apple in his mouth looked about as big as a grape would look in the mouth of a human being. And this provided an extreme close-up of his humongous teeth!

Gorillas – When we got to the gorilla exhibit, it was empty. But a friendly zookeeper told us to stick around for about 10 minutes for gorilla feeding time. We then got to watch as the keepers threw greens, fruit, and straw all around the enclosure; taking care to place some on the various ledges and hide some within crevices of the exhibit (seriously, am I too old to embark on this as a career?!? I'm afraid so...). Then they let the gorillas back in, and it was a frenzy. Well, an orderly frenzy – there was no pushing nor shoving; just some excited gorillas foraging in their exhibit. They quickly found all the hidden surprises, and we laughed as one of the females hoarded as much lettuce as she could carry and brought it up to a high ledge to enjoy it all by herself.

Elephants – The elephants were indoors, and the now 6-year-old baby Louie was using his trunk to eat jello off the floor. I

really enjoy watching elephants use their trunks; it's fascinating to me how dexterous they are – almost like they have 2 fingers on the end. But we've watched Louie grow up ever since we've been coming to this zoo when he was just a year or two old, and now he's getting pretty big! Last time we were at the zoo, he was trying to get down a step so he could get to the water, and he ended up going backwards down the step – it was so cute!

So great day, awesome fun as always! Like I said, every visit is different, and I am never disappointed! I am a zoo-addict!

An Unexpected Song And Dance

Sunday afternoon is the annual All County Band and Chorus concert. While in high school, I always looked forward to this event. Not only did it mean two days out of school to practice, (I went for both groups all four years), but it also meant being surrounded by fellow students who shared a passion for music. However, one of the schools in the county, until recently, never chose to participate. During my junior year, we had the privilege of having R.D. Mathey as the guest clinician for the choir. It featured, among other pieces, a medley of Andrew Lloyd Webber pieces. I was among the brave souls who tried out for a duet of "Unexpected Song" from [Song and Dance](#). Unfortunately, I was not chosen to sing the duet. I do remember the performance of Jester Harrison's "Amen" which was a staple of the BGSU Men's Chorus under Mathey's direction. I tried to find a youtube video but they must not perform it anymore.

Another common occurrence was the typical winter storm that would either cancel the concert or postpone it for a week. One

year, it was delayed twice before it was finally shelved for the year. Why it has always been in the middle of winter, I do not know. [Justj](#), is your youngest involved this year?

Grandpa Meet The Trolley

Tonight Act numero dos with the orchestra went much better than any of us had planned. Perfection... I would not go that far. There were some problems. Missed qs or rs. Songs falling apart, but I have been in a show or two when during the final week of rehearsal, we had the same thing happen. "A Victim of Gravity" comes to mind. But, I am really getting into this Grandpa thing. I had everyone on stage, in the orchestra, and a few people sitting in the audience laughing at some of his antics... to which madame director was quick to admonish. Tonight was also bio night. "John Truitt" mentioned that he had no idea what to include so I let him glance at my rambling. When he came to my favorite roles, he had to comment. Morat Notboratnichkov? Once again, the Liswathistani came out for a moment. Confusion arose since everyone naturally assumes this is Borat, but NO, NO, NO... not Borat... MMMMMORAT. Plus, we attempted one of the most dreaded moments of any show: the curtain call. Has anyone EVER been in a show in which the curtain call went perfectly the first time? OK... maybe not the first. But I am sure we will need to work on it again and again. Especially when there is a 13 member chorus along with several walk on cast members and 11 principals. Grandpa took a seat on the trolley while everyone else fell over each other. Two weeks from tomorrow!

Something new, something old

Wow, three posts in one day!

I've been working on a very old laptop (Compaq Armada), and installing Ubuntu Linux on it. This little machine has just been collecting dust for the past few months, patiently waiting for me to install a working operating system.

With an old wireless card, I am now able to use this computer to access the internet anywhere in my house.

Why in the world would I want to do that? Well, I'm looking forward to download updates to this machine. Of course, I'm enough of a geeky nerd to like playing with a different OS. And finally, I really like giving this old machine new life for at least a while.

The machine is much too slow for any serious work, but it will give me a chance to work with something different. I may start converting some of my other old boxes to linux of one flavor or another. If I can find good video and picture software, this may replace windows on one of my everyday computers. Still too early to tell on that.

So far so good. I was able to post on my blog, and read email. Maybe with additional memory, this things wouldn't be that slow either.... Nope, the processor is very slow.